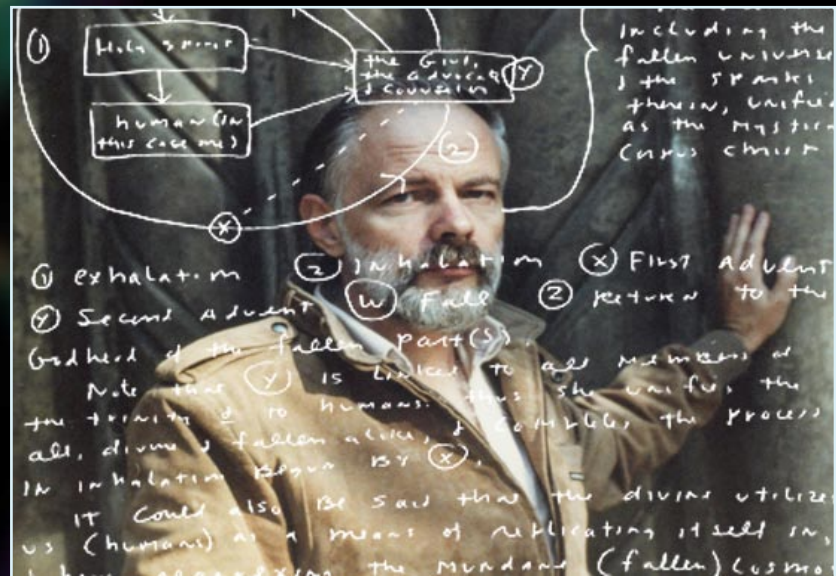
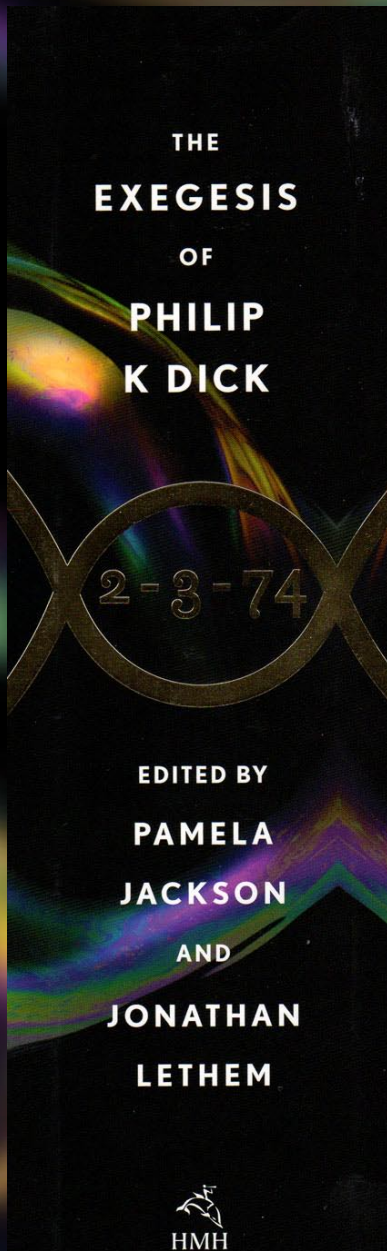


Photo of Phil © Tessa Dick, by kind permission

January 2012



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THIS ISSUE DEDICATED  
TO TESSA DICK

P K D

O t a k u

#23

## Editorial

by Patrick Clark

When Philip K. Dick died on March 2, 1982 his voluminous writings slipped from his grasp and into the hands of others. The world has been arguing about the results ever since. Phil's books are a form of property, no different from real estate or the family silver, and so the first set of hands to reach out were those of his heirs. Phil's estate became the Estate, managed by his three children. They then made a wise decision and commissioned their father's old friend Paul Williams as literary executive. That decision had momentous consequences. It's impossible for me to imagine the PKD legacy's survival, not to say its exponential expansion, without Paul Williams. He was August Dereleth to Phil's H. P. Lovecraft. Paul negotiated reprints of the published novels and short stories; he saw to the first ever publication of Phil's mainstream novels and the voluminous **Selected Letters**; he set movie deals into motion and he wrote the first and by far the best book about Phil, **Only Apparently Real**. Crucially, Paul instigated the Philip K. Dick Society and edited the Society's **Newsletter**. It became a rallying point for the many dispersed PKD readers around the world, a place to hang out, trade news, gossip and rants; a place to hear what was going on in the PKD world and read unpublished phildickiana. It made a bunch of isolated individuals into a family.

Eventually this had to end but when it was up and running the Philip K. Dick Society and its publications was an amazing institution. The Estate finally took back control and went its own direction but by that time the PKD legacy was alive and well.

The second pair of hands, big, clumsy and not a little dirty belonged to Hollywood. **Blade Runner** came out just after Phil's death; one wonders what he would have thought of the completed film. Its current status notwithstanding, the original opening of the film was a bust. Probably the 1990 **Total Recall** was more important to studio honchos; Schwarzenegger's film grossed over \$260,000,000. Slowly at first, then faster and faster, Phil's novels and stories were mined for plots and ideas. There have been eleven movies so far with a half dozen more in the pipeline. To say that most of these films have been dreadful is an understatement; to say that they have been successful is a joke. Most of them lost money at the

box office and only **The Adjustment Bureau** and **Minority Report** turned a profit, though **Minority Report** turned a very big profit indeed. In truth not much of Phil gets through the sausage-making process of Hollywood. Consider *Next*, surely the nadir of these sausages. And yet to a large extent the world probably recognizes the name Philip K. Dick because of these movies. In a bastardized form, to be sure. I suppose we ought to be grateful. But couldn't they just once make a decent version of a PKD original? Is that too much to ask?

Another set of hands that took hold of the PKD legacy belong to academia. The scholarly study of Phil and his works began early. *Science Fiction Studies* published a "Special Philip K. Dick Issue" in March of 1975. It was expanded and published as *On Philip K. Dick: 40 Articles from Science Fiction Studies* in 1992. Arcane studies have flowed from the Ivory Towers ever since. It's a kind of cottage industry. So we have "The Metafictive World of *The Man in the High Castle*: Hermeneutics, Ethics, and Political Ideology;" "P.K. Dick: From the Death of the Subject to a Theology of Late Capitalism;" "Postmodernism and the Birth of the Author in Philip K. Dick's *Valis*;" "Death of a Salesman: Petit-Bourgeois Dread in Philip K. Dick's Mainstream Fiction;" "Media, Drugs, and Schizophrenia in the Works of Philip K. Dick;" "*Ubik* and the Deconstruction of Bourgeois SF" and on and on. Check out Michael Fisher's bibliography at [www.philipkdickfans.com/valbs/articles-on-academic-journals-articoli-su-riviste-accademiche/](http://www.philipkdickfans.com/valbs/articles-on-academic-journals-articoli-su-riviste-accademiche/) if you are at all interested. The result of all this hair-splitting has been confusing. Which grand theory of Phil are we supposed to salute? Why do we harbor doubts that Phil had ever heard of, for instance, the works of German media theorists Friedrich Kittler and Wolfgang Iser let alone illustrates them? It is not as if we hadn't been

warned. As far back as 1841 in his tale "Never Bet the Devil Your Head," Edgar Allan Poe cautioned that

"When the proper time arrives, all that the gentleman intended, and all that he did not intend, will be brought to light, in "Extrapolation" or "Science Fiction Studies," together with all that he ought to have intended, and the rest that he clearly meant to intend – so that it will all come very straight in the end."

Of course there is nothing wrong with any of this. Scholars move on their own trajectories with different agendas and different goals and a particular audience. If the prose is impenetrable and the thesis inscrutable, well, that just means we are not the particular audience. I have to say it



Paul Williams



can be extremely annoying to hear these contending narratives declared ex cathedra especially given how much one journal article contradicts an other. There is an egotistical sense here that some university prof has a special insight into Phil's mind and can absolutely tell us "what it all means." Phil himself was leery of this kind of activity and remarked to Joe Vitale in 1978

"You know, sometimes I think it's all a plot, to praise you and accept you and treat you like a serious literary form. Because in that way they can guarantee your demise.

The only thing that's worse than being treated as "not serious" is being treated as "serious." I'd much rather be ignored. And this "scholarly" science fiction criticism is the worst.

You know, if they can't destroy you by ignoring you, they can destroy you by annexing you.

They, the literary critics, write these incredibly turgid articles which see all this "meaning" in your writing. The end result, I guess, is to drive all your readers away screaming."

What would Phil think now about his assimilation into the academic discourse? Maybe he'd be pleased; maybe amused; maybe appalled; maybe all three at once. In truth I think he would be flattered to be taken so seriously though I also think he would find much of what is written about him to be absurd. Still, as with Hollywood, academic hands keep Phil's name alive and, more so than Hollywood, scholarly study rather legitimates Phil's presence in the cultural marketplace. It therefore serves an important purpose. If many lay persons find this irritating they are just going to have to live with it.

There was one other pair of hands that strained to catch Phil's legacy. These hands belong to Phil's many, many fans. "Fans" is a vague term I suppose but at a minimum we might apply the label to anyone for whom the works and thoughts of Philip K. Dick are vitally important. Vitally important, that is, in a deeply personal way not simply as a means of making money or furthering a career but as a way of making sense of one's life and one's world.

Fans, I think we can say, love Phil even though the Phil they love may not have all that much to do with the actual Phil. Instead they love his ideas, his books, his humor (and perhaps his paranoia), his troubled journey through science fiction and Twentieth Century America. Some love his craziness; others his doomed quest for God; still others his opposition to tyranny or his peculiar view of reality. Some, I think, love his characters: Chuck Rittersdorf, Joe Chip, Arnie Kott, Leo Bulero, Ragel Gumm, poor deluded

Bob Arctor, the heroic Mr. Tagomi and, especially, Angel Archer and Horselover Fat. Fans can have a foot in those other camps: Richard Linklater is a fan and a filmmaker; Dave Gill and Lawrence Sutin are fans and academics. But typically a fan is just a fan – and proud of it.

Fans, it must be said, did most of the heavy lifting in the early days of PKD's survival. Paul Williams was the best possible fan. After the **PKDS Newsletter** ceased, fans like Dave Hyde and Greg Lee filled the gap with their own PKD zines. Fans like Phil Stephensen-Payne and Gordon Benson, Jr. created the original bibliographies. Overseas fans translated samizdat editions of Phil's books. Fans like Uwe Anton edited **Welcome to Reality**, a collection of phildickian tales. Fans reviewed books for the various SF web sites. Fans started newsgroups and blogs (yo cal, Jason, Michael, Ted). Fans transcribed the Selected Letters. They organized conferences. In a word they kept the flame burning. Hollywood, even the Estate, came late to this particular feast.

**PKD Otaku** is a fan endeavor. Always has been. Always will be. It is produced by fans for fans though of course all are welcome at the table. It's changed quite a bit since the first issue in January 2002 but this new issue is by far the biggest change ever. And it has never, ever, looked as good as it does today. This is also the biggest issue in the zine's history and I hope you, the readers, will agree that the content is diverse, intriguing and challenging. The content is an invitation as well. If you are a fan and you have something to add to the ongoing conversation by all means contact us. We are looking for new voices, new insights, opinions, ideas and observations. Drop us a line at [pkdotaku@gmail.com](mailto:pkdotaku@gmail.com) and let's talk.

This 23rd issue of PKD Otaku is the joint project of Frank Bertrand, jami morgan, Dave Hyde, Nick Buchanan and Patrick Clark. I'm the editor but my job was easy with these great collaborators. Thanks, guys; you made this issue possible. A very special thank you to Nick who did all

the graphic work and the actual layout. Thanks, too, to Michael Fischer for providing space for PKD Otaku at his [philipkdickfans](http://philipkdickfans.com) site and generally for keeping the lights on at that location.

Thanks to Perry Kinman, John Fairchild, Andre Welling, Laura Entwisle, Frank Hollander, Dave Keller and Greg Lee for years of encouragement and dialog. Marc Oberst, if you are out there drop me a line. And finally, a special thanks to Tessa Dick for allowing us to use the photo of Phil and for sharing her life with Phil with all of us. I would like to dedicate this issue to her.

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## A MATTER OF WEIGHT: THE EXEGESIS OF PHILIP K. DICK (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011. Eds. Pamela Jackson, Jonathan Lethem)

By David Hyde

Ward, Colorado © January 2012

Like Matador, my cat, the book I hold in my hand is large and fat: 944 pages in hardcover with a glossy dustjacket which, when peeled away, reveals a gold wubfur cover – almost the exact shade of Matador’s fur - that glows dully like an ingot of solid gold. With this fantastic cover the book takes on a Biblical feel, like something handed down from on high; the lost tablet of Moses when he stumbled down the mountain that last time. I espy Matador and pick him up - a two-handed job – and balance him momentarily on one hand while weighing him against the book in my other hand. I figure it will take five of these volumes to equal the weight of one Matador. And it is only about one tenth of the whole of the Exegesis of Philip K. Dick, which would then itself be the weight of two Matadors if published in its entirety. That’s a lot of weight. Certainly, if anything can be said of a book these days, these selections titled **THE EXEGESIS OF PHILIP K. DICK** (Houghton Mifflin Har-

court, 2011. Eds. Pamela Jackson, Jonathan Lethem) may lay claim to the description of a weighty tome. I say all this, not to go on about this book but merely to introduce my cat. Matador hasn’t read this book although he did sit on it one time, and neither have I. The problem is how to read it. I pried the book open the day I got it, goggled at the cryptic handwritten notes included on the inside cover, and read through the introductory pages, the acknowledgements and notes and then the first actual Exegesis entry. I could progress no further and instead opened the book at random and read brief excerpts here and there. Then I closed the book but, too late for me. That first entry (page 3: excellently chosen by the editors) had fired up my imagination; as PKD always does, and I already had too many questions. The first, of course, being why would I read this book in the first place?

I can answer this question because it is one I have pondered for over twenty-five years. Philip K. Dick’s nov-

els and stories, for me, are detached from reality. That is, they’ve cut the bonds tying his imagination to the consensual reality of the 20th century. In today’s argot we’d say PKD is ‘off the hook’ (and I might add here that this phrase itself is evidence of a Phildickian influence on American society). He cut loose from conventional science fiction – all those rockets and ray guns, and even from the mainstream fiction of his time. It is important to note that PKD struggled with literary conventions all his life; that he transcended them and how is the purview of our literary historians. Not an easy task but an essential one in that Philip K. Dick dominates international discussion in so many intellectual fields these days. There are many fac-

tions trying to claim him for their own from the Marxists to the nuclear physicists to the Gnostics. But it is to the literary theorists that we must first turn for an explanation of PKD’s influence for he was a writer, first and foremost. What is needed is a survey of current thought in the literary field that includes a history of these ideas and presents competing arguments and demonstrates Dick’s place in a theoretical framework, all based on deep familiarity with his work and the commentary upon it. We at PKD OTAKU welcome such a survey should any of our readers care to write it. But we are strict. Still, here’s an

opportunity to contribute to our understanding of reality. Once again English Literature is at the forefront of human endeavor!

Generally what has resulted from his writing is a vast questioning of reality by the industrial world. What is reality? Dick cut us loose from hidebound convention and, some believe, made a quantum leap in ... what? Metaphysics? Physics? Philosophy? Even in Literature? We do not know because we have no ground to stand on; Dick freed us from an accepted reality and now we find ourselves floating around in a space of pure relativism, sometimes known as post-modernism. PKD OTAKU may well be the forum to discuss such matters but it is not my intention to do so now. However, I will note that modern theorists are having a hard time dealing with PKD’s obvious Christian bent.

To answer the question above I read PKD for the fun of it and I will read the **EXEGESIS OF PHILIP K. DICK** be-



Illustration by Robert Crumb



cause I, like most everyone, want to know the truth of reality. A flaccid relativism is not the answer for me. Philip K. Dick released us from previous models of reality in some ways that we have yet to comprehend; it is difficult when one is in the middle of an intellectual revolution to realise that fact. I sometimes see PKD as an intrepid explorer into unknown territory, a man who lacked not only a map but any idea that he was now in another dimension altogether. But he pressed on, delving into Dark Realms of the Imagination just like he did back in the 1950s when he published his short stories in pulp magazines with titles like *Worlds of Tomorrow* and *Beyond Science Fiction*. Oh, yes, early influences can be traced. How I will read the **EXEGESIS** is very carefully. What we are dealing with here is a matter of weight. The **EXEGESIS** is worthy of serious study by those of us who are prepared to study it. Watching *BLADE RUNNER* seven times does not qualify. If we include all of PKD's novels, stories, letters and other writings we have now with this addition of the **EXEGESIS** enough material to occupy legions of scientists and scholars in lifetimes of study. That's the way it is when something new comes along, we can't expect to understand it all in a day and to pontificate prematurely only makes one look foolish. PKD is the pioneer who took a leap into the unknown in a search for the truth – like his character Thors Provon in **OUR FRIENDS FROM FROLIX 8**. Are we to take his genius, one that is acknowledged worldwide, one that confounds and inspires us, and come up with nothing? Maybe, but to reach this conclusion at this time is at best self-serving and at worst calamitous to intellectual progress.

Matador agrees with me and reminds me about cats. Cats are a detail in reality and details are important. Somewhere in the vast writings of Philip K. Dick there is a small detail somewhere that would be easily glossed over by most readers but which will hit some other reader like a half-brick to the head and he or she will have the idea that will change our understanding of reality and the human race will enter a new way of life. With this excellent edition of **THE EXEGESIS OF PHILIP K. DICK** we now have more of the territory pioneered by PKD to explore in search of Reality.

But before we leap into our search we must prepare the groundwork (necessary even in a place where there is no ground) and get all our ducks in a row. Passing time and the written record create history. Philip K. Dick is dead, alas, but we have a wealth of his written material that must be ordered. We must make sure that the facts of

real life accord with the written history. We must first determine the truth of what PKD wrote regarding the events in his life and weigh his statements against those of others

who have knowledge of any event. For the possibility exists that PKD – a master fantasist – made it all up. All the pink beams, the Xerox letters, the endless years of speculation, the Exegesis itself, all are details

themselves in a fiendish Master Plan hatched by PKD to show the literary world who had spurned his mainstream masterpieces what a novel was really all about. Peace.

P.S. Next issue I shall introduce another cat, the feline that changed a universe!

P.P.S. Please check out my *TALES OF MATADOR THE MOUNTAIN CAT* wherein the fearless furball tells his tale. Included on this website.

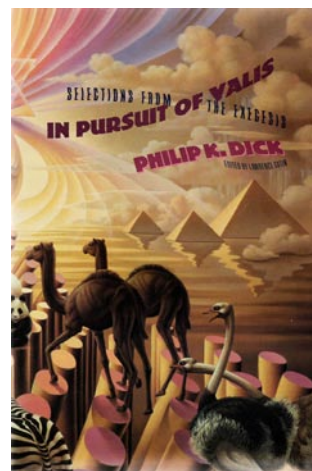
## On The Confusion Between Eisegesis, Exegesis and the Queen of the Fairies: An Eisegesistal Commentary

by Frank C. Bertrand

© December 2011

There has already been a lot written about the recently published **The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick**, (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011), some of it thoughtful, but mostly, I find, of a non constructive critical nature. One casualty of this rush to judgment has been Lawrence Sutin's **In Pursuit of VALIS: Selections from the Exegesis** (Underwood-Miller, 1991). Another is confusion about what Philip K. Dick's Exegesis actually is. Then there are bandied about slippery-slope labels like "mystic" and "prophet" that have no supporting empirical evidence. We need to step back for a moment and take, instead, an open-minded, more co-

gent critical perspective about *The Exegesis* and Philip K. Dick.



The word “exegesis” itself is a good place to start. As the respected O.E.D. indicates “exegesis” derives from Greek words meaning “to interpret, guide and lead.” Originally it was applied to commentaries that explained Biblical Scriptures and then, by extension, it also came to mean “An explanatory note, a gloss” or “An expository discourse” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed., 1989, vol. 5, p. 524). It involves asking analytical and critical questions based on criteria that are as objective, careful and clear as possible, to identify the single textual meaning intended to be conveyed.

Is this what Philip K. Dick has done? Biblical exegesis? Not really. The use of “exegesis,” in fact, is misleading and unfortunate. It has connotative baggage that gives rise to unrealistic expectations and misrepresentative interpretations. In **VALIS**, fictional character Phil Dick notes, “The term “journal” is mine, not Fat’s. His term was “exegesis,” a theological term meaning a piece of writing that explains or interprets a portion of scripture” (1991, p. 22). The real writer, Philip K. Dick, however, in a 1-8-77 letter states: “I’ve been working until three or four a.m. each night on my enormous exegesis of my religious experiences back in March of 1974,” (emphasis mine) and in a 5-20-77 letter “I began in 1974 to develop my exegesis: my account of my mystical revelation and an account of the cosmology disclosed to me” (emphasis mine, **Selected Letters**, vol. 5, 1977-79, p. 6, 78).

I would be the first to admit that Philip K. Dick had an interest in “religion,” in particular Gnosticism. He more than once mentions reading William James’ *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. But, he had a stronger interest in Philosophy, Psychology and German Culture. This is evident from his interviews, letters and essays, and certainly via thematic allusions in his short stories and novels. These interests were all “intellectual tools” in his “intellectual toolbox” that he used to try and fabricate answers to his two salient themes: What is reality, What is human-ness. The so-called “exegesis” is but another intellectual tool he used to try and understand a particular experience he had and how it relates to the themes he wrote about. No more, no less.

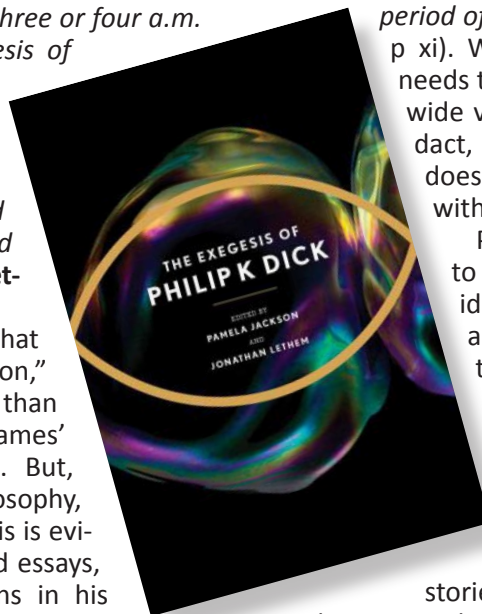
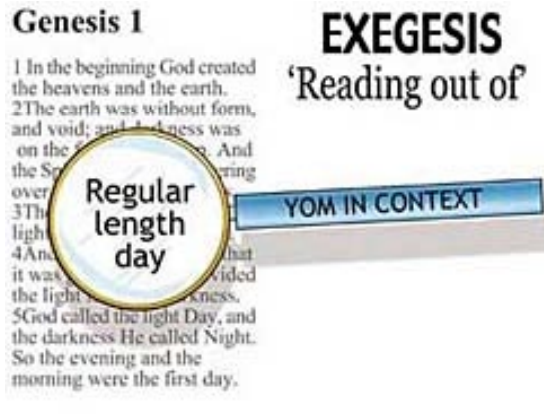
A more accurate term for what Philip K. Dick actu-

ally did would be “eisegesis.” That is, reading into a text, in the sense of one gets whatever meaning he/she imposes with preconceived ideas and/or suppositions upon a text, which could end up being symbolic, historical, spiritual and/or literal. That is, the interpretation one “reads into” is not supported by the lexical meaning, syntax and overall context of the original text. In this instance, Philip K. Dick is doing eisegesis not on a text, but a personal experience, one presented to him via his five senses then rationalized by his pre-frontal cortex. Has he done so using critical and analytical questions based on clear and objective criteria? Not really.

The two versions of the Exegesis we now have are very subjective, as Phil flits about from one potential explanation to another explanation, then yet another explanation. Lawrence Sutin aptly writes, “...the *Exegesis* is a sprawling, disconnected journal – part philosophical analysis, part personal diary, part work-in-progress notebook for the final novels – that was produced in the course of lengthy nighttime writing sessions over a period of eight years” (In **Pursuit Of VALIS**, 1991, p xi). What is fascinating in this process, and needs to be noted, is Phil’s love of research and wide variety of reading. He is truly an autodidact, which is part of the problem. Quantity does not automatically, or logically, correlate with quality.

Philip K. Dick does, nonetheless, manage to challenge our views about a variety of ideas with overlooked facts and intriguing analyses. But these, in part, derive from testimony-based belief versus empirical-based evidence. It’s a kind of transcendent adventure using (creative) artifice as a refuge from reality. It could be argued that some of his academic critics/pundits have done the very same thing to a small coterie of PKD’s short stories and novels, those that best support the current theory-flavor “ism” of the month.

If, and when, you manage to read through all 943 pages of this latest **Exegesis** version, you’ll be left with more tantalizing questions than enlightening answers, much like a Philip K. Dick novel or short story. As PKD himself incisively states it, in a 2-23-78 letter, “I have almost 500,000 words of notes I’ve taken over a four year period, concerning my “paranormal” experience starting in February 1974, and one thing I am sure of is that I will never





really know what did in fact happen” (emphasis mine, **Selected Letters**, vol. 5, p. 155).

Then again, religious experiences, mystical revelation, paranormal and will never really know might leave you intellectually unsatisfied with no warm and fuzzy feeling in their pre-frontal cortex. In that case consider this: fifteen months after the '78 missive Phil writes, in a 5/12/79 letter to Kleo Mini (his second wife), that “...after sifting through countless theories and doing a lot of research and thinking, I have decided that what happened was that Diana, who is Queen of the Fairies, came and saved me and took me to Faerie....I might add that it was always my hope as a child that this would happen. Diana told me that she was my “tutulary spirit” (ibid., p. 229).

Yes, Diana, Queen of the Fairies, which is surely Philip K. Dick’s pervasive sense of black humor at its best. Wouldn’t a better title for the *Exegesis* have been *The Man Who Japed, Again?* [FCB, 12/11]

## A Hell-Chore, Indeed!

By ej ‘Jami’ Morgan

© January 2012

**B**ear with me, (or perhaps I should say BARE with me) while I start this article in a very different way than I first envisioned. Yes, it will be about the *Exegesis*, but as any good writer knows, you gotta grab their attention first, right? Start with a bang (like the explosion in my novel, *AKS* ;) So, I laughed out loud when I thought about the different reaction I would get from telling a group of mostly male Dickheads that my article was delayed because I was on a Vajrayana Buddhist retreat. Yawn... big snoozer, right? But if I said it was a Tantric Retreat, I envisioned waking up to a line of guys standing in the freezing cold ready and willing to come in and help me.

Sorry, that was a bit sexist, I know, but Buddhist humor can be such a pleasure ;) It’s true, Vajrayana is the “tantric branch” of Tibetan Buddhism. And while the practice is about transforming desire to

liberation, it is not the fantasy sexual practices so many people think “tantra” means. As Lama Yeshe\* (a well respected authority on Tibetan tantra) points out “if wallowing in desire were the same as practicing true trantra, we’d all be highly evolved yogis and yoginis by now!”

I felt I could bring these two topics together quite easily (Phil’s *Exegesis* and the 30-day retreat I’ve been on) because they both deal with spiritual quest. (Ha, ha, haaaaa... she begins to laugh manically, recalling how easily she thought she could weave all the Exegetical terminology and Phil facts into a novel about PKD and a cosmic quest for what’s really real.) That is how I first became fascinated with PKD, you know. Not his SF flights of fancy, but his unbelievably insatiable desire to answer the penultimate philosophical questions of humanity, love, reality, and yes, God. Isn’t PKD’s unique blend of all those topics why we remain so intrigued with him, and now the *E*? Equally fascinating to me are the plethora of posts and

ponderings about Phil’s obsession with God—now and when I first became interested in *VALIS* and *In Pursuit of VALIS* (the first two books I read by and about Philip K. Dick.)

Early on, in one of my first discussions with Paul Williams, he used the phrase when “Phil found God” referring to the 2-3-74 experience. **FOUND God?** I recall debating this with Paul. Of course PKD was searching, but far from having found anything, I thought. Maybe that’s the crux of the matter and why so many are willing to take the mind-numbing trip through this hypergraphical tome because we want to experience the *Exegesis* in “real time,” and see if Phil really did find answers. I still think they remain elusive.

If you want a nice concise look at Phil’s Kerygma (as understood on October 18, 1978), read the first two pages of Folder 21, pages 412 and 413. That is the “dance” in a nutshell, complete with: Zebra = Christ.

Christ = God. Thomas = Zebra and I (PKD) equal Thomas. Thus I equal God. Bravo Phil, that’s it! No Buddhist Lama could say it better.



Williams pointing toward the window of the #4 apartment on Cameo Lane in Fullerton where the famous (or infamous) pink beam was seen by Phil.

Photo by EJ Morgan on one of our trips around PKD land.

But forgive me, I get ahead of myself, because you could just as easily say that Phil reached some form of resolution at the end of Part One, on page 208, where he accepts that he had an epiphany (not a theophany, he says.) ...some form of Holy Wisdom; that after yearning his entire life to hear that “still small voice” that Elijah heard, he had. But, then, in true Phil form he quickly reverses himself saying, “what if at the end of my search for God I learned there is no God, then whatever I accomplished, experienced or acquired would mean nothing; conversely, this makes up for anything and everything, and creates meaning of an ultimate order in my life.” He goes on to say, “The 3-74 experience was ‘vaster than empires’; the exegesis which uncovered the significance is vaster yet—infinite in sum.” “What do you want out of life?” I could ask, and answer, “This.”

Really, Phil? Just that? Apparently not, for that was not the end of the “hell-chore”...far from it.

There were easily another six or seven thousand pages of speculation, scribbled over the remaining years of his life AFTER he had reached that conclusion in 1976, or the “I equal God” revelation two years later.

I’m glad I waited until several others had written their insights and reactions to **The Exegesis of Philip K. Dick**, for now most of the age-old onerous topics have re-emerged, as well as some new ones. Classics like: Did Phil have a religious or psychotic episode? Perhaps he suffered a series of transitory ischemic attacks (TIAs) during the spring of 1974. Or, as I end the prologue of my novel that deals with **VALIS** and the **Exegesis** fictionally:

Something had infiltrated Phil’s mind. A presence—a pink light—that he said beamed information to him. Mental illness? Had Phil finally flipped out? When you claim that an info-firing pink beam is after you, your friends and fans get really worried. But in true Phil-form he could describe his fantastic vision in exquisite detail. He called it **VALIS**—the Vast Active Living Intelligence System—and wrote a novel about it.

One novel was not enough to explore his mysterious, mystical experiences. Philip K. Dick spent eight years and eight thousand pages of **Exegesis** (his private ponderings and speculations) about the events that began in the early 1970s. Phil obsessively searched for the source and true meaning of the revelations. Were Russians beaming secret signals into space that Phil somehow intercepted? Did

he receive alien transmissions? Was he channeling Bishop Pike? Or—was **VALIS** actually God?

I wrote that many years ago, soon after my debate with Paul Williams, but now, critics and some Dickheads are puzzling over that last point (again)—did Phil actually see or hear God? NOW WAIT (for last year)—did any of you, even ONE of you, sigh while reading those “tiresome” questions?

How many times over the course of your admiration (dare I say devotion) to PKD have you heard these same issues raised and re-asked? It’s become a game, of sorts, to rattle them off. While writing my novel, I was trying to include as many Exegetical glossary terms as I could in my story (using Sutin’s uber-abridged **In Pursuit of VALIS: Selections from the Exegesis**.) I can’t believe I missed “tachyon bombardment.” That is my favorite “final answer” de

jour. Using the glossary from this new abridged **Exegesis** (and yes this one is also abridged, but of course you know that, you’re Dickheads), I managed to incorporate at least sixty of the key Kerygma terms. Even the “vault of heaven, with the wispy clouds” was depicted, with the Big Guy, as I called him. That was my take on his dialectic ;) But I digress...

Let’s tackle that thorny issue. No, not God, but the idea that this fabulous, long-awaited material could possibly be “tiresome.” In our online PKD fan group (on Facebook), I had the audacity to agree with Charles Platt (Editor of the 1980 **Dream Makers** interviews with “the uncommon people who write science fiction,” which of course included Phil)—rather agree with his assertion in the 12.16 New York Times review that the material becomes “tiresome.” OMG, such Sacrilege!

Some of the Dickhead “boyz” jumped to conclusions about what exactly I found tiresome. They assume it’s the subject matter or the difficulty of it. No, it’s not the actual speculation about God, spiritual or philosophical issues that I found tiresome, but Phil’s endless roller coaster ride over the same lost and found epiphanies. “I’ve got it now... wait, I guess not.” Or as Tim Powers (fellow writer and former Phil friend) says in the intro, “Every day was starting again at zero. It was never cumulative.” That’s the tiresome part. Phil frequently found himself “exhausted and drenched in a cosmological flop sweat.” Me, too.

As someone who has done a fair share of exegeting myself on my own spiritual experiences and quandaries, I would



never criticize Phil or anyone for trying to write his or her way to clarity— on ANY issue. That’s the point of journaling, or all writing for that matter. And, Phil certainly had good reason to stay up night after night pondering the mysteries, mystical experiences and profound questions that haunted him. I was only commenting on OUR hyperlexical reaction to it—OUR compulsion to READ every word he put to paper—and how that can be tiresome and exhausting.

Phil referred to his endless Exegesis process and introspection as his “hell-chore” (see page 658, oh hell, let me insert it here ;) This begins a couple of paragraphs before Pamela’s footnote, but carries over to page 659):

“My Exegesis, then, is both a delusion in which I am trapped and, in addition, a delusion I am creating for others—ie, in **VALIS**—but he allows this in order to protect my integrity (einaí).\*\*

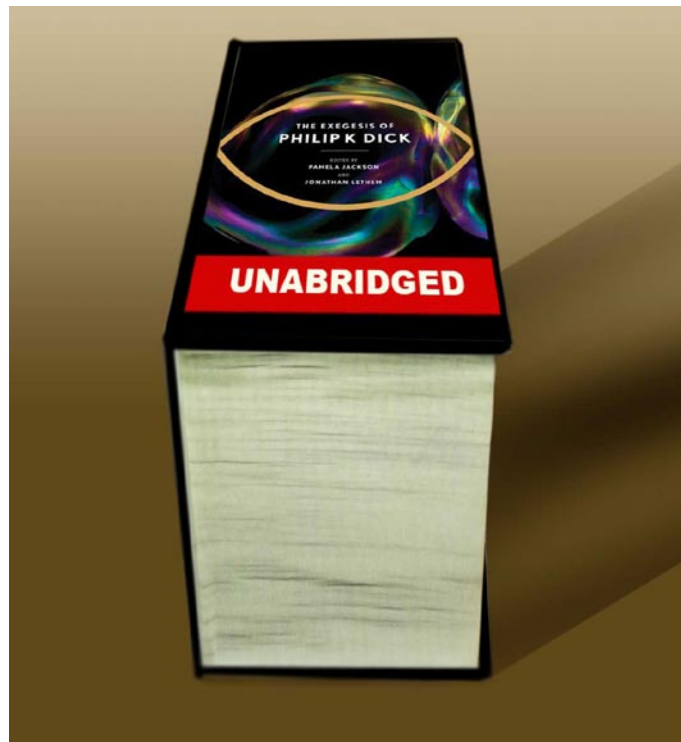
Thus (to summarize) delusion—super sophisticated Satanic delusion—(ie, 2-3-74) led to a futile exegesis, a **hell-chore** (punishment that he allowed Satan to inflict on me)—but okay. “A chicken is an egg’s way of producing another egg.” Viz: the primary delusion (enchantment) of 2-3-74 led to the further delusion (second delusion) of the futile exegesis; I was totally trapped in Maya, led there by my own original suspicions—ironically!—that what we see is delusion! But: the second delusion—the exegesis exhausted itself finally... whereupon a true and self-authenticating theophany did then occur—and it bore no resemblance to 2-3-74 whatsoever. Obviously, if the God of 11-17-80 were genuine (and I say this theophany was self-authenticating based on [1] premise; and [2]logical deductions from the premise) then 2-3-74 was something else. Well, it was enchantment and magic; it was a spell; and enchantment magic and spell do not reveal, but,

on the contrary, addle the wits; I was (as I say) fed what (1) I would most likely believe, and (2) wanted to believe—a bad combination that does not lead to the truth—ie, to God.”

Phil’s Exegesis was a tiresome hypergraphical hell-chore by his own definition, and that is why I dreaded revisiting the material and setting off the infinite regress infinitely, again, and pouring over circular reasoning as no one has ever cycled through ideas and philosophies before. And, the point he made above was still not the end—because there was no end—but, for the moment, Phil reasoned he had not found God.

I might however, after all these years, change my position and say that Phil did, in fact, find God. What he found just wasn’t in the form or shape he expected. God revealed to him the ineffable and inexplicable, but Phil being Phil, and a writer, was determined to exegete that which cannot be named nor conveyed. During his dialectic (which he first defined as VALIS, later as his “process-bases of everything” and ultimately referred to as “God against Satan, and God’s final victory Foretold and Shown” a title for his Exegesis) gives us that famous quote, “**I thought**

**a thought and then an infinite regression of theses and counter-theses came into being. God said, “Here I am; here is infinity.”**



Whip out your copy of **the E**, or just use this handy link which will take you directly to the [Infinite Void](#) (page 639, compliments of Google books), but **YOU** will have to decide where and when to stop, because for Philip K. Dick, only death ended his obsessive quest for meaning and answers— his hell-chore.

The end? **NEVER!** I guess that’s what I get for dialing Zen.

Even after a month alone with **the E**, as we have taken to calling it in our Secret PKD Society (aka Facebook fan group), I have barely scratched the surface, or rather interior pages. Fortunately, several Dickheads, scholars and critics have examined it more thoroughly. So, thanks to our industrious new PKD fan site developer, Michael

Illustration © 2012 Nick Buchanan

Fisher, we offer up a few links to add to your endless reading, viewing and listening pleasure: **links, links, links** (as the Total Dickhead wanted for Christmas ;)

Michael found several sources for reviews, videos, podcasts and commentary about the **Exegesis**.  
<http://www.philipkdickfans.com/pkd-otaku/pkd-otaku-23-links/>

Due to the heft of **the E**, my favorite method of enjoying the **Exegesis** is as eBook on the Kindle. But if you don't have one or don't want to buy the rather pricey Kindle version, try using GoogleBooks on a PC, laptop, iPad, or whatever gadget you like. You can search for your own favorite glossary term, like "Anokhi" (which is in the glossary, but not in the actual text) or dialectic, Phil's favorite exegetical topic: <http://books.google.com/books?id=8KfEw-XXMxILC&pg=PA460&dq=philip+K+dick+dialectic&hl=en&sa=X&ei=aB7qTqnnDuLRiALzn9SOBA&ved=0CDUQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q&f=false>

Finally, I must say that Dickhead Gill was right early on, when he suggested the best way to read the **Exegesis** is to simply open it up and randomly pick a page. I believe some folks do this with the Bible, a technique called bibliomancy, a form of divination. The method of employing sacred books for 'magical medicine', for removing negative entities, or for divination is widespread in many religions of the world, according to the all-knowing Wikipedia (our modern day version of Phil's famous MacMillan's Encyclopedia of Philosophy.) Read more: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bibliomancy> After all, Phil used the I Ching to plot his Hugo Award-winning **Man in the High Castle**, so I think he would enjoy it if we tried some good old bibliomancy with the hefty physical edition of his **Exegesis**.

As for me, time to get back to the Buddhist retreat. "The sky would fade, the twilight would become darkness, but the **Exegesis**, I mean Glimmung, would blaze on, as if burning out the impurities of everything and everyone around him."

Dialing Zen and above quote compliments of PKD and **Galactic Pot-Healer**.

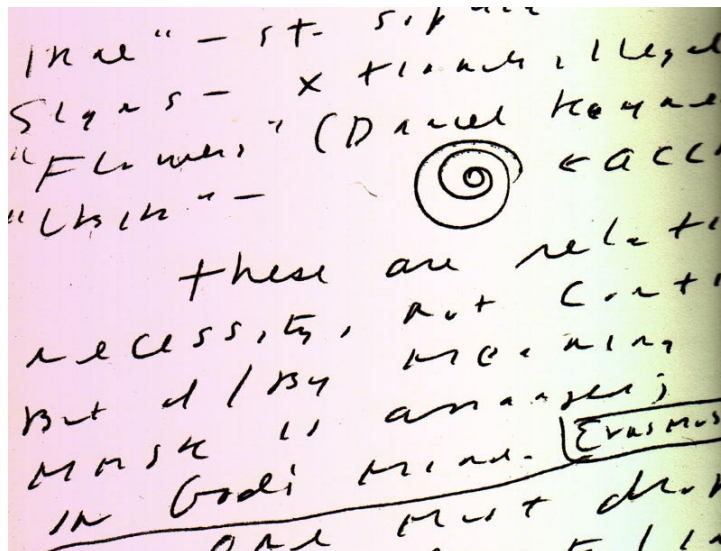
\*\*\*\*\*

\*Footnote: Like Phil, Lama Yeshe died much too young. Perhaps both of them just burnt out. Something I hope to avoid. WARNING: too much **Exegesis** (and Tantra) can be dangerous to your health. And, Buddhist love to use antidotes... you already know the best one, right? **UBIK** spray! Take a shot, NOW!

\*\*Second Footnote: No I am not actually going to insert Pamela Jackson's half-page annotation here. For that, you will have to look it up.

**My own Endnote/annotation:** Yes, after all that analysis, I am glad the **Exegesis** is available. Those who think Philip K. Dick went "round the bend" in his final years (as Brian Aldiss called it) probably won't buy or read it, but scholars and the curious will dip in and out and SEE the extent of Phil's obsession with 2-3-74.

No one was more anxious to get her hands on this material than me. But, I must confess, that was sixteen years ago. I would have inhaled the full 8-thousand page file cabinet back then, and viewed this mere one-thousand page abridged tome a snack, burped and had much more insight for my novel. But, enough is enough and I for one am no longer clamoring to the put the remaining seven thousand pages online—even though I feel certain some will. Knock yourselves out.



ej "jami" Morgan is the author of **A Kindred Spirit**, a novel, which is reviewed (yet again, she blushes) here in Otaku 23. She also released a 20th Anniversary eBook Edition of a booklet she "co-created" in 1991, called **Beyond the GodForce** (released 11.11.11, to be exact.) "That book deals with many of the same **Exegesis** quandaries, but in 60 pages without the infinite regress," she quips. "Yes, just like Phil, I can speak in the third person about myself and my writing." ; ) Jami mostly resides in Albuquerque, NM, "phasing in and out."

Jami is also working on another book, that she calls a "follow-up of sorts" to her novel, but she says it's non-fiction. **Vision: Seeing Clearly** will consist of essays on topics like Buddhism, Gnosticism, Shamanic journeying, ancient aliens, and other intriguing subjects from her novel. We wish you luck on that project, and please keep us informed.



## A SCANNER DARKLY: A Slice In Time

By Lord Running Clam

© December 2011

By way of introduction I am working my way through an indexing project on **THE SELECTED LETTERS OF PKD: 1974** as I write this article on **A SCANNER DARKLY**. The volume of Dick's letters from 1974 deals mostly with **FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID**, the first edition of which came out from Doubleday in February 1974. Of course, there's lots of fascinating information and comments on other novels and stories but **FLOW MY TEARS** dominates the content novel-wise.

**FLOW MY TEARS** was the novel that precipitated PKD's financial actions against Doubleday; this volume of letters is full of remarks, snarks and demands by Dick of Scott Meredith, his literary agent for 22 years, to give him a good accounting of sales of **FLOW MY TEARS**. He also initiates investigations of other publishers, particularly Ace Books. He believes he is being ripped off and at one point fires his agent. But when he gets a check for \$4000 in back royalties he simmers down a bit and stays on with the Scott Meredith Literary Agency.

It is worth noting that it is in SL 74 that PKD contacts the FBI and informs on Stanislaw Lem, Peter Fitting, and others. His paranoia extends to Doubleday's inexplicable misplacement of 2,500 copies of **FLOW MY TEARS**: only two months after publication the book is unavailable although PKD believes demand is high due to the upcoming Nebula Awards. **FLOW MY TEARS** is a nominee. Toss in the facts that the US Army bought 232 copies of **FLOW MY TEARS**, the break-ins of his house, mysterious letters arriving from behind the Iron Curtain, and that President Nixon has just been impeached and we can see where PKD was a little concerned about the state of affairs. Indeed, he expresses great shame at Nixon's actions and investigates moving to Australia.

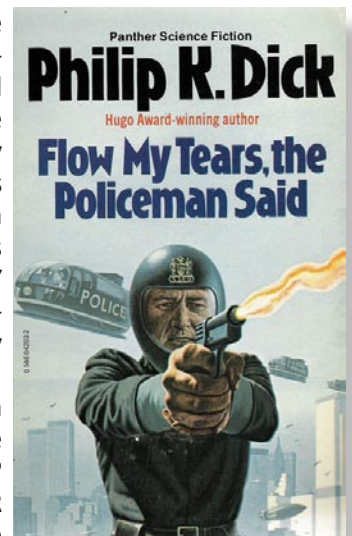
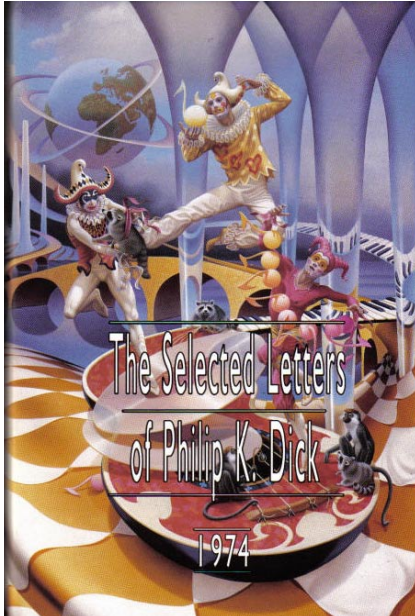
1974 was a time of great change. Politically Watergate dominated public consciousness, the war in Vietnam was over and people were dancing in the streets. The youthful zeitgeist was that we had won a great victory in ousting

the hated Tricky Dick Nixon and a new sense of freedom was in the air now that he was gone and the war was over. Of course, that didn't last long.

PKD in his letters openly wondered about the affects **FLOW MY TEARS** had on the political authorities. He felt justified in his paranoia, what with his safe being blown open a couple years earlier, Nixon's enemies list, the content of the novel which deals with a police state in America and all these Communists wanting to visit him and even lure him to Poland! With his letters to the FBI, troubling as they may be, I think he was covering his ass somewhat. Plus he was thinking of his next novel, already written in draft and due out in 1975: **A SCANNER DARKLY**.

Doubleday had bought **A SCANNER DARKLY** in 1973 but it was not published until 1977. Philip K. Dick caused the delay by citing new psychological research that affected the content of the novel and that he would have to rewrite it. It wasn't until 1976 that he sent the final manuscript off to Doubleday. In **SELECTED LETTERS: 1974** Dick doesn't include **A SCANNER DARKLY** in his musings. Perhaps he was happy to postpone the novel until the political situation settled down. For **A SCANNER DARKLY**, like **FLOW MY TEARS**, is an equally savage indictment of Police State mentality. In **FLOW MY TEARS** Dick writes things at one remove - Jason Taverner, the protagonist, is tossed into some awful alternate world. But in **A SCANNER DARKLY** the world of early-70s America is only thinly disguised. By the time PKD does the final draft of the novel he has covered his ass some more. It is an "anti-dope" novel that will hopefully open the eyes of anyone reading it to the dangers of drugs. PKD repeats this stance on several occasions. I cannot disagree with this view but will say that **A SCANNER DARKLY** is equally about the Nixonian repression in early-1970s America. Like **FLOW MY TEARS** it presents an oppressive, Nazi-like society ruled by the police.

But what is the truth of the matter? What was life like in early-1970s America? And how does **A SCANNER DARKLY** present it? I've wanted to ask these questions of **A SCANNER DARKLY** for a long time because here we are now in 2011 and 1971 is 40 years in the past. I've read a lot of comments on **A SCANNER DARKLY** over the years and have made a few myself, but what I've noticed about more recent comments is that they see the world of **A SCANNER DARKLY** as a fictional creation and stress



the anti-drug angle. There seems to be little realization of historical reality and this is due, I believe, to the fact that these writers are young; they either weren't alive in 1971 or were puking in their mother's arms. So let's look at how it was back then, back when the hippies were getting their heads bashed in and Nixon was trashing the Constitution.

Those of us who came of age at that time each have our memories, what follows are mine.

I happened to immigrate to America in 1971. I was 20 years old and an English hippie although it wasn't until I got to the States that I started smoking marijuana. Smoking pot practically defined hippie and the world was divided into those who did and those who didn't. In 1972 I joined the US Military for mixed reasons: I wanted to do my duty to my new country but I had been reading a lot of hippie and anarchist stuff and also thought I would be a true revolutionary and fight the system from within – as urged by, for instance, Abbie Hoffman. So I joined the Air Force and after training was stationed in Indiana. It could've been worse, they could've sent me to Vietnam. In Indiana I settled into the barracks life. I worked all day and when I wasn't working I was smoking dope, popping pills, drinking and chasing girls – this is what half the airmen were doing then. The other half were 'straight' and avoided by us stoners. Incidentally, Bruce Gillespie notes that **A SCANNER DARKLY** is an enclosed world that excludes 'straights' and I add that the characters in the novel – and we who lived back then – existed inside the world of the straights (those who didn't smoke the demon weed) and who were more powerful than us. Just as in **A SCANNER DARKLY** Bob Arctor and his friends live inside the spying eyes of the police. To pursue our righteous action of smoking dope and taking random drugs as was our hippie duty we were in a constant sub-war with the straights, most heavily represented by the military police and local authorities. Like the characters in **A SCANNER DARKLY** our lives revolved around drugs, chiefly marijuana. We were always out looking for a supply, used code words when

we talked about it, which was often, and were completely paranoid about getting busted. In the military back then getting busted for smoking pot could end you up in Leavenworth making little rocks out of big ones for ten years. In many ways life on the air base was schizophrenic. Here

we all were, shorthaired bastions of the establishment secretly living a double life as undercover hippies.

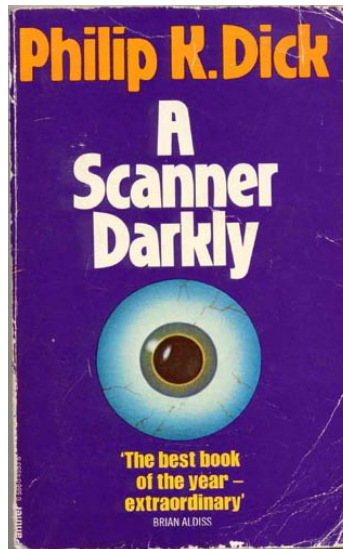
We fought small battles within the military mostly undermining the established ways of doing things, we pushed the limits of freedom within the military society and like our hippie brothers and sisters on the outside we were forcing changes. But paranoia was our constant companion. Every time we drove off base past the military police guards we feared getting pulled over, and when we came back, usually loaded down with a fresh supply of weed, we feared getting busted even more. But, like I say, it was a schizophrenic place. We feared the MPs but the top floor of our barracks was the MP floor where all the single airmen lived, and when they

weren't on duty they were smoking dope with us in our little rooms or hiding out on the base somewhere smoking even more.

The base authorities dimly realized something was going on and used many tactics to bust us: Lightning searches at midnight, German shepherd dogs sniffing through the barracks (we forestalled these, though, by sprinkling ground pepper in the carpets and laughing quietly as they sneezed outside our doors), informers - narks as we called them, threats and intimidation. All the usual police tactics of oppression.

Anyway, the situation was no better on the outside, our brethren were fighting in the streets, rotting in jails and dying in Vietnam. The point I'm making here is that in **A SCANNER DARKLY** Philip K.

Dick caught the times, the paranoia, the drugs, the police oppression perfectly. This is not some dispassionately written novel dashed off to make a few bucks from Doubleday but a ringing indictment of American society in the early 70s. It is barely fiction. When I first read **A SCANNER**



*I say to Tom Wolfe, take off your ice-cream suit, get out of your penthouse apartment in New York, set aside your Ivy League education and read **A SCANNER DARKLY**.*

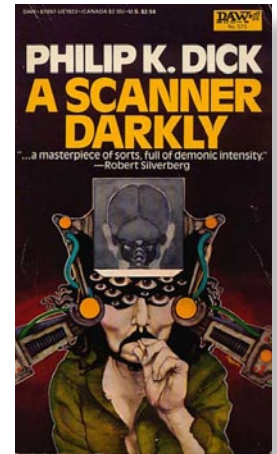


**DARKLY** – my second PKD novel after finding **EYE IN THE SKY** in 1984, I was blown away by how PKD had written my life: not in details but in essence, the essence of paranoia brought on by oppression. The life of constant fear and the senseless though somehow revolutionary pursuit of getting high. This was a time of civil war and not a matter of effete intellectuals and dirty hippies sitting around getting high and spouting revolution. We were at war and our drug use was a weapon we used with abandon. Like Bob Arctor's brain society was split in two. Perhaps we were fools then to think we could win this social war, that peace and love would win in the end. Undoubtedly we made some changes but we were also naïve to think that we could compete with the authorities on an even field. As PKD writes in **A SCANNER DARKLY** the authorities are massive, impersonal and uncaring. They used Bob Arctor to the very last drop of his being; they used him up and discarded him. Oh, sure, they had the noble goal of eliminating a deadly drug from society but look at what they had to become to do it: robots, machines just following orders, doing their jobs. Good Germans. And I say good Germans because in Nazi times in Germany under Hitler this exact same thing went on with their treatment of the Jews and undesirables. The treatment of Arctor by the police in **A SCANNER DARKLY** is on a par with the medical experiments conducted by the Nazis. Philip K. Dick portrays a Nazi society coming into existence in the United States. Let us keep this foremost in our minds when we discuss this novel. Anti drugs, sure, but equally anti-authoritarian. For one who lived those times **A SCANNER DARKLY** is the Truth.

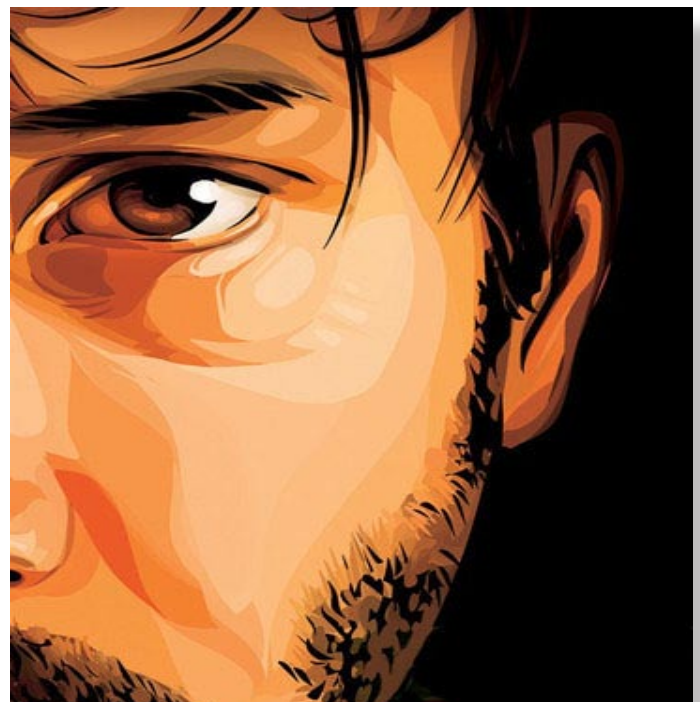
I've complained before about a remark Tom Wolfe made about the hippies; he asks where are the great hippie novelists? Well, I say to Mr. Wolfe, take off your ice-cream suit, get out of your penthouse apartment in New York, set aside your Ivy League education and read **A SCANNER DARKLY**. Even an intellectual snob and culture vulture like you will have to admit that not only is **A SCANNER DARKLY** a great hippie novel it is a great novel that relegates much of what you might consider to be great writing to the dustbin of literary history. Philip K. Dick himself called **A SCANNER DARKLY** a masterpiece and who can disagree? And on what grounds? Bah! We're supposed to read Truman Capote and Tom Wolfe and their ilk and be astonished at their brilliance and their elegant turn of phrase, their 'style' which, to me, is like reading their view of the world: one of unconscious superiority, privilege and trust funds. Emasculated garbage in my opinion. Philip K. Dick with **A SCANNER DARKLY** alone crushes this outdated mentality. When you consider his other novels, including **FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID**, we can see why the books of these so-called modern novelists are gathering dust on the shelves of the used bookstores while nary an edition of Philip K. Dick can be found. Exposed as self-involved

bourgeois hackwork written under the false consciousness of capitalism these obliterated novels championed by the New York literary establishment have little to do with modern political consciousness, they're irrelevant while the novels of Philip K. Dick define our present times and are central to the ideological battles of today.

Remember always that **A SCANNER DARKLY** is a novel of political truth that captures a slice of time in America that only those who lived through it can truly appreciate. Do not go off making comments about drugs and dissociation and facile criticisms of the novel, go back to the early 1970s, put yourself there under the very real scanners of an incipient police state. And when you've finished reading **A SCANNER DARKLY** take a look out your windows and note the cameras recording your every move. Have things changed? Are the times better now? Or worse? Wonder about that and then, as Ted Sturgeon said, buy **FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID** and brace yourself.



References: **The Bleakest Book I've Ever Read: Philip K. Dick's A SCANNER DARKLY** by Bruce Gillespie, 2005. Available as a PDF download at <http://efanzines.com/SFC/ScratchPad/scrat060.pdf>



From the motion picture **A Scanner Darkly** 2006 - Richard Linklater

## THE SELECTED LETTERS OF PHILIP K. DICK: 1974

Summary By Dave Hyde, © December 2011

Reading the letters Philip K. Dick wrote in 1974 is something akin to reading the old love-letters of one's spouse – to someone else! Fascinating, informative, insightful yet excruciatingly painful. Some things you just don't want to know. But I've just spent several weeks reading these letters – some of them over and over - to create a detailed index of their contents as part of a complete index to all the letters that PKD wrote in his lifetime – a project initiated in 2011 by PKD fan Frank Hollander. Fortunately, most of these letters have been collected into the several volumes of **THE SELECTED LETTERS OF PHILIP K. DICK**, published by Underwood-Miller Press and, later, Underwood Books. The 1974 volume was the first of these to be published, appearing in a now valuable collector's edition in 1991.

In 1974 Philip K. Dick, as evidenced by these letters, was concerned with a handful of main topics:

- His family and health. Particularly his lack of contact with his daughters, Isa and Laura.

- The availability and sales of his novel **FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID**.

- A wayward argument with Polish science fiction writer Stanislaw Lem over payments on the Polish edition of **UBIK** – which involved PKD contacting the FBI.

- His visionary experiences and dreams beginning in February and continuing throughout the year. His interpretations of these experiences often relate to his friend, the late Bishop James Pike. Speculation on **UBIK** abounds.

- Contacts with agents, editors and publishers regarding his novels **FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID** and **A SCANNER DARKLY**, and the reprinting of others of his novels. In a contretemps with the Scott Meredith Literary Agency (SMLA) he briefly sought other literary representation due to his disagreement with the SMLA over past royalties due him and the perceived lack of support from the agency.

- Letters to Claudia Bush - a graduate student at Idaho State University, expressing his dreams and visions and his many interpretations thereof. These comprise the longest letters in the book.

- Reviews, interviews, and invitations relating to his writing career.

- Dealings later in the year with Hollywood for a script of **DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?** and an independent movie production of **UBIK** - PKD would write the screenplay.

Let's go quickly through the months.

In **January** he wrote five letters, two of these are inconsequential, but at the

end of the month he notes publication of **FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID** from Doubleday & Co. and an interview in the London Sunday Telegraph. He gives credit to Brian Aldiss for his assistance in the British publication of **MARTIAN TIME-SLIP**. The final letter of the month is to his father and PKD is pleased with the publication of **FMTTPS**. All is well with his wife Tessa and baby Christopher.

Most of the sixteen **February** letters are to fellow writers (Ursula K. LeGuin, John Brunner, Robert Heinlein, Philip Jose Farmer, Ron Goulart) and a few to family and friends.

The month begins with him complaining about a toothache and the gasoline crisis. He mentions the December interview in *Vertex* magazine and another short interview in the high school publication *Voice*. The big news of the month is the return of Pinky, his cat, after a disappearance of five months. He notes upcoming reissues of several of his novels and an interview for French TV. His letters this month usually mention publication of **FMTTPS** and the British edition of **MTS**. He is also pleased to announce that Ursula K. LeGuin has nominated **FMTTPS** for the Nebula Award.





In a Feb 8th letter to Doubleday editor Diane Cleaver he talks about the plot of **A SCANNER DARKLY** and that he will have to postpone publication of the novel until the next year due to new scientific research requiring him to do a rewrite. Later in the year, however, he will wield **ASD** as a bargaining tool against Doubleday as he tries to get a larger advance payment; and he also tries to shop the novel around to other publishers.

On the 19th we find that his short story, “**The Pre-Persons**” is close to publication, later in the year this story will feature again when reader criticism arrives.

The name of Stanislaw Lem first occurs on the 24th in a letter to Philip Jose Farmer and the month ends with letters to his daughter, Laura, and his father and step-mother, Edgar and Gertrude Dick.

PKD wrote sixteen letters in **March** 1974. In this month we find that he is separated from his daughter, Isa (Isolde Hackett). Early in the month he writes about the break-ins to his house in 1971 and 1972. In a March 8th letter to Henry Ludmer, an agent at the SMLA, he includes signed contracts for the sale of **MARTIAN TIME-SLIP** to Eyre-Methuen Publishers in the UK. In this same letter he hits hard at Stanislaw Lem and the Polish methods of royalty payments – or lack thereof. A footnote by Paul Williams, editor of this 1974 volume of letters, describes PKD’s ‘delusions’ about Lem and a Communist Bloc conspiracy to lure PKD behind the Iron Curtain.

In a letter to Diane Cleaver on the 10th he declines a May deadline for **ASD** and proposes an extension until the end of the year. He reports on the positive feedback he’s gotten on **FMTTPS** and asks Cleaver how the novel is doing sales-wise. On this same day he also wrote to Charles Platt, then an editor at Avon Books, to try to interest him in republishing **MARTIAN TIME-SLIP** once, and if, PKD gets title reversion. He talks actual monetary figures (not that he’s hinting or anything) of \$9,500 he got from the paperback sale of **DADOES** to Signet Books and a \$10,000 top bid for **UBIK**. All in all he wrote four letters on the 10th, all of them business related, the last a response to an invitation to speak at a science fiction convention.

The *Vertex* and *Voice* interviews feature in the month’s letters and to them is added the French TV interview and the fact that the BBC dropped an interview with him for their Omnibus program.

A long letter to his daughter, Laura, sympathizes with her troubles at school and notes that **FMTTPS** sold to a minor publisher in France.

The first of his letters to the FBI this year came on

the 20th. In this he reports on Stanislaw Lem, the Russian publication *Ogonek*, and a letter he received from Estonia. It is in this letter that we find first mention of the ‘Xerox Letter’ and the paranoia it caused in PKD.

In a letter to his father we discover that **FMTTPS** has sold almost 5,000 copies of the first edition and that Doubleday is pressuring him for his next novel – **A SCANNER DARKLY**.

Late in the month he writes to the child support division of San Rafael to inquire about visitation rights with his daughter Isa. The last letter of the month is to comment on an article in a recent *Psychology Today*.

In **April** 1974 PKD hit his stride in letter writing, composing 26 missives to all and sundry, including his first of many to Claudia Bush. Letters to the FBI dominate the month; in these PKD writes to FBI agent William A. Sullivan detailing further the iniquities of Stanislaw Lem and the appearance of French Marxist literary critics on the horizon. PKD is nervous as it may be that Lem himself will arrive in the U. S. in the next month. PKD also wrote to scientists in Leningrad as a ruse to see what response he would get. He sends a copy of the letter to the FBI. In his mind, at least, PKD links a letter from a Martin Roogna who resides in Estonia with the supposed communist conspiracy. This letter PKD had earlier sent to the FBI. However, in his reply to Roogna, PKD encloses a photograph and talks of the praise Lem has heaped on him. He gives monetary details on sales of editions of **THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE**. He closes the letter with a request for publishers’ addresses in the USSR and that Roogna send him any editions of his books he finds there.

The more he wrote to FBI agent Sullivan the more he seemed to relax and in a letter dated April 20th he starts to sound more and more like a crank as he speculates about hidden codes in his correspondence and ‘disinhibiting’ stimuli that failed to affect him. He talks about his childhood where he sees other Communist influences at work. After this, and no doubt filled with patriotic fervor after opening up to the FBI, PKD dashes off a note to President Richard Nixon in which he sympathizes with his plight and wishes him a good night’s sleep.

His first letter to Claudia Bush on April 4th (the first of 36 he will write in the year) is brief, although that would change later, and informs her he is going to the hospital for hypertension and suggests she read the *Vertex* interview.

Other notable letters in April begin the corre-

“These letters ... constitute a harrowing literary journey—one which can never entirely be separated from the corpus of Philip K. Dick’s fiction. . . . Illuminating and embarrassing, brilliant and pathetic, the letters of Philip K. Dick are the real thing.”

—William Gibson, from the Introduction

spondence between Dick and the United States Information Agency (USIA). In a facile turnabout PKD now uses Stanislaw Lem and the *Ogonek* printing to boost his professional standing as an internationally known writer. He also writes about the French TV interview and international editions of his books and asks what he can do for the USIA.

In a 3-page letter to Senator Lowell Weicker mid-month PKD complains about the treatment of social dissidents in the USA, mentions his signing the 1969 *Ramparts* anti-tax statement and the break-ins to his house, closing with a comparison of his situation and that of other dissidents to the plight of Alexandr Solzhenitsyn in the USSR.

Also mid-month he reads a rebuttal by Poul Anderson in *Vertex* to Joanna Russ's feminist response to PKD's short story "**The Pre-Persons**". Russ finds the short story objectionable and disagrees with Dick's stance on abortion. A letter PKD wrote to Russ later in the year was returned to him unopened.

Perhaps the first real mention of PKD's 'visionary experiences' is found in a letter to Ursula K. LeGuin on the 14th. He writes that he feels we are in Rome with the early Christians fighting the Roman Empire and relates this notion to **FMTTPS**.

After talking with his friend and fellow sf writer, Philip Jose Farmer, Dick writes a rough draft of a story to be called "A Man For No Countries" with the byline of Hawthorne Abendsen – a main character in his novel **THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE**.

The next letter to Claudia Bush – now 2 ½ pages long – notes that he is out of the hospital and will help her on her thesis on PKD. He lists sources for her to read and encloses a short biography. As in many of his letters he mentions the current state of his literary affairs: interviews, magazine appearances, speeches and other literary popups. He gives her a list of his favorites of his own books (**MTS**, **WCBY**, **FMTTPS**, **DRB**, **TMITHC**...) and refers her to academics that he knows. He closes by giving

her his phone number.

In a letter to the Rev. John W. Siebert on the 21st PKD writes about **FMTTPS** and the name 'Felix' occurring in one of his dreams. The Roman Empire enters into things and the purpose of this letter is to bring **FMTTPS** to the attention of the Roman Catholic Church. He repeats this information in a letter to Ursula K. LeGuin two days later. In a letter to his agent, Scott Meredith, PKD wonders why booksellers are unable to order copies of **FMTTPS** and gives sales figures he got from Diane Cleaver at Doubleday: the March figures give 4,750 copies sold from a print run of 7,500, but 2,500 copies are unaccounted for. PKD

had hoped to meet Cleaver at the Nebula Awards the next day but due to doctor's advice he is sending his wife, Tessa, instead. He wants Meredith to pressure Doubleday

for a second edition of **FMTTPS**. This letter opens up a can of worms for Meredith, Doubleday and Philip K. Dick in that PKD becomes disaffected with his agent and Doubleday. As the year progresses his complaints grow more vociferous and eventually cause a break between Dick and the SMLA. He later refers to Doubleday & Co. as 'Dogshit Books'. Further letters in the month to SMLA agent Henry Ludmer and Diane Cleaver at Doubleday & Co. expand our knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the publication of **FMTTPS**.

A notable letter is one to Robert Heinlein in which

PKD thanks Heinlein for his graciousness when meeting Tessa at the Nebula Awards ceremony.

**May** 1974 begins with PKD writing another letter to the FBI. This is the 65th letter he has written so far in the year. In it he reports on an impending visit from Peter Fitting and a cohort of

Marxist critics. If he doesn't hear from the FBI he will not meet with this group. The start of the rift with the SMLA is found in a May 2nd letter to Scott Meredith in which he regrets that Meredith has not sent PKD the letters from Lem he requested. Once again he slams Lem. He has contacted the Science Fiction Writers Association (SFWA) and

July 5, 1974

Dear Claudia,

Since I last wrote you (sending on the 7 page letter to Peter Fitting plus the 2 page letter to you) I have continued to have the same dream again and again which I mentioned: a vast and important book held up before me which I should read. Yesterday, for example, since Tessa and Christopher had gone off on a picnic, I took several naps and had four dreams in which printed matter appeared, two of them involving books.

For three months, virtually every night, I've had these dreams involving written material. And within the last few days it became obvious that a specific book was indicated. That the ultimate pur-

**He later refers to  
Doubleday & Co. as  
'Dogshit Books'**



involves them in his fight with Lem over royalties on the Polish edition of *UBIK*. On this same day he writes to literary agent Robert P. Mills and looks forward to their 'business relationship'.

It seems it only took a couple of weeks for PKD to be completely disaffected with President Nixon. He writes the president a letter full of contempt and is so disgusted with the president's actions that he feels he – PKD – must leave the country in shame.

He again writes to Diane Cleaver inquiring about the unavailability of copies of **FMTTPS** – he has been invited to be Guest of Honor at a local sf convention but the organizers can find no copies of his recent Doubleday novel. Immediately following this letter he writes to his agent Scott Meredith and bemoans the **FMTTPS** situation more belligerently: the John W. Campbell Memorial Awards are coming up but how can the awards committee get copies? Doubleday better print another edition soon.

This situation with **FMTTPS** must've festered in PKD's mind as, only two days later, on the 4th, he writes Meredith and fires him as his agent. The following day he again writes to Meredith a letter that begins conciliatory enough but ends with PKD threatening Meredith with future audits.

He then writes to the principal of a local high school where he, together with Ray Bradbury, Norman Spinrad, A. E. Van Vogt and Theodore Sturgeon, addressed the students. Compliments for all concerned. This uplifting experience became a staple in his subsequent letters; he'd enjoyed himself and wanted to tell everyone.

It's only the 5th of May but PKD has already written fourteen letters, including to the President, a Congressman, a Senator and *The Wall Street Journal*. But his dander was up against Doubleday & Co. In a May 7th letter to Doubleday editor Lawrence Ashmead, he parodies Doubleday as 'Dogshit Books' and suggests that they sold the missing copies of **FMTTPS** to a chain store and then took them back as unsold – where are the missing copies of **FMTTPS**?

He again writes to agent Sullivan at the FBI and informs them that he must meet the Fitting group but will audio record their conversation. And after dashing off a short note to Willi Brandt, the Chancellor of West Germany, he moves into high gear on the 8th (on this day he wrote eight letters – the most any day this month).

A publisher of paperback editions of his novels, Signet Books, then came into his sights. He wrote them

politely inquiring about sales figures and royalties then tries to interest them in bidding on paperback rights for **FMTTPS**.

Diane Cleaver at Doubleday has written him and he is happy to be getting copies of **FMTTPS** but thinks he will make little profit on the deal for a paperback edition with DAW Books. Therefore he feels there is little point in completing **A SCANNER DARKLY** for no money. On this day he also contacts the Robert P. Mills Agency and tells Mills he's ending his contract with the SMLA. He proposes a new novel for Mills to sell and notes he has a short story done

in rough. The last two letters of the day are to his friends Philip Jose Farmer and Ursula K. LeGuin; in these he repeats the firing of his agent, the auditing of Dogshit Books and how upset he is that Dogshit Books sold paperback rights to DAW Books for only \$2,500. Notes a new paperback edition of **TMITHC** from Berkley Books.

After festering overnight, the next day PKD fires a short note off to Cleaver at Doubleday and demands a list of all bidders and their bids on paperback rights to **FMTTPS**. His


letter to Claudia Bush this day delves into his dreams.

A long letter to Robert and Virginia Heinlein on the 10th talks about **TMITHC** and likens Robert Heinlein to Hawthorne Abendsen.

All this complaining must've done some good as on the 12th we see PKD thanking Scott Meredith for a \$2,500 check for back royalties due on sales of eight books published by Ace Books. However, he notes that Ace published seventeen books and he expects more payments. PKD will stay with the SMLA if they continue to squeeze Ace Books and if they abrogate the Doubleday – DAW paperback sale of **FMTTPS**: The bid of \$2,500 is unacceptable and PKD wants something greater than \$5,000. Further letters over the next few days give examples of Ace Books editions on which he has no sales figures or royalty statements. And what about UK royalties? The last of this flurry of letters to Meredith ends with PKD planning on going to New York with the SFWA grievance committee and his getting an independent accounting of the Doubleday – DAW sale.

In mid-month we find him again writing to the FBI: the 'Fitting group' has come and gone and he has audio-tape of their conversation: they wanted him to endorse a Marxist view of his writing. He blames damage to his car on this group.

Unfortunately, it looks like most of the \$2,500 PKD had just received from Meredith had to go to pay his

b sent it to me but couldn't.  
Harding.  
  
Cordially,  
  
Phil Dick  
  
goes to show you that you should  
y. Or else it shows that the  
or whatever can put you on. A  
read the book I'll mail it to you.

last-year’s takes: over \$1400 of it going to the IRS and the state of California.

He then goes at Scott Meredith again with more facts and figures on his Ace Books editions .He thinks Ace may owe him up to \$125,000 in back royalties. He again mentions going to New York with the SFWA and notes that token payments will not wash. In between letters to Meredith PKD also wrote to Henry Ludmer – an agent at the SMLA dealing with foreign sales of PKD’s work – thanking him for UK sale of **NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR** to Granada Books, yet wondering when he can expect first payments for **MTS** and **FMTTPS**.

In letters to his attorney PKD complains about not seeing his daughter, Isa, since 1971 and asks for help. And in a letter to former wife, Anne, and his daughter, Laura, he invites Laura to visit him that summer – PKD will cover the costs.

More badgering of Scott Meredith follows re the Ace Books situation and problems with Putnam’s Press and Berkley Books editions of **THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE**. This continuous barrage of letters resulted in one from Meredith in reply, arriving the 28th May. PKD will go along with Meredith on his Doubleday and Ace Books explanations but wants him to keep on at Doubleday and Ace for more royalties. He toots his own horn a bit by mentioning various interviews, articles and remarks that show PKD as a popular international science fiction writer.

A last letter to the FBI this month encloses the letter PKD got from Estonia and one from Fred Pohl.

Towards the end of the month PKD compliments *Foundation* editor, Peter Nicholls, and accepts his invitation to go to England to speak there. He writes the editor of *Psychology Today* and thanks them for the review of **FMTTPS**. He then contacts Ashmead at Doubleday & Co. and asks for the latest sales figures on **FMTTPS**. The month ends with a last letter to Meredith inquiring when and how much he will get from Ace Books.

We can see from the table below that Philip K. Dick was a constant letter writer. Nowadays few people write letters but I can attest that even dashing them off, as PKD seems to have done, takes a lot of time. But, then again, he was a writer and if not writing stories he was writing letters – a total of 61 in May.

After this exhausting survey of May 1974 we move into **June**. This month is a little easier on the indexer as

he only wrote twenty letters, starting with three straight to his lawyer having to do with custody and visitation of his daughter, Isa. On the 8th he thanks editors Ed Ferman and Barry Malzberg for a pre-publication copy of their collection *FINAL STAGE* containing his short story “**A Little Something For Us Tempunauts**”.

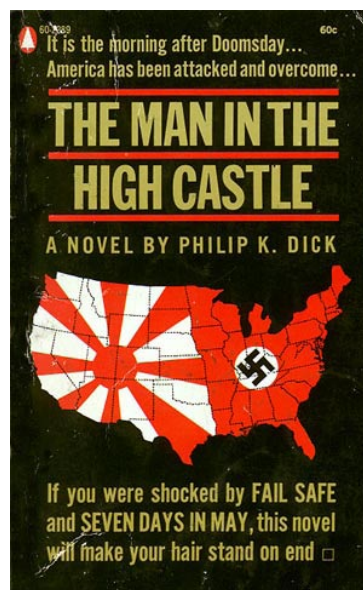
A ten-day gap between 11th and 21st June ended with a letter to Scott Meredith in which he informs his agent that he wants to buy back rights to his novel **A SCANNER DARKLY**. He expects Meredith to resell the novel for a good price. In another letter to Meredith this same day he asks again about the money due him from Ace Books and asks if Stanislaw Lem published **UBIK** in Poland. He also

asks Meredith to contact Paul Williams and check on the publication progress of **CONFESSIONS OF A CRAP ARTIST**. And in a letter to his daughter, Laura, he notes that he is the number one US author in France and has some seventeen books published there.

On the 22nd June we find first contact between PKD and Jan-nick Storm, his Danish publisher. Then it’s back to Meredith: a June 24th letter once again saying that the \$2,400 payoff on his seventeen Ace Books is not enough and

that he still estimates Ace owes him\$125,000.

He writes letters to ex-wife Nancy and daughter Isa, enclosing photos and gifts and asking Isa to write to him while arguing with Nancy over her religious beliefs. And in a letter to his lawyer he asks if he can pursue legal action against the woman who supposedly stored his stuff, including important business papers, after he split with Nancy and sold his house in Santa Venetia in 1972. In a letter on the 27th he writes to his friend, Carol Carr, and fills her in on everything and notes that he has declined the invitation to speak at the nearby Westercon 9f



MAY 1974 LETTERS: Quantity per day

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
2	5	3	2	3	2	4	8	3	1	0	1	1	2	4	4	4	0	0	2	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	2	2	2



convention because of hypertension.

He next writes his mother and thanks her for the bunny she sent for baby Christopher.

In a 7-page letter on the 28th he writes to Peter Fitting and recalls their recent conversation when Fitting visited PKD at home. In this letter he opens up, somewhat surprisingly, to Fitting and goes into details about his dreams and visions of flash-cut abstract art images. We are being bombarded, he thinks, with information from space and the force, *Ubik*, comes to us from the future. He feels his novels are coming true and that the world resembles a PKD novel.

A letter to Claudia Bush goes into interpretations of **FMTTPS** and we note the first appearance of the title to his sequel to **TMITHC – VALISYSTEM A**. He encloses a Marxist paper on his work written by Stanislaw Lem and sees positiveness in Lem's essay, particularly his remarks on *UBIK*, although Lem's letter somehow feels wrong. He wonders why the Marxists latched on to *UBIK*.

**July** is another exhausting month with 42 letters written. He picks up the pace of his letters to Claudia Bush with eighteen to her during the month. These are some of the most trying letters to read as they are full of speculation about his dreams and visions of February and March 1974 and onwards. It is in these letters that PKD wonders at length about Russian ESP experiments, messages from space, and a recurring dream of a wise man holding up a big book of secrets that he cannot quite make out. He actually finds the book in his library only to discover that it is a biography of Warren G. Harding! Soon his letters to Bush explore ancient Greek and Roman mythology and history. Such figures as the Cyclops, the Sibyl at Cumae and Bishop Pike are involved and various religions from Zoroastrianism to Hinduism and the Essenes. These letters to Bush are mostly long and boring; PKD's relentless religious and philosophical speculation gives one the impression that his imagination is running wild as he desperately tries one explanation after another with each building on those that have gone before. But, this exploration of his visionary dreams – and they continue throughout the year – is important to us now as we try to determine the truth in these extraordinary events. It would have been of no concern if PKD had simply dismissed it all as just weird dreams to be mined for his stories; but he didn't, instead, as these letters show, he made his visions a central part of his intellectual life. Fans of PKD are well aware of his *Exegesis*, the million-word journal he wrote until the end of his life, that continues his speculation into these matters. From the small extracts we have seen published so far, we can see that



his ideas grew in sophistication the more time he spent thinking and writing about them. This is not the place to survey the *Exegesis*, indeed we cannot as it has yet to be published in full, but we note that it is in these letters to Claudia Bush that we find the beginnings of certain key notions which are found more fully-formed in his later writing: The Roman Empire, secret Christians, messages from space, movement through time, and how his stories presciently in hindsight interleave into it all. The *Exegesis* is to be published this year, 2011, and is eagerly awaited by the legions of PKD fans and scholars all over the world. No doubt it will be a fascinating and much-discussed volume but I must warn the reader that the *Exegesis* might seem like a million-word letter to Claudia Bush!

Setting the Bush letters aside we find PKD still battling his ex-wife, Nancy, over custody and visitation rights for his daughter, Isa. He has not seen her since 1971. He continues to write to agents, editors and publishers. At Doubleday a new editor has replaced Diane Cleaver – Lawrence Ashmead – but PKD's concerns remain the same: the small advance for *ASD* and his wish to buy it back. And in a letter to Charles Brown, editor of *Locus* magazine, he disagrees with a review of **FMTTPS** by Peter Fitting, he thinks Fitting did not read the whole novel and cannot take his conclusions seriously.

Another letter to Jannick Storm, his Danish translator, explains some colloquialisms in **FMTTPS** and makes some suggestions on how the novel should be translated.

PKD contacts the ACLU and relates the story of the 1971 break-in and asks if the ACLU can force the Marin County police to divulge the results of their investigation.

In a notable 7-page letter to Louise Zimmerman – a psychic he read of in a Brad Steiger book, PKD recaps his recent life and goes into details about his 2/3-74 experiences. It's all in this letter: whirling lights, abstract paintings, ESP, information from the stars, Bishop Pike, the Essenes, Qumran Scrolls and Cabalism. The interested reader is directed to this letter as a good summary of PKD's thinking to that date.

The penultimate letter of July 1974 is another to the FBI: he encloses a recent letter from Stanislaw Lem and comments on *Science Fiction Studies* and a Darko Suvin Afterword to Lem's novel *SOLARIS*.

In a letter to Claudia Bush on the 30th we find that his cat, Pinky, peed on him in bed and in the ensuing cleanup he broke a glass and cut his foot badly. Not only that, he dislocated his shoulder somehow and thinks the tutelary spirit has left him. He's in a miserable state. Tessa must help him write his letters.

Well, Philip K. Dick may've been depressed and

in pain due to his cut foot and dislocated shoulder but for the indexer this is a lucky break! He cannot crank out the letters like before in **August** and writes only five letters in the month, all one-half page or less in length.

He writes his Congressman and congratulates him on his Watergate stance and in a letter to the Los Angeles Times he suggests Nixon should give up his property and estates to atone for his actions.

In another example of two-facedness PKD writes to Darko Suvin and compliments him on his article on Lem's *SOLARIS* while enclosing a bibliography of his own works for Suvin's article on PKD to be published in *Science Fiction Studies*.

In a letter to Cathleen Jordan, an assistant at Doubleday & Co., he believes the SMLA holds rights to his short story "**Colony**" which is to be published in Brian Aldiss' anthology *SPACE OPERA*.

The final August letter to John Bush (no relation to Claudia) notes that PKD is working on **VALISYSTEM A**; he has cracked the code in ancient texts, the I Ching, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and this is the basis of the plot.

**September**, in which he wrote 27 letters despite a sore shoulder, opens with another letter to the FBI: PKD sends them communiqués from Darko Suvin, notes the influence of Science Fiction Studies and gives the Communist Party chain of command from Lem in Poland to three Marxists he mentions in the letter. He thinks the Party has penetrated the SFWA organization.

He next writes to Scott Meredith and notes that the SMLA controls rights to "**Colony**". He's not heard from Meredith since May and he left the SMLA on July 7th. However, due to talks with SMLA agent Henry Ludmer he may remain with the SMLA. He thinks the sales price on "**Colony**" is too low but thanks the agency for reselling **THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE** for reprint by Gollancz in England. He wants a rapprochement with the SMLA and states that J. P. Gorin, the would-be movie producer for **UBIK**, has sent money to the SMLA for movie rights.

PKD declines an invitation to be guest of honor at the 1977 World science fiction convention to be held in Canada.

He writes to president Gerald Ford and tells him to pardon the poor as well as the rich.

He's not been able to see Isa this summer but hopes to do so over the Christmas holidays. He pursues custody actions in letters to his lawyer and still wonders about the household possessions he lost in the break up with Nancy.

A brief letter on the 16th to the Rosicrucians includes a check for reading materials.

He's heard feedback that the Berkley Books paperback reissue of **TMITHC** is unavailable and he asks the SMLA to check out the situation.

He writes Cathleen Jordan at Doubleday on the 19th noting that the SMLA owns rights to material they have marketed. In this letter we discover that PKD himself will write the screenplay for the movie adaptation of **UBIK**. He asks Ms. Jordan for the address of Bishop Pike's widow, Diane.

PKD has found out that Ursula K. LeGuin has been invited to attend the same function in the UK that PKD has been invited to in the new year. He wants LeGuin to fly with him to England.

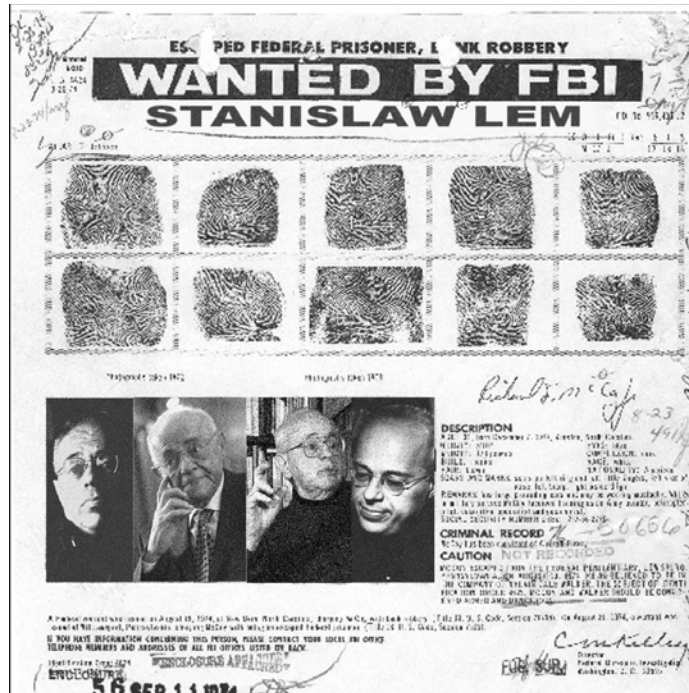
Joanna Russ has written to him and he thanks her for her letter on the 23rd. He's been getting hate mail

over his story "**The Pre-Persons**" and realizes Russ will not like the story. He mentions meeting an ex-soldier while in hospital and this man, an explosives expert, suggests that the break-in was the work of the government, brought about, perhaps, by something PKD has written.

Another letter on the 23rd to Malcolm Edwards in the UK equates the USA with the USSR as slave empires. He tells Edwards that *Rolling Stone* is sending Paul Williams to interview PKD. He's also starting on his screenplay for **UBIK**.

He reiterates the slave state empire notion in another letter to LeGuin and says that Tom Disch suggests that PKD was possessed by Elijah. It is in this letter to LeGuin on the 23rd that we find first mention of the pharmacy girl with the fish-sign necklace.

Yet another letter on the 23rd (the fourth) to Claudia Bush delves once more into **UBIK**. PKD has figured out that Runciter is Jesus, Buddha, etc. He brings up Plato's notion that we are living in a cave and that our world is somehow fake. He speculates on time-travel, the Essenes, the Qumran Scrolls and Elijah. The postscript refers to the impending *Rolling Stone* interview and that Paul Williams





is an old friend. It was Williams who gave a copy of **THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH** to Timothy Leary who then passed it on to John Lennon.

On the 25th in a letter to his mother we hear the sad news that Pinky has died but he got two new kittens.

He writes to Eyre Methuen publishers in England and thanks them for sending Brian Aldiss' Introduction to their edition of **MARTIAN TIME-SLIP**.

Obviously excited by the prospect of a movie version of **UBIK**, Dick contacts Universal Studios and asks if the actress Kay Lenz will be available for the lead female role. He notes that the **UBIK** screenplay is due in rough in January 1975.

In a letter to Claudia Bush he recaps the situation re his work: the **UBIK** screenplay; a movie option on **TTSOPE**; Berkley Books reprint of **TMITHC** has sold out and they will reprint; the upcoming *Rolling Stone* interview; UK editions of **TMITHC**; Frances Ford Coppola's interest in producing **UBIK**. He then returns to his dreams and suggests an alternate present is breaking into reality from outside of time. He tells Ms. Bush the story of meeting the explosives expert in the hospital and notes the number of Marxists flying in to talk to him about **UBIK**. He's read John Allegro's book **THE SACRED MUSHROOM AND THE CROSS** and realises that the strange rituals he's begun to perform are Essene mushroom rites.

A September 30th letter to Berkley Books says that ASD sold to Doubleday for \$2,500 but PKD wants to buy it back and asks if Berkley wants to make an offer on ASD. Then he asks for sales figures on the Berkley reissue of **TMITHC**. He again writes this day to the Rosicrucians and orders some books and supplies.

The last letter of the month is to Bruce Gillespie in Australia. In this letter he rants against Stanislaw Lem over the Polish edition of **UBIK**. He finds Lem's fiction dehumanizing and that Lem himself fits the android category.

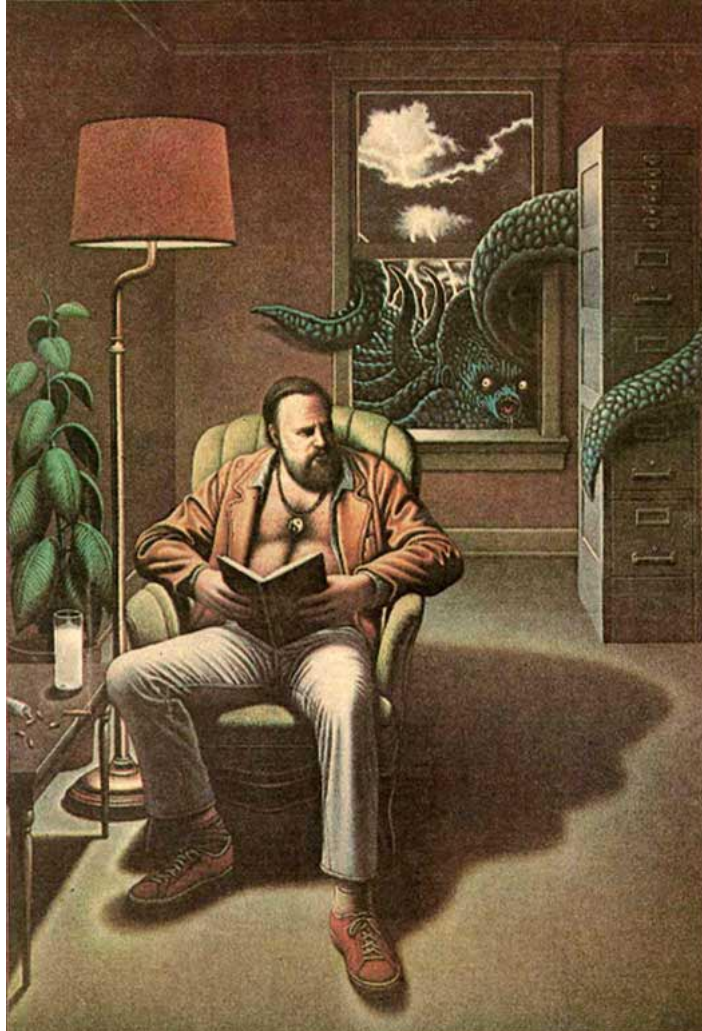
In the first letter of October we see that PKD must've found the address of actress Kay Lenz; he wants her to star in the **UBIK** movie.

A letter he wrote to Joanna Russ on the 3rd **October** is returned unopened. In it PKD states he is sorry for her hateful remarks on "**The Pre-Persons**" but thinks that such awakening of hate justifies the story. After writing this letter to Russ he writes to Mike Bailey, editor of *Vertex*, instructing him to publish the enclosed exchange of letters between he and Joanna Russ and the ensuing contretemps on his magazine.

At this later date we all know the importance of the 1975 *Rolling Stone* interview to our Fandom. On 5th October 1974 this interview had yet to occur; but in a letter of this date Dick compliments Paul Williams on his impending edition of **CONFESSIONS OF A CRAP ARTIST** (1975 Entwhistle Press) and returns the signed contract. That aside, it is in this letter that he briefly formulates the Platonic notion that we are all living in a cave and sometimes reality breaks

through. **UBIK** is true. This is a main idea of Dick's about his 2/3-74 experiences and to our later view it lies at the heart of his extended cosmology (or is that cosmogony?) and it includes the encompassing idea that **UBIK** is true which suggests that his other novels also are true. Obviously PKD was in full **UBIK** screenplay-writing mode when he wrote this – moving figures on a screen, but it would influence the *Rolling Stone* interview in ways he wanted it to go. I just wanted to note that because this volume of letters is full of insights into Dick's stories, ideas and methods and it is easy to get sidetracked by any number of them. Ahem.

In a letter to Claudia Bush mid-month PKD relates the tale of his lost love, Kathy; he's written her many despairing letters but has had no word from her. He notes that he hears a lot from God, Elijah and Bishop Pike but nothing from Kathy. He's just reread **UBIK** and sees his



G.K. Bellows' Illustration from Rolling Stone

recent dreams in the book. He tells Ms. Bush his Pinky dream. His farewell to Pinky is, for me, the most heart-rending moment in the book. He mentions talking to Timothy Leary on the phone and that John Lennon was reading **TTSOPE**.

For purposes of a comparison between **UBIK** and **UBIK: THE SCREENPLAY**, he notes the point at which he will change the ending of the novel for the screenplay and gives some details.

Another letter from this time to Tom Disch reveals the fact that baby Christopher needs minor surgery for a birth defect and he has had to postpone the *Rolling Stone* interview. He's also finished the **UBIK screenplay** early and given it to J. P. Gorin, the director. Apparently, Al Pacino is to play Joe Chip!

He's heard from Don Wollheim at DAW Books that **WE CAN BUILD YOU** is being reissued and is pleased with that, but he must decline his offer to write another book for DAW, maybe later.

On the 22nd we note PKD writing to Peter Nicholls in the UK and giving details of his speech "**Man, Android and Machine.**" He asks Nicholls to make travel arrangements for when PKD visits London in the new year.

Then a quick letter to Robert P. Mills, literary agent, to close the day wherein PKD is disappointed his plans for **A SCANNER DARKLY** fell through; he no longer has the money to buy it back due to medical costs. Nor is he making progress on **VALISYSTEM A**. He's also discovered that pretty much everything he's written is controlled by the SMLA and the **UBIK** screenplay and another novel are due them. He cannot change agents and must remain with the SMLA.

Next we find him complaining to Lee Harding, editor of the Australian anthology *BEYOND TOMORROW* (1976) that "**We Can Remember It For You Wholesale**" has been over-anthologized and he suggests "**The Computer**" for inclusion in this anthology. This would be done.

Once again he contacts his agent Henry Ludmer at the SMLA. He has received a screenplay for **DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?** from Herb Jaffe, Hollywood Producer, but thinks the script is no good. Strategizing re Hollywood follows and PKD closes by noting that J. P. Gorin has not contacted him in ten days and is probably shopping the **UBIK** script around. But by the next day (29th October) PKD has heard from Gorin and he writes Ludmer again. It looks like Francis Ford Coppola is interested in some way. Gorin asks for an extension of payment for the

screenplay. PKD asks if this is ok with the agency.

The disagreement with Joanna Russ flared up again with PKD writing to Mike Bailey and telling him that Russ had returned his letter and will not communicate with him until he changes his written ways. In the matter of returned letters Dick has also gotten one from Stanislaw Lem stating that he will not accept PKD's letters either. But the rough draft of the **UBIK screenplay** is done, he has a **DADOES** script to hand, and the *Rolling Stone* interview is imminent.

He writes to his friend, Jamis, on the 29th and tells her of family news and Hollywood doings. He's reading *THE LATE, GREAT PLANET EARTH* by Hal Lindsey and consigns it to the metaphorical garbage can.

He next writes to daughter Laura and sympathizes with her High School troubles. He catches her up on some of his news and hopes to see her when he is in the Bay area in December. Within this letter he writes that Robert Heinlein called him and doesn't sound too good, but that he offered to lend PKD money but he declined.

The last letter of October is to his mother and he fills her in on all the latest news. He will visit her in December.

It's back to business again in **November** 1974 with Philip K. Dick contacting Ace Books for reversion of the title to **DR. BLOODMONEY**. It's been out of print too long and he wants it back.

On the 3rd he writes Henry Ludmer and tells him of the four-day visit by Paul Williams. He thinks the *Rolling Stone* article will improve his public profile. After talking with Williams he will not sign the revised contract with Doubleday for **A SCANNER DARKLY** nor will he sell it to Berkley Books. Williams feels PKD is peaking at this time what with all the Hollywood activity and urges PKD to wait until after his *Rolling Stone* interview appears before publishing *ASD*. The day ends with a letter to Ursula LeGuin in which he thanks her for her comments published in *Vertex* but regrets they will be flying to London separately. He recommends a book by Maurice Bucke: *COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS* that PKD thinks describes his experiences exactly and talks about this book.

PKD reaches out to Herb Jaffe on the 6th offering to write the second draft of the **DADOES screenplay** and to arrange a meeting. This was done in a day or two, sort of, and PKD informs Henry Ludmer of what happened on the 9th: He was visited not by Herb but by Robert Jaffe and it was he who had written the **DADOES screenplay** and...



Photographs by kind permission © Tessa Dick

Phil, Christopher and Paul Williams 1974



it was a final script. It seemed to Dick that Jaffe himself didn't take his screenplay seriously and that Hollywood looked at the field of science fiction much differently than those within it. He tells Jaffe how to do a rewrite and the scribe says wilco.

By the 13th PKD has received the galleys for "**Faith Of Our Fathers**", a short story that will be in Harlan Ellison's anthology **DANGEROUS VISIONS**. Dick wants to add to his Afterword some text denying the use of LSD had any affect on the story.

The next day PKD writes an excited letter to Henry Ludmer — he's heard from Robert Jaffe and had a visit from Hampton Fancher; it still looks good for the **DADOES** movie. If Jaffe drops the option on **DADOES** then PKD urges Ludmer to contact Fancher. He has positive feelings about a PKD movie.

PKD then sends the unpublished Foreword to **THE PRESERVING MACHINE** to Darko Suvin and hopes he will use PKD's article "**The Evolution Of A Vital Love**".

A letter to Claudia Bush mid-month tells her that his kitten has died and that he's been reading The Book of Acts and he was definitely possessed by the Holy Spirit.

He hears some bad news around the 19th, his old editor at *F & SF*, J. Francis McComas is ill. PKD writes to him and reminisces back to the time he first met McComas in 1952. He talks about Tony Boucher and reports on his recent news.

By the 20th he's found Diane Kennedy Pike's address and he writes her of recent news; he wants to discuss his religious experiences with her.

Four letters to Claudia Bush follow and in these, besides recent events, he notes that *Science Fiction Studies* has 45,000 words of essays for their special PKD edition. In another dream of the wise old man he reads Greek words in the big book from *The Book of Hebrews* in The Bible. Besides The Bible he's also deeply into *THE AENID* and Dante's *Purgatorio*. He quotes Virgil and speculates on prophecy of the Cumaen Sibyl. It is in the first of these four letters that we find first mention of the 'iron prison.' He still feels there is something important in **UBIK**. He returns to ancient Greece and Orphism to explore what exactly this is, speculating at length.

In between the letters to Bush he replies to Diane Kennedy Pike, describing the plot of **FMTTPS** and referring her to Dante and Virgil.

Then it's back to Ms. Bush and a long quote from

John Calvin on the nature of sin and heavenly exile. He's read an article on Lewis Mumford and includes a short quote about the transition from the Roman to the Christian era. PKD has pierced the veil and sees a Roman slave state is back again. The postscript notes that Calvin is right, but how did we lose our supernatural faculties?

And so ends November 1974 with seventeen letters written. December has sixteen more.

The year's first letter is to an unknown editor objecting to abortion. But several letters to Claudia Bush quickly follow. In these PKD discusses an article by Malcolm Edwards which he has sent her. He recommends some philosophical books and a record album, *Dragonfly*, by the Jefferson Starship. In the letter to Bush on the 9th **December** he describes a recent dream in which he saw a future machine, a complex engine based on technology unknown to us. He gives details of this future engine. Soon PKD is making distinctions between space travel and time travel and bringing in alternate universes and the precognitive nature of his experiences. A follow-up letter on the 18th informs us that PKD did a drawing of the future machine for Tessa and an enclosed article from *The Enquirer* illustrates a similar device. He also encloses notes on the nature of time which he composed after reading about a Soviet astrophysicist. According to PKD we're on the verge of a new cosmogony.

On the 19th he writes to his stepdaughter, Hatte, fills her in on his news and is happy to hear from her. He hasn't seen her since 1964.

His final letter to Claudia Bush for the year came on the 21st. He thanks her for her gift of two arrowheads and notes reception of a Christmas card from Robert Heinlein.

After reading an article from Paul Williams he writes him and says he now realizes his personal experiences resemble those of Empedocles who lived in the third

century before Christ. More dreams follow and he refers to Carl Jung and quotes from *The Book of Hebrews* again. He mentions that the actress Barbara Seagull visited him with the Hollywood types. He closes with an enclosed article from the *Los Angeles Times* that describes Nixon's illegal anti Vietnam War protester actions and mentions the *Ramparts* anti-tax declaration that he signed in 1969.

After Christmas he writes to Kleo and Norman Mini, briefs them on his news and tells them he is studying Greek philosophy and that he is the reincarnation of Empedocles. The second to last letter for the year is one



to his friend, Margot, and after giving her his news he notes that all the secrets of the Universe can be found in **UBIK**.

His last letter of 1974 is to his mother and he regrets he won't see her this year. Tells her that yesterday a reporter from *The New Yorker* visited him for a six-hour interview.

And now this summary is done. If the reader wants to do more research on some topic covered here, he or she is referred to the two accompanying documents:

Index to THE SELECTED LETTERS OF PHILIP K. DICK: 1974 and the

Contents of THE SELECTED LETTERS OF PHILIP K. DICK: 1974.

I will not comment further on the ideas and activities in this volume; to do so would be another major effort that would delay the main purpose of these three documents (this Summary, the Index, and the Contents) which is to enable the reader to pursue such research on his or her own. But, now that I'm done and all the reading and re-reading of these 1974 letters is over, I must say that my interest is piqued. The volume of PKD's 1974 letters comes in the middle of other volumes of his letters. I wonder about such things as how Pinky came to be so named, what are the details of the 1971 break-in, and his career-long relationship with The Scott Meredith Literary Agency. And, in the future: did he ever get to see his daughter, Isa? Did he sort out the problems with Doubleday & Co. over **FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID?** And what about the publication of **A SCANNER DARKLY** and how come the **UBIK screenplay** never resulted in an actual movie? And let's not forget the Marxists, did they come back? Oh, lots of questions to be asked and answered in the surrounding Letters volumes!

But this is a start: Frank Hollander's goal is to compile an Index to all of the published letters written by Philip K. Dick, no matter where they appeared – and although most of them are contained in the volumes of **THE SELECTED LETTERS OF PHILIP K. DICK**, many are not. I am not the only one working on this project and I believe that with so many fans working together we shall, one day, have this complete index.

## THE SELECTED LETTERS OF PHILIP K. DICK: 1974 (Underwood-Miller, 1991)

Index compiled by Dave Hyde,  
© October 2011

- Many page numbers refer to the first page of the significant letter: the actual entry may be in the pages immediately following.

- Page numbers in **bold** denote the entry is usually the recipient.

- Page numbers in *italics* denote entries in the actual SL 74 book index that I did not note as I compiled this Index. The book index is only of the works of Philip K. Dick (i.e. Novels, short stories, speeches, etc.)

- The NOVELS of Philip K. Dick are in capitals: **UBIK**, **A SCANNER DARKLY**

- The NOVELS and major collections are abbreviated with the capitals of the words in the title: **ASD**, **FMTTPS**, **TTSOPE**, etc. except for **UBIK** and **VALIS**.

- **BLADE RUNNER** is not mentioned by name in the 1974 Volume of letters but for those interested in early news of the eventual movie I have included **BLADE RUNNER** in this Index; all entries are inferred. **BLADE RUNNER** is capitalized like a novel (BR).

- The Short Stories are in quotation marks: "Colony" etc.

- Anthologies containing a PKD short story are capitalized and italicized: *FINAL STAGE*

- Book editions by other writers are capitalized and italicized: *BACCHAE*, *THE*; *BORIS GUDUNOV*

- Magazine and newspaper appearances are in italics: *Vertex*, *Los Angeles Times*, etc

- **RADIO FREE ALBEMUTH** is referred to herein as **VALI-SYSTEM A**.

### How to use this Index

I have tried to include all references to PKD's novels, short stories and essays in SL 74 in this Index. I have also noted areas of interest to PKD students (his 2-3 /74 'pink beam' experiences, his family relationships, business dealings, his contemporaries, the 1972 break-in, etc.). In general refer to the attached SL 74 Summary for guidance to the contents of SL 74 and the attached SL 74 Contents for more details.

For example, suppose you are interested in the background to his Vancouver Speech, then you would see the entries for "The Android and the Human"; Vancouver speech; Canada. Similarly if your interest is in early **BLADE RUNNER** history then you would see the entries for: **BLADE RUNNER** (inf.); Jaffe, Robert; Jaffe, Herb; United Artists.

Note: I have incorporated the Index from the actual SL 74 book into this index.

If you find any errors herein please contact me via [PKDfans.com](http://PKDfans.com).







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## A Reappraisal of Philip K. Dick's 'The Cosmic Puppets'

By Nick Buchanan  
© January 2012

As Dick's work becomes ever more popular, the consensus about which are his best books seems to harden and set into the approved 'Dick Canon.' Fans loudly proclaim the titles of **Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?**, **The Man in the High Castle**, **UBIK** and **VALIS**, safe in the knowledge that they will not be challenged by received opinion. Others furtively wait, watching to see if 'Dick Scholars' (self appointed) sneer or approve their favourites. To fall in line with such might be a sign of cowardice or indicate a lack of imagination. Instead, I urge folks to re-evaluate all of Dick's fiction with an open mind, side-stepping the clichés and well trammelled phrases of others.

There are so many gems outside of the canon which contain great ideas and artistry – including **The Galactic Pot Healer**, **The Cosmic Puppets**, **Eye in the Sky**, **Dr. Bloodmoney**, **In Milton Lumky Territory**, etc. not to mention his amazing catalogue of **Collected Short Stories** which are often treated as mere sketchbook roughs for the 'more important' novels. Although many themes from the short stories were indeed explored more fully in subsequent novels, they clearly stand alone as works of art in their own right. There is a beautiful economy in the short stories – a terse, lean quality that is not often found in the novels. They are honed and well proportioned. It should be remembered that Dick only turned to writing novels because he was told he would earn more that way. He was a short story writer – a very good one. I treasure his **Collected Short Stories vol.1-5** just as much as **VALIS** (see? – even that felt like swearing – such is the sway of the canon). If you doubt the validity of my argument, read (or re-read) such gems as **I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon**, **The Little Movement**, **Electric Ant**, **The Skull**, **The King of the Elves** (set to be released as a Disney movie

in 2013), **The Father Thing**, **Second Variety**, **Adjustment Team**, **Small Town**, **Hanging Stranger**, ...etc. I stopped only because it would be too easy to go on.

**Cosmic Puppets** has certainly drawn a very mixed response from critics, and biographers. Lawrence Sutin in **'Divine Invasions A Life of Philip K Dick'** rated it 3/10, calling it *'blandly written and woodenly plotted.'* (p292)

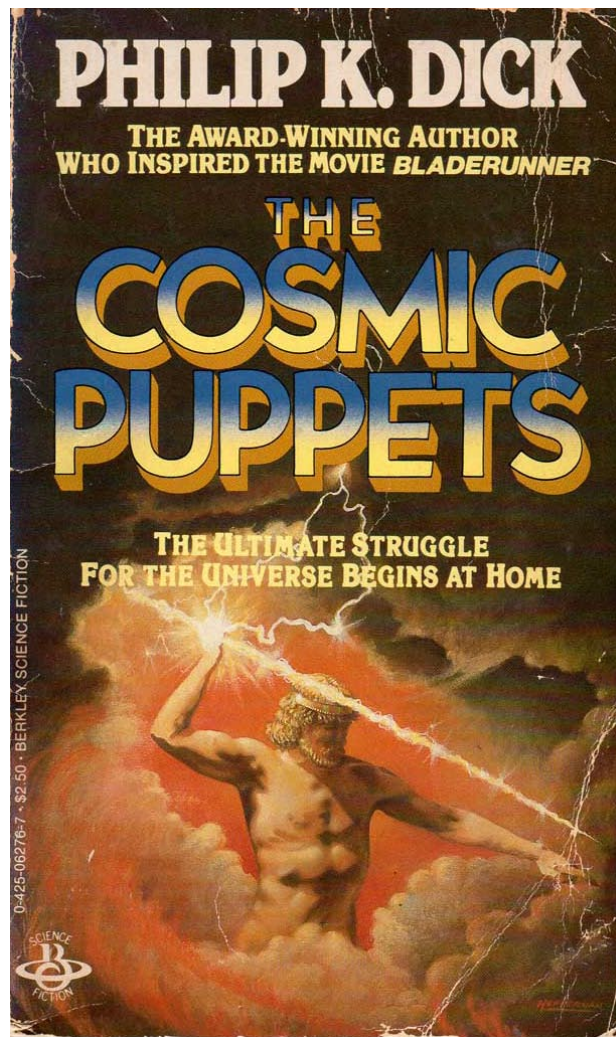
Darko Suvin in his overly didactic **'Artifice as refuge and world view: Philip K Dick's Foci'** described **Cosmic Puppets** as one of three Dick novels *'best forgotten'* (I knew you'd ask, ... **Dr. Futurity** and **The Game Players of Titan**) (**Writers of the 21st Century Series**, Ed. Olander & Greenberg p.80). Suvin, a Yugoslav born Professor Emeritus of McGill University (Mon-

treal), appears to have many followers, each clutching the handrail of his sometimes cumbersome literary theory. I would encourage readers to approach the work with fresh eyes, especially when it is dismissed out of hand by those who should know better. There is certainly much in **Cosmic Puppets** which is best remembered – especially by those who are interested in the recurring themes in the mind and work of Dick. Some folks never emerge from the rubble of literary theory to find the actual book they are supposed to be reading.

In Kim Stanley Robinson's **'The Novels of Philip K Dick,'** he dismisses **Cosmic Puppets** by making the assertion that, *'...the appearance of evil aliens in one of Dick's novels...is in every case the sign of a weak book, and [Cosmic Puppets] is the first example of that phenomenon.'* (p.20) Frankly, I am staggered that such a writer could be so short-sighted and simplistic. Furthermore the Gods in the story hardly qualify – they are so unlike any con-

ventional aliens of 1950's Fantasy or SF.

I am comfortable with the idea that we all have our favourites and that people may not share our taste. That is healthy. But in the case of **Cosmic Puppets**, I think a great many folks may have been put off even giving it a chance. Consequently, I would like to highlight the merits of this book – one I consider to be very far from *'bland,'* *'best forgotten'* or *'weak.'* I happen to think it's a little



gem, containing (as it does) just about every major theme Dick was to explore throughout the whole of his career; from malice to **VALIS!**

**Cosmic Puppets** fits the fantasy genre more than the science fiction genre, and to some, this is a problem. Personally I think the journey is best enjoyed when you just enjoy the ride and don't get hung up on what car you are in. It is Dick's writing that counts and his ability to cast a spell which challenges the very fabric of reality. Is *Frankenstein* Science Fiction or Horror? I honestly don't care – because what it really is, is *Frankenstein*. Sorting the mail is not the same as reading a letter.

In 1953 in the U.S., Science Fiction magazines outnumbered Fantasy ones (One of Dick's favourite's, 'Unknown' stopped being published a full decade before **Cosmic Puppets** was completed. Another, 'Weird Tales,' stopped in 1954). **Cosmic Puppets** was first published in an earlier version, in 1956. In *To the High Castle*, Gregg Rickman relates that, in 1981, Phil told him that **Cosmic Puppets** was an attempt to write his version of the kind of fantasy that appeared in 'Unknown' – 'A fantasy novel for a publication which I loved which no longer existed.' (p.300).

Phil himself saw the boundaries between fantasy and science fiction as rather flimsy:

*'Fantasy involves that which general opinion regards as impossible; science fiction involves that which general opinion regards as possible under the right circumstances.' And deciding which is which is contingent, he thought, upon 'subjective belief.'* (Selected Letters 1980-82, p.153). Sometimes the genres have more to do with promotion and sales than with strict criteria. As Phil once said in relation to the Mainstream versus Science Fiction genres: *'[It's all about] packaging and marketing. We're not talking about content at all.'* (Hour 25 Talk with Philip K. Dick by Mike Hodel) Hard-nosed SF-ers may spend too long looking for the spaceship - like Phil says Sharon Jarvis at Doubleday did with another of his novels. *'She says, well, there's no rocket ships in this book. It's not science fiction.'* (Ibid).

Clearly Phil's rich imagination did not organize itself into the narrow confines of genres. Phil loved ideas and he knew that if you start sorting them at their inception they will be smothered and die. Better to feed and nurture them and let them find their way when they are 'older.' It is perhaps worth noting that much of Phil's shorter fiction was Fantasy and not Science Fiction.

The assertion that the writing in **Cosmic Puppets** is weak, or lacking in some way, is easily challenged by the

text itself. There are evocative descriptions of the natural world. For example:

"The morning was warm and sunny. The dew hadn't been baked off the weeds yet. The sky was a mild, hazy blue, not yet heated up to blazing incandescence. That would come later, as the sun climbed toward its zenith. A faint breeze stirred the cedars that grew in a line along the slope behind the immense stone building. The cedars cast pools of shade... A single road twisted up the rise to the flat surface where the building stretched out. The grounds were carefully tended. Flowers and trees, and a long wood fence that formed a protecting square." (P.49 Ch.5)

There are great character studies. Here's the fussy, wittering character of Mrs Trilling, boarding house owner:

Mrs Trilling peered around peevishly at her son. "What do you want? Keep out of the ice box. You can't have anything until dinner time; I told you that!"

"There's a man outside. He wants a room." Peter added, "He's a stranger."

Mabel Trilling dried her hands quickly, swollen face suddenly animated. "Don't just stand there! Go tell him to come in. Is he alone?"

"Just him."

Mabel Trilling hurried past her son, outside onto the porch and down the sagging steps. The man was still there, thank God. She breathed a silent prayer of relief. People didn't seem to come through Millgate anymore. The boarding house was only half-filled: a few retired old men, the town librarian, a clerk, and her own apartment. "What can I do for you?" she demanded breathlessly.

"I want a room," Ted Barton answered wearily. "Just a room. I don't care what it's like or how much it costs."

"Do you want meals? If you eat with us you'll save fifty percent over what you'd have to pay down at the Steak House, and my meals are every bit as good as those tough little dry things they try to push off on you, especially a gentleman from out of town. You're from New York?"

An agonized twist crossed the man's face; it was quickly fought down. "Yes, I'm from New York." (p.22-23)

But before we dig deeper let's give the story some shape and an outline; a brief summary will help us to explore its ideas in greater depth.

**"[Cosmic Puppets is]  
Best forgotten."  
- Darko Suvin**

**Cosmic Puppets** is a tale about a 27 year old Insurance Salesman, Ted Barton who is unhappily married. The year is 1953 and while on holiday near Millgate, Virginia (the town where he grew up) he decides to revisit the place. What he finds

disturbs him. Although the street layout is the same, all the names have changed. At first he assumes just their names have changed, then he finds that all of the shops have changed - as well as their owners. *'His memories don't agree with the situation.'* (p.52). He is even more



alarmed when he reads an old newspaper which reports his own death as a nine year old boy (from *Scarlet Fever*). He wonders if it is he, and not the town, who has changed. Whatever is happening, he rightly deduces that *'There's something going on. Beyond human awareness.'* (p.44)

While Ted seeks answers, there are scenes involving strange children who shape clay into different creatures. One boy, Peter Trilling, has the power to bring them to life. He makes a clay man (golem) and orders it to chase someone. When it fails he casually crushes it, frightening all his friends (p.21). Peter's puzzlement at their obvious distress prefigures Pris and Irmgard's inability to understand J.R. Isidore's upset when they decide to cut the legs off a spider one by one (**Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep**, p.155). Peter, Pris and Irmgard lack empathy; they represent the cold android brain which fails Voigt-Kampff.

The clay acts as a metaphor for how easily Gods can reshape things – from formlessness to form and back again (a cow is 'recycled' into a man). In this world and others, Gods have a special relationship with entropy – some can accelerate it to formlessness and decay, whilst others can reverse it to form and new life. At this point in the story, Ted is simply left with more questions.

It is only when Ted meets the drunk, Will Christopher that he starts to get some 'answers.' Will remembers how the town was before the 'change.' Ted learns that the change was sudden – overnight, that the whole town was replaced by a fake; A shabby, deteriorating version of Millgate. Eventually he concludes that the whole town has been overlaid with another reality, *'a distortion layer.'* (P.176)

Will demonstrates to Ted a power that can be used to 'restore' items back to their authentic state. Initially the change is only temporary and localised. But, together they eventually set about changing the whole town back, beginning with a playground (which had been changed into a row of rotting stores). The original replaced by an obvious fake. Ted and Will Christopher's task is to unhide, rather than to originate. The boy, Peter, tries to stop them – he uses spiders, rats and snakes which he has command over. Mary Anne, a thirteen year old dark-haired girl, tries to help Ted and Christopher. In order to effect the restoration they have to remember how the town was and focus on their recall. Together they eventually succeed, but not before learning that the town is a battleground between two opposing forces; That of Ahriman (the wrecker) and Ormazd (the builder). The boy Peter is Ahriman and Dr

Meade is Ormazd (although he had forgotten). Mary Anne, it turns out, is Armaiti, daughter of Ormazd.

Once the town is 'recovered,' Christopher's memory of the whole restoration vanishes and he is left only

with a hazy recollection of Ted (he knows his face, but can't quite place the circumstances). This memory-wipe of Christopher is almost certainly a homage by Phil to one of his favourite scenes in the whole of literature – 'The Piper in the Woods' chapter of Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows*. In the story, Rat and mole hear beautiful music, which produces a strange yearning in them. It is so great that when they move on, Pan removes the

memory from their minds, otherwise it would make all other pleasures pale in comparison:

*'We have to be occluded to something....Pan had to occlude them to protect them against their own memories...it says "The greatest gift that he gave them was not to rescue them but to occlude them that they had been rescued." It's a beautiful sentence, incredibly beautifully written, just a gorgeous sentence.'* **Philip K Dick: Piper in the Woods – Philip K. Dick interviewed by Gregg Rickman** (Audio Cassette, side two, 1981). The verbatim quote from *Wind in the Willows* runs like this:

*'For this is the last best gift that the kindly demigod is careful to bestow on those to whom he has revealed himself in their helping: the gift of forgetfulness. Lest the awful remembrance should remain and grow, and overshadow mirth and pleasure, and the great haunting memory should spoil all the after-lives of little animals helped out of difficulties, in order that they should be happy and light-hearted as before.'* (**The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame**, Ch 7, The Piper at the Gates of Dawn). **Cosmic Puppets** p.182-184 follows this *Wind in the Willows* chapter so closely that I urge Dick fans everywhere to compare them.

So, the town is restored, and Christopher is left to enjoy it as if nothing ever happened. Before he leaves town, Ted agrees to call into Christopher's electrical shop next time he visits.

**Cosmic Puppets** has the feel of an early *Twilight Zone* episode. Indeed in 1959 (some six years after **Cosmic Puppets** was written) an episode aired in which the vice president of an Ad Agency away on business, decides to revisit his old hometown. In the *Twilight Zone* Episode – 'Walking Distance' (written by the great Rod Serling) the





town of his childhood is not only unchanged – it is EXACTLY as it was when he was a small boy – then he meets himself as a small boy! He is carving his name on a tree – just as he once did.

In **Cosmic Puppets** however, a man revisits his childhood and finds all is lost – it is gone and he is shattered. His journey, his quest is to regain it; to rediscover and reclaim what was lost. This is an archetypal story, it is the story of Citizen Kane and is referred to in A. E. Houseman's poem for A Shropshire Lad:

That is the land of lost content,  
I see it shining plain,  
The happy highways where I went  
And cannot come again.

However it is William Blake's 'The Garden of Love' which resonates most with **Cosmic Puppets**:

#### The Garden of Love

I went to the Garden of Love,  
And saw what I never had seen:  
A Chapel was built in the midst,  
Where I used to play on the green.

And the gates of this Chapel were shut,  
And Thou shalt not' writ over the door;  
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love,  
That so many sweet flowers bore,

And I saw it was filled with graves,  
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:  
And Priests in black gowns were walking their rounds,  
And binding with briars my joys and desires.

Where Blake has the church replacing his joys, Dick has Ahriman the destroyer supplanting everything he remembers. In both cases entropic forces have made dreadful changes – removing the Eden of youth. I think it worthy of note that when Ted sets about 'restoring' the town (p.114) the first place he wants to restore is the playground (equivalent to Blake's 'where I used to play on the green'). The origins of Dick's fine story lead us to Blake, this time via St. Paul.

**Cosmic Puppets** was written in 1953 and originally titled **Glass of Darkness** appearing first in the December 1956 edition of *Satellite Science Fiction*, then in 1957 it appeared (re-drafted and re-edited by Dick) as an Ace Double – paired with *Sargasso of Space* by Andrew North. Lord Running Clam has pointed out that although this re-

write is often described as an 'expanded' version, so much was taken out that the final word count was some 740 words shorter than the original. (**Pink Beam** by Lord RC. p.79) The irony of course is that the earlier (longer version) was known as a Novella, whereas the later (shorter one) which I am here discussing was known as a Novel.

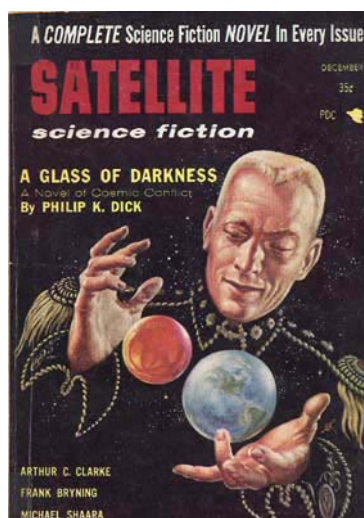
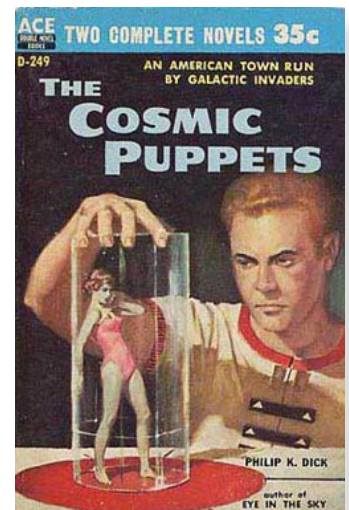
Astonishingly, after the Ace Double Version in 1957, **Cosmic Puppets** remained out of print for twenty-six years! It was finally reprinted by Berkley in 1983. Such a prolonged absence removed it from general discourse and may have served to relegate its perceived worth. In an interview with Gregg Rickman (conducted two years before the 1983 edition was finally published) Dick explained why it was still out of print for (at least some of those) twenty-six years: 'I have a contract with Berkley to bring that one out, but it's a tie-in contract that requires me to revise *The Unteleported Man* but I can't get back into that space of *The Unteleported Man* to rewrite it...' (Philip K Dick: In His Own Words by Gregg Rickman – date of quote: 9-30-81)

The original title, **A Glass of Darkness** is not far off the title of Dick's much later novel, **A Scanner Darkly** and both were named after St. Paul's suggestion that we are not currently seeing the whole picture;

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."  
(1 Corinthians 13v12 KJV)

Either we are not equipped with the sensory apparatus required, or the fullness of reality is somehow being concealed from us, and we are deluded. This idea plays a central role in **Cosmic Puppets** because the town that Barton revisits is in some kind of occluded state. It is hidden; overlaid. St. Paul's quote suggests that we are ALL in the position of Ted Barton - we are all only seeing a faint reflection of the real reality (in essence, a fake). But one day we shall see the fullness of reality – stare it in the face as it were.

The Thirteenth Century Persian poet, Rumi suggested that how much we are able to 'see' is directly proportional to how pure



(clear) our hearts are, and that the work (polishing) is ours to do:

‘Everyone sees the unseen in proportion to the clarity of his heart,  
And that depends upon how much he has polished it.  
Whoever has polished it more sees more  
More unseen forms become manifest to him.’

The connection to St. Paul’s ‘A Glass Darkly’ is obvious. The Talmud also speaks of the part we all play in our own perceptions:

‘We do not see things as they are,  
we see them as we are.’

And if we haven’t ‘cleaned our glass’ then we won’t be getting the full picture. Blake also suggested that what we perceive now is only partial:

‘If the doors of perception were cleansed  
every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.  
For man has closed himself up,  
till he sees all things thro’ narrow chinks of his cavern.’  
(William Blake - ‘His sense of exile’)

This quote and St. Paul’s ‘Glass’ have obvious resonances with Plato’s Cave (where all we see are the flickering shadows of a greater reality). Elsewhere, Blake suggests that reality contains worlds and infinities which our sensory faculties are (usually) inadequate to:

‘To see a world in a grain of sand,  
And a heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And eternity in an hour.’  
(William Blake – ‘Auguries of Innocence’)

Philip K. Dick, however, along with certain poets, painters, mystics, shamans, and philosophers may be privy to an ‘is-ness’ (as Meister Eckhart called it) which remains unavailable to everyday consciousness. In my opinion, Dick was more Philosopher than Shaman. The Quantum Physicist and the eastern mystic may arrive at similar conclusions but that does not make their paths equivalent or their passions identical. The problem of truly seeing things as they are – in their true state – can only be solved when *percept* is pure and unhampered by *concept* (for concepts filter and strain our perceptions into use and habit – and the pure percept is lost). Of course, concept has a value but it works best when it follows percept; introduced prematurely, it will

only edit and filter and make us blind to even that which is right in front of us. To look at something is not the same as to see it. The Russian formalists new this: ‘*The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known.*’ (Victor Shklovsky 16)

Where our senses end and reality begins is a mainstay of Dick’s work; often one or the other (or both) are shown to be unreliable. The ‘tree falling in the forest’ not only makes no sound, but it isn’t really there either! Either that, or it isn’t really a tree, it’s just a piece of paper with the word ‘tree’ written on it – and even you might not be who you thought you were. Whilst this insubstantiality is often terrifying, or in the least, disconcerting, Dick is never slow to exploit its intrinsic dark humour.

In particular he had a delicious sense of the absurd, which I believe is a natural property of genuine philosophic enquiry. He employs it with great panache and wit in *Cosmic Puppets*. Take this scene for example where Barton, who is confused about the changes in the town, is sitting in a bar next to a drunk. The drunk, (Will) Christopher, is asking him questions:

“Why did you come to Millgate? A little town like this. Nobody ever comes here.”

Barton raised his head moodily. “I came here to find myself.”

For some reason, that struck Christopher as funny. He shrieked, loud and shrill, until the others at the bar turned in annoyance.

“What’s eating you?” Barton demanded angrily. “What the hell’s so funny about that?”

Christopher managed to calm himself. “Find yourself? You have any clues? Will you know yourself when you find yourself? What do you look like?” He burst into laughter again, in spite of his efforts. Barton sank down farther, and hunched miserably around his glass.

“Cut it out,” he muttered. “I have enough trouble already.”

“Trouble? What sort of trouble?”

“Everything. Every goddamn thing in the world.” The bourbons were really beginning to work their enchantment on him. “Christ, I might as well be dead. First I find out I’m dead, that I never lived to grow up—”

Christopher shook his head. “That’s bad.” (Ch 6, p.73)

The absurdist bathos of the last line is priceless, together with the way Phil riffs on the phrase ‘*I came here to find myself*’ - Phil rings

**“He had a delicious sense of the absurd”**

out multiple connotations with this simple line using great understatement, inviting the reader to collaborate with his many trains of thought. Although Ted has returned to Millgate

to find out ‘who he was,’ (p.25) he is soon trying to find out what *anything is!*

Dick’s great sense of humour runs through this book like veins in marble. In most of his recorded interviews Phil laughs often – usually at absurd propositions,



paradoxes or gross understatement. This playful approach to meanings informs his philosophy and his humour – since flexibility of thought are prerequisites for both. Too little has been written about this intrinsic side of Dick.

He also finds dark humour in the overwhelming odds against certain characters. The sheer scale of the deck stacked against them is funny and terrifying at the same time. One gets the impression that Dick is aware of both aspects simultaneously. The odds against the little man who keeps trying is a recurrent theme in much of his work. In the following example, a newly made tiny clay figure (given life) fails to catch hold of a station wagon:

‘As the station wagon started up, the tiny clay figure made a frantic leap. Its tiny arms groped wildly as it tried to find purchase on the smooth metal fender. Unconcerned, the station wagon moved out into traffic, and the tiny figure was left behind, still waving its arms futilely, trying to climb and catch hold of a surface already gone. Peter caught up with it. His foot came down and the clay man was squashed into a shapeless blob of moist clay. Walter and Dave and Noaks came slowly over; they approached in a wide, cautious circle. “You got him?” Noaks demanded hoarsely.

“Sure,” Peter said. He was already scraping the clay off his shoe, his small face calm and smooth. “Of course I got him. He belonged to me, didn’t he?” (Ch 3. p.21)

There is grim humour in the clay figures’ failed attempt to grab the station wagon – and in the irreverent finality of his demise. Nevertheless we are chilled by Peter’s cold indifference. Of course, this echoes the malevolent nature of one of the Gods, Ahriman, who (like his incarnation as the disturbing boy, Peter) might kill us on a whim. One is reminded of Gloucester’s great lament as he stands blinded:

‘As flies to wanton boys are we to th’ gods,  
They kill us for their sport.’  
(King Lear Act 4, scene 1, 32–37)

Peter’s words, “Of course I got him. He belonged to me, didn’t he?” and his behaviour towards his creation echo the relationship between God and Job (whose family were deliberately obliterated as a test of his faith). “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.” (Job 1v 21. KJV).

The scope of **Cosmic Puppets** is epic – it concerns the struggle between two opposing Gods and the way the world changes according to which God is in the ascendant. Ted finds a town subjugated to Ahriman’s dominance; a town rotting and degraded. Dick’s sense of humour brings it down to a very human scale – to a man disappointed that all the good D.I.Y he has done on his house has been lost during the ‘change.’ Here’s a scene where Will Christopher has invited Ted back to his house. They are outside and he is about to open his front door and show Ted the disappointing changes:

‘My place was a nice little three-room cabin; I built it myself. Wired it, put in plumbing, fixed the roof up fine. That morning I woke up and what was I living in?’ The old man halted and fumbled for his key. “A packing crate.” (Ch 7, p79)

Note the comedic timing as Phil forces a pause – the old man fumbling for his key – which makes the punch-line all the more powerful. A lesser writer would have missed that.

The dark humour continues when Will Christopher describes arriving for work the day after the change:

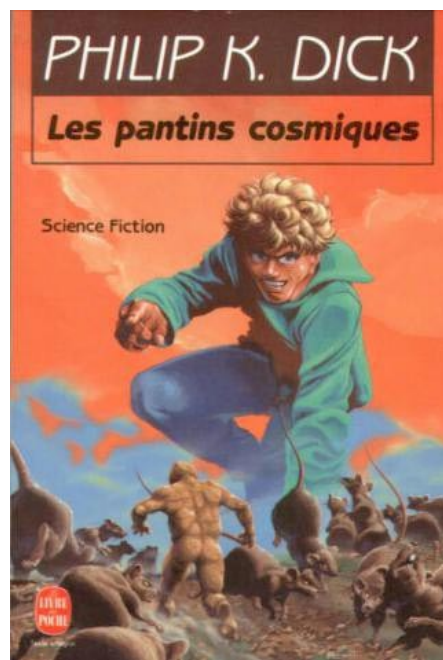
“I used to be a hell of a good electrician. Serviced radios. Ran a little radio shop.”

“Sure,” Barton said. “Will’s Sales and Service.”

“Gone. Completely gone. There’s a hand laundry there now. On Jefferson Street, as it’s called now. Do a terrible job. Ruin your shirts. Nothing left of my radio shop. I woke up that morning, started off to work. Thought something was odd. Got there and found a goddamn laundry. Steam irons and pants pressers.” (Ch 7 p.80)

The understatement of the line “*Thought something was odd*” is masterful; deliciously subtle.

There is nothing slight about **Cosmic Puppets** apart from its length (it is more of a Novella than a Novel).



Phil once referred to **Glass of Darkness** as being ‘slight’ but it is clear from the fullquote that he was referring only to word count and not to quality. Indeed in the very same quote he is at pains to express his like for the story: ‘... and it runs about 40,000 words. You can see that it is slight compared with the others, but again I personally like it; it’s pure fantasy which has always

been my favourite.’ (Selected Letters 1938-71. p.35 Anthony Boucher June 3 1957)

In the main, its territory is characteristically Dickian; a roller coaster ride which undermines our confidence in reality at every turn. Its themes prefigure the entropy in **UBIK**, the soft drink stand in **Time Out of Joint**, and



the dualism in **Maze of Death** and **The Divine Invasion**. Where **Cosmic Puppets** differs, I think, is in 'flavour' – it has the feel of a parable or allegory. Like Orwell's 'Animal Farm' there is a lightness of touch, and an easy charm which is deceptively skilful and hard earned. The currency of metaphor is sometimes mistaken for something simple or even worse – shallow. Perhaps this is why some have found this book 'light' even though it explores many of Phil's most profound ideas and themes. The simple can be sophisticated and the complex can often be shallow (e.g. train timetables). Ironically I think the novel is both complex (in its ideas) and sophisticated in the manner in which Phil presents and explores those ideas.

Much of **Cosmic Puppets** is virtuoso – in terms of the standard of writing. *Yes, I did say 'virtuoso' and I say it without hyperbole.* The raising of its quality took place during the rewrite between the Satellite Stories Magazine incarnation, and the Ace edition. In the Fanzine **For Dick-heads Only**, Dave Hyde has written a very useful comparison of the two with special reference to key differences. The improvements are obvious. Many of the differences involve Phil *telling* less and *showing* more, inviting the reader to collaborate more with the text (**FDO #3** Ed. Dave Hyde. 1992).

As for what others have made of **Cosmic Puppets**? It's a mixed bag:

Andrew M Butler in his otherwise useful '**Pocket Essentials: Philip K Dick**' gave **Cosmic Puppets** one of the few 'opinion-less' verdicts in the book. Which suggests either neutrality, indifference or reticence. I think it may have been the latter because he nevertheless rated it 3/5 (p.18) which is higher than his ratings for eight other Dick novels. Perhaps it is hard to assert the merits of a book when revered scholars have dismissed it as '*best forgotten.*'

Douglas A. Mackey in **Twayne's United States Authors Series: Philip K Dick** devotes two pages to **Cosmic Puppets** - which is not as cursory as it sounds because he is quick to see its relevance particularly in relation to later works. His main criticism is that '*the characters are rather flat.*' (p.16) Personally, I think the characters display obvious shape – Peter the malevolent child, Christopher the drunken DIY expert, Mrs Trilling the fussy boardroom owner, Mary Anne the thirteen year old girl with strange powers, etc. They all work on two levels - as mythic ciphers as well as 'real' people. They have a function in the novel as well as a life – they serve to develop the ideas and themes. This is a novel about

forces and delusions as well as about people and motivations. In this sense, the reader is engaged not just by the characters and their relationships, but by the world itself which is intrinsically conflicted and desperately needing resolution. In his summing up paragraph on **Cosmic Puppets**, Mackey rightfully regards it as '*a remarkably clear paradigm of the essential Dick myth: we and our world are inhabited by warring Gods, but through our growth of knowledge and vision, we can help the creative forces prevail.*' (p.16).

I am not alone in recognising its value:

Umberto Rossi thought **Cosmic Puppets** important enough to include in his study of 20 novels ('**The Twisted Worlds of Philip K Dick: A Reading of Twenty Ontologically Uncertain Novels**' - 2011). Although he doesn't give it anything like an overt commendation, he does refer to it as a '*hitherto neglected novel.*' (p.26). I was heartened to see **Cosmic Puppets** graduating into the pantheon of existential ambiguity, even if not altogether celebrated.

Angus Taylor in his **Philip K Dick and the Umbrella of Light** mentions **Cosmic Puppets** only once, but makes a pertinent point about '*woman*' as a symbol for the cyclical processes of nature. He says that: '*[Cosmic Puppets], a fairly straightforward allegory of the struggle between good and evil, form and chaos, quite clearly makes this connection between woman and the earth, or life.*' – **Philip K Dick and the Umbrella of Light** – Angus Taylor (p.22) Nowhere is this more graphic than in the ending where Armaiti becomes the earth itself (her two breasts very thinly disguised as hills):

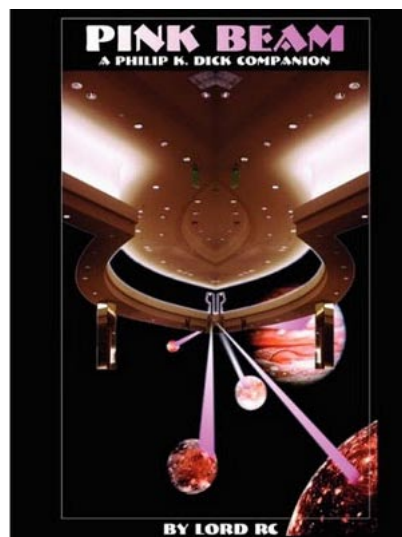
'He was recalling a sleek, glowing body. A lithe shape diffusing itself into the moist soil of early morning. A flash of black hair and eyes as she trickled away from him, into the Earth which was her home. Red lips, white teeth. A gleaming flicker of bare limbs and then she was gone.

Gone? Armaiti wasn't gone. She was everywhere. In all the trees, in the green fields and lakes and forest lands. The fertile valleys and mountains on all sides of him. She was below and around him. She filled up the whole world. She lived there. Belonged there.

Two swelling mountains divided for the road ahead. Barton passed slowly between them. Firm hills, rich and full, identical peaks glowing warmly in the late-afternoon sun.

Barton sighed. He'd be seeing reminders of her just about everywhere.' (p.186)

Lord Running Clam speaks openly of its obvious value, in his excellent '**Pink Beam: A Philip K Dick Companion.**' Most importantly, he recognised **Cosmic Puppets** as '*under-rated,*' giving it a top rating



of 5 stars – Yes, the same as he gave **VALIS**, **Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?**, **A Scanner Darkly** and others. He also noted that despite its obvious fantasy leanings, it was still ‘definitive PKD.’ (**Pink Beam** Lord RC. p.79) To my mind, of all the comments that have been made of this early novella, Lord RC’s appraisal of **Cosmic Puppets** comes closest to its actual value.

Gregg Rickman clearly grasped the significance of **Cosmic Puppets** when he referred to ‘*The Novel’s richness*’ (**Philip K Dick: In His Own Words** by Gregg Rickman, Revised Edition p.27). Elsewhere, in the first volume of his excellent and thoroughly researched biography **To the High Castle: Philip K Dick A Life 1928-1962** Rickman said, ‘*The Cosmic Puppets, enacting as it does an early version of Dick’s evolving theology, deserves to be much better known.*’ (p.299). Rickman is right, but of course **Cosmic Puppets** deserves to be known for many more reasons than this. For example, I wish it were better known for Dick’s tremendous skill in the writing, and for the accomplishment of making the reader experience a truly alternate reality.

Dick often felt that there was something *behind* reality (as in Millgate); an otherness which invests ordinary objects with the prospect of transformation. It was a quality Phil himself found in A. E. Van Vogt’s work:

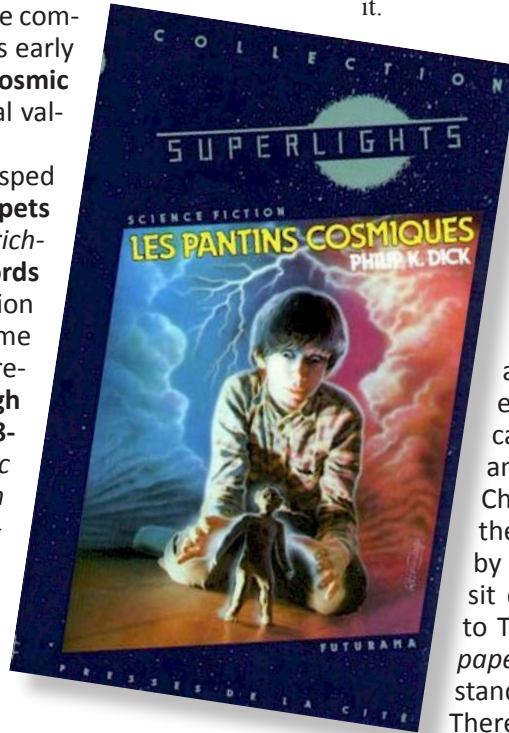
*“A point came when I began to feel that science fiction was very important. Van Vogt’s The World Of Null-A -- there was something about that which absolutely fascinated me. It had a mysterious quality, it alluded to things unseen, there were puzzles presented which were never adequately explained. I found in it a numinous quality; I began to get an idea of a mysterious quality in the universe which could be dealt with in science fiction. I realise now that what I was sensing was a kind of metaphysical world, an invisible realm of things half seen, essentially what medieval people sensed as the transcendent world, the next world.”* (Interview with Philip K Dick by Charles Platt as quoted in **Who Writes Science Fiction** by Charles Platt 1980. p.164)

As an example of that numinous quality, there is a scene in the book where Will Christopher and Ted are in Christopher’s house. Christopher, who has just successfully transformed a wine bottle back into a coffee grinder (only to see it revert to a bottle once more) decides to show Ted something else:

‘Christopher scrambled up and crossed over to the dresser. He rummaged around in the drawer and got out a small cardboard box. He carried it back and sat down on the floor with it.

“Look at this.” He opened the box and lifted out something. With trembling fingers he removed the tissue paper. Barton crouched down and peered over his shoulder.

In the tissue paper was a ball of brown string. Knotted and frazzled. Wound around a bit of wood.’ (Ch 7, p.90)



Dick’s writing skills are magnificently displayed in the above scene and in those which follow. Christopher’s excitement is expressed through Phil’s careful choice of the words ‘*scrambled*’ and ‘*rummaged*.’ Phil then communicates Christopher’s reverence for the object and the importance of this shared moment by having Christopher carry it back and sit down with it (instead of simply pass it to Ted). The ‘*trembling fingers*,’ and ‘*tissue paper*’ add to the gravitas and to our understanding that the object is highly cherished. There is great humour in such a build up, especially as Ted moves a little closer in anticipation, only to witness a reveal of ‘*a ball of brown string.*’ The absurdity is like that found in a Samuel Beckett play. It is worth noting that in revealing the object, Phil follows the deadpan short sentence ‘*In the tissue paper was a ball of brown string,*’ with a description of the object in a very clear and textural way ‘*...Knotted and frazzled. Wound around a bit of wood.*’ The very roughness of the object can be felt – and this is important because in a moment the object’s shape and intrinsic material will be revealed as something quite different altogether. Phil knows that the mystery only occurs if we first ‘*appreciate the very ‘string-ness’ of string before we procede.*’ The scene continues:

‘His old face awed, eyes glittering, lips half-parted, Christopher ran his fingers over the ball of string. “I’ve tried on this. Many times. Every week or so I try. I’d give anything if I could bring this back. But I can’t get so much as a flicker.”

Barton took the string from the old man’s hand. “What the hell is it? Looks like ordinary string.”” (p.90)

The deadpan humour of those last four words take obviousness to an art-form. Dick also reinforces the tactile qualities of the string, as first Christopher, then Ted Barton, handle it. Phil has also whet the readers’ appetite by having Christopher lament about his failed attempts at restoration without revealing the ‘true’ identity of the



string. As the scene unfolds, the strange qualities of the object are brought out by its dual identity:

‘A significant look settled over Christopher’s tired face. “Barton, that was Aaron Northrup’s tire iron.”

Barton raised his eyes unbelievably. “Good Lord.”

“Yes. It’s true. I stole it. Nobody else knew what it was. I had to search for it. Remember, the tire iron was over the door of the Millgate Merchants’ Bank.”

“Yes. The mayor put it up there. I remember that day. I was just a little kid then.”

“That was a long time ago. The Bank’s gone now, of course. There’s a ladies’ tea room in its place. And this ball of string over the door. I stole it one night. Didn’t mean a thing to anyone else.” Christopher turned away, overcome by his emotions. “Nobody else remembers Aaron Northrup’s tire iron.”

Barton’s own eyes were moist. “I was only seven years old when it happened.” (Ch 7, p.91)

The complete difference between a ball of string and a tire iron (in texture, shape, material, etc.) is testimony to Phil’s playfulness as well as his philosophic enquiry; could reality be utterly different from that which we see? He works the same juxtaposition with the Bank, by having it replaced by ‘a ladies’ tea room.’ Phil also cleverly solves the writers’ problem of explaining how Christopher could recognise the tire iron (once it became a ball of string). He does this by giving it a definite locale ‘over the door at the Millgate Merchant’s bank.’ The above scene ends with both men overcome by their emotions – they alone are the custodians of these memories. They alone recognise the full significance of this simple ball of string. This is both touching and hilarious; touching because this simple object has become a metaphor for all that has been lost, a symbol of their bond and a repository for their shared memories – and it is hilarious because it is still two men crying over a ball of string.

Dick cleverly now gives us the back story of Aaron Northrup’s tire iron (it is time for the ‘iron-ness’ of the tire iron):

“Did you see it?”

“I saw it. Bob O’Neill yelled down Central at the top of his lungs. I was in the candy shop.”

Christopher nodded eagerly. “I was fixing an old Atwater Kent. I heard the bastard. Yelled like a stuck pig. Audible for miles.”

Barton’s face glowed. “Then I saw the crook run past. His car wouldn’t start.”

“No, he was too damn nervous. O’Neill yelled, and the crook just ran straight down the middle of the street.”

“With the money in that paper sack, in his arms. Like a sack of groceries.”

“He was from Chicago. One of those racketeers.”

“A Sicilian. A big-time gangster. I saw him run past the candy store. I ran outside. Bob O’Neill was standing there in front of the Bank, shouting his head off.”

“Everybody was running and hollering. Like a bunch of donkeys.”

Barton’s vision grew dim. “The crook ran down Fulton Street. And there was old Northrup, changing the tire on his model T Ford.”

“Yeah, he was in from his farm again. To get loaded up with cattle feed. He was sitting there on the curb with his jack and tire iron.” Christopher took the ball of string back and held it gently in his hand. “The crook tried to run past him—” (p.91-92)

Having placed the tire iron in context as a fully functioning car tool, Phil has cleverly reintroduced the ball of string. He has Christopher handle it to remind the reader of its shape and texture.

“And old Northrup leaped up and hit him over the head.”

“He was a tall old man.”

“Over six feet. Thin, though. Rangy old farmer. He really cracked that crook a mean one.”

“He had a good wrist. From cranking his old Ford. I guess it just about killed the fellow.”

“Multiple concussion. A tire iron’s pretty heavy.” Barton took back the ball of string and touched it gently. ‘ (Ch 7, p.92)

Again Phil encourages us to see both objects at the same time; this time emphasizing the obvious weight differential.

“So this is it. Aaron Northrup’s tire iron. The Bank paid him five hundred dollars for it. And Mayor Clayton nailed it up over the door of the Bank. There was that big ceremony.”

“Everybody was there.”

Barton’s chest swelled. “I held the ladder.” He trembled. “Christopher, I had hold of that tire iron. As Jack Wakeley was climbing up with the hammer and nails, they gave it to me and I passed it on up. I touched it.”

“You’re touching it now,” Christopher said with feeling. “That’s it.”

For a long time Barton gazed down at the ball of string. “I remember it. I held it. It was heavy.”

“Yeah, it weighed a lot.”

Barton got to his feet. He laid the ball of string carefully on the table. He removed his coat and put it over the back of a chair.

“What are you going to do?” Christopher demanded anxiously.

There was a strange look on Barton’s face. Resolve, mixed with dreamy recollection. “I’ll tell you,” he said. “I’m going to remove



the spell. I'm going to bring back the tire iron, the way it was." (Ch 7, p.92-93)

The writing is so good here that Phil has made us experience what Ted is experiencing, namely an object which is somehow two completely different things at the same time (each with mutually exclusive properties). He does this by first reinforcing the nature of a ball of string (using texture and appearance), then he reinforces the nature of a tire iron (by contextualising it and reminding us of its function and weight), then he directs our attention to keep alternating between the memory of the tire iron and the actuality of the ball of string. A virtuoso performance by a gifted writer!

If we look at the philosophical aspects of the book we will see that Phil shows a great playfulness about the mystery of ordinary things. Where many philosophers mistake solemnity for depth, Phil retains a childlike sense of wonder and curiosity (childlike, not childish). It percolates through this book in such a way that we smile with joy whilst we marvel at the philosophical questions. In this respect Phil's enquiry is very like that of Rene Magritte (the Belgian surrealist). Both regard reality with a degree of scepticism as something plastic and unreliable; both challenge our apparently safe understandings of the world. In the hands of writer and painter, the ordinary is revealed as something extraordinary. Indeed the 'Ball of string / Tire iron' problem of mutually exclusive realities which are nevertheless one and the same has a very close visual counterpart in Magritte's painting 'Il Telescopio' (shown here). In this painting we are presented with a visual paradox; we see (through two window panes) a blue sky and some clouds, but then we notice that the right hand window being ajar has revealed a background which contradicts the sky (the gap shows a dark void). Perhaps it was only a painted sky on the surface of the window? However Magritte's masterstroke lies in the upper corner of the right hand window where we



do indeed see through the window to the window frame. The window is see-through and opaque at the same time. We are seeing the sky – and we aren't seeing the sky at the same time. The connections between Dick's fiction and Magritte's paintings would inform a very rich study – which would prove mutually illuminating. Perhaps one day I will present such a piece, but for now I must not stray too far from our subject of **Cosmic Puppets**.

Some of the Russian formalists were keen on a process of 'defamiliarization,' in which a writer describes and presents the world with a startling freshness. That is to say that their writing avoids the cliché, the obvious and the well trammelled paths of convention. Instead they stalk their subject, ambushing it to the point where the reader might not (at first) understand the thing being described. But once they 'see' it, there is an 'aha' moment of realisation – they see the thing again as if for the first time; the reader now has more of the thing itself than before. As Proust once said, *'The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.'* The above scenes in **Cosmic Puppets** represent a kind of *Defamiliarization par excellence*. In juxtaposing a ball of string with a tire iron, Dick has reinforced the intrinsic (and very different) properties of each. The such-ness of each is accentuated. Then, in having us believe they are one and the same thing, Dick takes us to a deep mystery of forms where we experience estrangement from reality itself. His writing is fresh and original and the phenomenon of believing a ball of string and a tire iron are one and the same, is delightful and strange at the same time. Indeed the whole 'string/tire iron' passage achieves something like a Zen Koan; as we suspend our judgement and explore the new possibilities.

Incidentally, the ability to hold two mutually exclusive frames of reference together simultaneously in this way is known as 'bissociation,' a term coined by Arthur Koestler. He thought the mechanism was at the heart of all Humour, Insight and Creativity. It involves 'a leap from one plane or associative context

to another.' (**Janus: A Summing Up** – by Arthur Koestler) various means, including:

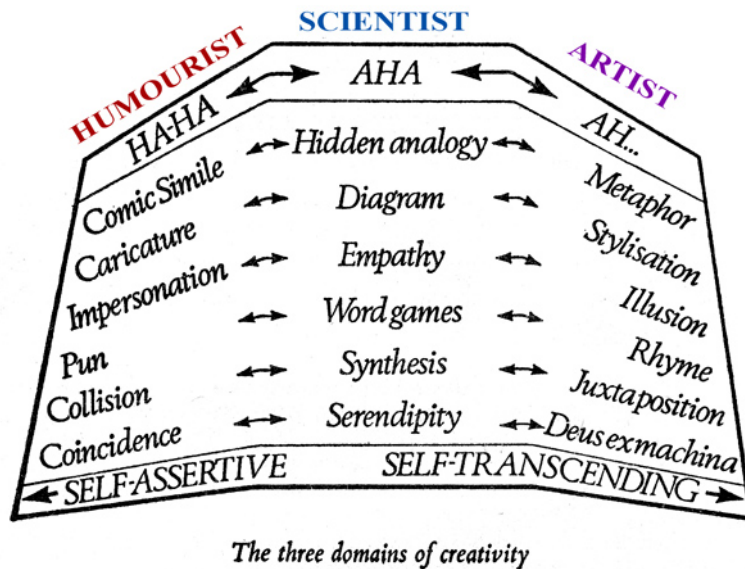
(p. 113). It works in *Humour* at the point where one frame of reference is traded for another (every joke is after all a thwarted expectation). It works with *Insight* in a similar way by 'combining previously unrelated mental structures in such a way that you get more out of the emergent whole than you have put in.' (*ibid.* P.131). It works in *Creativity* when new material, previously ignored, presents hidden connections and becomes pertinent to the task in hand. In this way we move seamlessly from Haha (Humour) to Aha (Insight) to Ah... (Creative Vision). All three are based on the mechanism of bissociation and how well we can relate material from disparate contexts. The man who discovered Vitamin C, for example, suggested that the key was to process the percept in a new way, an unconventional way:

"Discovery consists in seeing what everyone else has seen and thinking what no one else has thought." – Albert Szent-Györgyi. I think this is why seeing a ball of string but knowing it is a tire iron is funny and deep at the same time.

All of which seems relevant not just to **Cosmic Puppets** (where a whole town is bissociated with a degraded version of itself) but also to Dick and his habit of combining profound insight with humour. Wit and Wisdom (Wits) are closer than many folks think; perhaps this is why the Buddha smiles?

Early in the story, Phil shows us what it would be like if St Paul's 'glass' were cleaned – *To see through a glass clearly*, as it were. The boy Peter hands Ted a special 'filter-lens' through which Ted sees the figures of the two God's. Ted is surprised that what he first thought was haze above the mountains was in fact a whole figure standing, but he wasn't standing in the landscape, he *was* the landscape. (p.59- 61). This echoes a favourite quote of Dick's, by Idries Shah (a modern day Sufi): '*The worker is hidden in the workshop.*' (**Man, Android and Machine** by Philip K Dick). Another of Phil's favourite quotes is pertinent here too: '*The nature of things is in the habit of concealing itself.*' (Heraclitus Fragment 123, as quoted in **VALIS** p.63)

The problem for Ted is that of undoing the concealment, to reveal the true reality 'beneath the blanket of illusion.' (p.96) In **Cosmic Puppets**, this is achieved by



1. By using Peter's 'Filter-lens' (p.59-61)

2. By use of Christopher's 'S.R.' (spell remover) contraption – a metal, conical hat which runs on electrical power. There is gentle humour in the scenes where Christopher demonstrates it; Phil juxtaposes Christopher's great solemnity with the 'hats' ridiculous appearance. Nevertheless, with the wearer's concentration, the device restores a wine bottle to its original form (a coffee grind-

er). (p. 83-90)

3. By remembering the original which has been 'hidden' and by focussing on it and re imagining it. (p.114-117)

All these methods utilize focus and concentration of one kind or another. The last two suggest that mind affects matter, that in fact, mind might be 'midwife' to reality. These ideas are in one sense confirmed by Quantum Mechanics which tells us that a photon will behave differently if we observe it than if we don't. Observed, it behaves as a particle; unobserved it behaves as a wave. (Ref: The Copenhagen interpretation as devised by Neils Bohr and Werner Heisenberg).

Furthermore, when Christopher uses his SR device to turn the wine bottle back into a coffee grinder, it transitions first into an indeterminate state where it is neither bottle nor grinder – but has the potential to become either (p.85-86). This is very like the cat in Schrödinger's famous thought experiment which remains in a state of being neither alive nor dead until it is observed, at which time it resolves itself into one of the two states. Until then it remains in a 'Super-state' which has the potential to be either dead or alive (and could accurately be described as being both at the same time)!

There are many leitmotifs in Dick's work which see their first well-honed expression in **Cosmic Puppets**; themes which Dick will return to again and again, and characters seen here who will continue to populate his fiction. For example, that of Peter, an obvious Dickian archetype; the cold, predatory, malevolent boy. We see him again as Manfred, in **Martian Time Slip**, who reduces the world to meaningless babble, where words become



'gubble-gubble,' newspapers are reduced to nonsense and music is reduced to screeches and shrieks. The koinos kosmos which the other characters enjoy and inhabit is slowly devoured by Manfred's voracious ideos kosmos. In **Cosmic Puppets**, Peter/Ahriman is described as a similar force:

'It fed constantly. ... It swept up and absorbed everything, all life, whatever it touched. It turned life into a barren path of filth and ruin and death.

Ahriman took in life and breathed out the numbing, barren chill of deep space. A frigid, biting wind. The blight of death and emptiness. A sickening odor, a rancid stench. Its natural smell. Decay and corruption and death. And it continued to grow. Soon it would be too big for the valley. Too big for the world. (Ch 13, p.159)

In **VALIS**, Phil asserts with mantra-like regularity that *'the Kingdom never ended.'* That, in fact, the Kingdom was still there but remained somehow hidden. (p.39) This was exactly Ted Barton's discovery some twenty-four years earlier in Millgate. Indeed, elsewhere in **VALIS**, Phil explains his idea in terms that are very resonant with the two Millgate's of **Cosmic Puppets**:

'Prior to that, during the interval in which he had experienced the two-world superimposition, had seen not only California, USA, of the year 1974 but also ancient Rome, he had discerned within the superimposition a Gestalt shared by both space-time continua, their common element: a Black Iron Prison. This is what the dream referred to as 'the Empire.' He knew it because, upon seeing the Black Iron Prison, he had recognized it. Everyone dwelt in it without realizing it. The Black Iron Prison was their world.' (**VALIS**, p.40)

They Live in a world very much like the one Ahriman had ravaged. Put another way, it's as if in 1974, Phil became Ted Barton knowing his town was ersatz – a fake.

Indeed **Cosmic Puppets** is so laced with Phil's most recurrent and important ideas and archetypes, that it is difficult to imagine any Dick fan, scholar, reader, enthusiast, etc. wanting to marginalise or ignore it. For example, Ormazd, the God who forgets his own deity represents a theme Phil would return to in **The Divine Invasion** (with the character Emmanuel). Then there's the little girl, Mary who helps Barton; an archetype Phil returns to with Sophia in **VALIS**, Zina in **The Divine Invasion** and to a lesser extent, Jessica McClain in **The Game Players of Titan**. Mary also represents one of the first Dark-Haired Girls.

Patrick Clark has suggested that *'Divine Invasion is in some way Cosmic Puppets re-written.'* (Otaku #20).

This is an astute point worthy of greater exploration. Suffice to say that despite the twenty-four year gap between the publication of the two books, the same themes continued to curl around Phil's mind.

Whole scenes in **Cosmic Puppets** prefigure those in later novels; **Time Out of Joint's** dissolving objects, **UBIK's** entropic forces, **Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep's** android-mind and lack of empathy, **Flow My Tears the Policeman Said's** trade of one world for another which looks the same, but isn't, **The Galactic Pot Healer's** two Glimmung's and their bi-theistic struggle over the sunken Cathedral, etc. It could even be said that the Millgate of **Cosmic Puppets** has an alternative history, like the central idea presented in **The Man in the High Castle**.

Perhaps the most important ingredient of **Cosmic Puppets** (to Phil himself) was the philosophy of Zoroastrianism (once one of the largest religions). The writing of this story proved to be a watershed moment for the author, especially in his philosophical journey, introducing him to ideas which would remain important to him throughout the whole of his life. Nearly a quarter of a century after the Ace Edition, Phil recalled with great affection why **Cosmic Puppets** was significant to him: *'...without my intending this, in order to write it I had to do some research into religion; Into Zoroastrianism. And this turned out to be a turning point in my life. Because although I researched Zoroastrianism simply to write a novel, I found that once I had studied a dualistic, bitheistic religion, it was very hard for me to go back to monotheism after that...So it had influenced me spiritually, theologically, religiously.'* (Philip K Dick: **In His Own Words** by Gregg Rickman, Revised Edition p.116 – date of quote 9-30-81)

In fact, Phil would come to describe the visions he had in 2-3-74 as *'totally Zoroastrian.'* **Selected Letters 1974** (Letter to Claudia Bush, July 15 1974. p.174). The following day, in another letter, he writes, *'...it is obvious now that Ormazd is speaking to me in my dreams.'* (**Ibid**. Letter to Claudia Bush, July 16

***'I enjoy it. I enjoyed writing it and I enjoy reading it.'***  
**-Philip K. Dick**

1974. p.178).

It is clear that **Cosmic Puppets** remained a very important book to Phil and he spoke of it with obvious affection. In Gregg Rickman's invaluable book of interviews **Philip K. Dick: In His Own Words**, Phil says about **Cosmic Puppets**, *'I enjoy it. I enjoyed writing it and I enjoy reading it.'* (Revised Edition p.116).

So if **Cosmic Puppets** is interesting, typically Dickian, well written, full of themes which he would return to and which proved significant to Phil's own life, what



stopped it from gaining its deserved popularity? I think the real answer lies in a cocktail of factors, some of which have been touched upon previously and are worth collecting together:

i. It was marketed as Science Fiction when it is clearly Fantasy. Both Satellite and Ace presented it as SF in their editions. The blurb on the Satellite edition reads 'A Novel of Cosmic Conflict' and the Ace edition blurb reads 'An American Town run by galactic invaders.' The Satellite cover (beautifully painted by Kelly Freas) shows a giant figure in space performing some kind of magic with earth and another planet, much like a juggler would juggle balls; the Ace cover (also well painted by Ed Valigursky) shows the adolescent fantasy of a teenage boy trapping a miniature woman in a glass jar. The misrepresentation of the story as being one with 'galactic invaders' and 'cosmic conflict' may have led readers to expect another E.E. 'Doc' Smith style, space opera (which were doing good trade at the time). The readers' disappointment might have been more a reflection of them being duped rather than from any displeasure at the actual text.

ii. Many SF fans shun Fantasy as if it were beneath them.

iii. After the Ace edition in 1957 it remained out of print for the next twenty-six years (most of Phil's working life).

iv. Phil referred to it (in its **Glass of Darkness** incarnation) as 'slight' and people took him at face value (the only part of **Cosmic Puppets** he ever referred to as 'slight' was its word count). Its quantity is slight, not its quality.

v. Critics and self appointed experts have dismissed it, and then had their work referenced by further critics and 'experts.' I believe their harsh words have in-

timidated some writers into falling in line with their knee-jerk pronouncements.

This last factor still casts a long shadow. I hope this essay has gone some way to challenge the cursory dismissals with a fairer account. In particular I wanted to highlight the merits of this fine book and draw attention to the high quality of its craft.

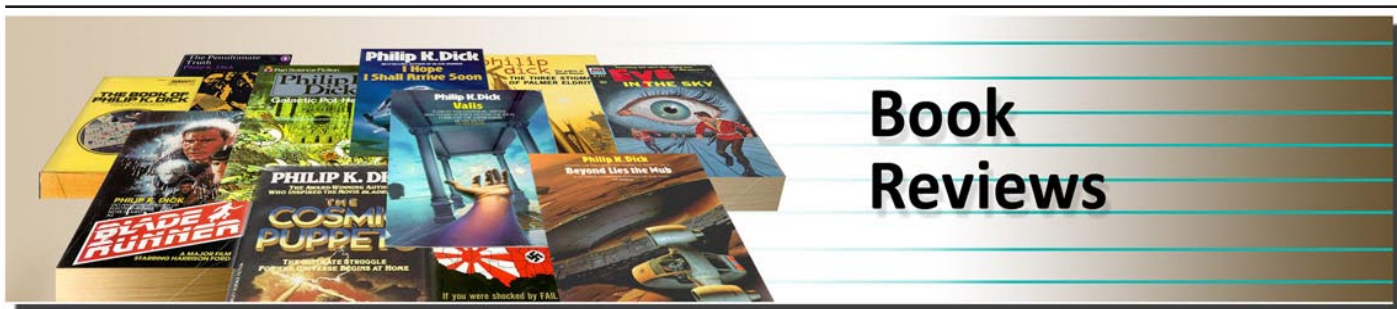
In a 1981 interview with Gregg Rickman, Phil described **Cosmic Puppets** as '*...the greatest fantasy novel ever written...It was a tour-de-force in a way. Because I was writing a fantasy novel for a publication that I loved, which no longer existed.*' (**Philip K Dick: In His Own Words** by Gregg Rickman, Revised Edition p.115 – date of quote 9-30-81) Some may assume this was hyperbole on Phil's part or even tongue in cheek bravado, but nothing in the interview suggests this. In fact everything points to the idea that Phil really did think a lot of this book. A little later in the same interview he says: '*I originally conceived of myself as a fantasy writer...I loved that kind of fantasy myself.*' (**Ibid** p.117 – date of quote 9-30-81)

To me **Cosmic Puppets** is a beautiful little Hymn to the act of creation, to form from formlessness, to life from clay, and to the restoration of that which was lost.

If **Cosmic Puppets** has become a guilty pleasure – it might be that someone else is pulling your strings. Watch out for Ahriman he wears many guises – he may make you see **Cosmic Puppets** as something poor and degraded when in fact, if you regain your focus, it will be revealed as a bright shining gem.

I am grateful to Frank C. Bertrand for his transcript of the Hour 25 Talk with Philip K. Dick by Mike Hodel.





# Book Reviews

## Whose Kindred Spirit?

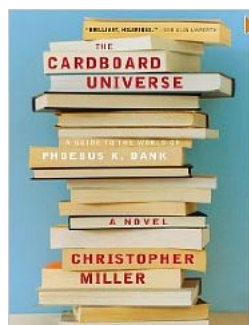
### A Kindred Spirit by e.j. Morgan

Albuquerque, N.M.: ZiaLink Ink, 2011, 352 pgs., \$14.95  
Trade pbk: ISBN: 978-0-9827619-0-8

### Book review by Frank C. Bertrand

© December 2011

Most die-hard, so called “Dickheads” are well aware that Philip K. Dick made himself a prominent character in two of his novels, **VALIS** (1981) and **Radio Free Albemuth** (1985). Some of them also know that other writers have made Philip K. Dick a character in their fiction. These range from Richard A. Lupoff’s story, “**The Digital Wristwatch of Philip K. Dick**,” first published in December 1985, to the first collection of stories explicitly or implicitly featuring Philip K. Dick as a character, **Welcome To Reality: the Nightmares of Philip K. Dick** (1991), most ably edited by Uwe Anton. Of the stories, two longer ones are worth mentioning: “**Dick – A Gnostic Death in Life**,” by Gero Reimann (trans. by Jim Young), and “**A Little Something for us Reincarnats**,” by Thomas Ziegler (trans. by Jim Young).



Fan fiction has also been part of this growing trend, in particular Jim Bauer’s “**Philip K. Dick is Dead (No, no, he’s in Cold-Pak, Looking Out)**” (1998), and Andrew May’s intriguing “**The Call of Cool-O: Philip K. Dick meets H.P. Lovecraft**” (2000).

More recently there is Chris Miller’s 2009 novel **The Cardboard Universe: A Guide to the World of**

**Phoebus K. Dank**. Yes, the same initials, PKD. And Phoebus even shares a biography and writing aesthetic much like Philip K. Dick’s, to the extent that we learn Dank has written a book about a fictitious SF writer named Philip K. Dick (Harper Perennial, SC, pp. 56, 107).

Today, (2011), we have the appearance of a very imaginative, at times quite funny, yet poignant novel by e.j. Morgan titled **A Kindred Spirit**. Yes, Kindred is the middle name of Philip K. Dick, though, in a May 4, 1973 letter he writes:

*“The middle initial in my name stands for Kindred, my mother’s maiden name. Kafka would be more apt, perhaps; maybe not; maybe Kindred is right on. Is it?”*

The word can also mean “of a similar nature or character,”

as in “a kindred spirit.” Very word clever, that e.j. Morgan.

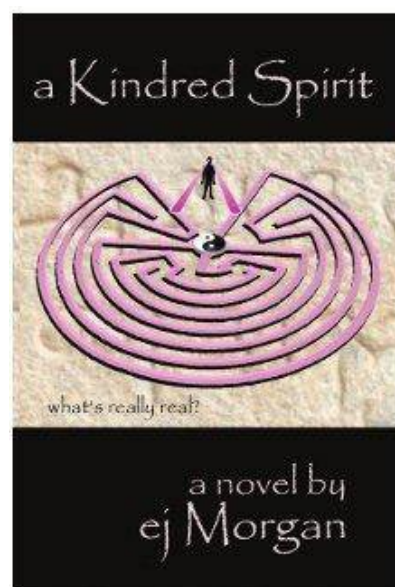
In her novel we meet 27-year-old Nicole J. Perceval, from Ottumwa, Iowa, a senior reporter for the Ottumwa Courier newspaper. It’s early in 1982 and Niki is intent on going to the Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles to interview Dr. John Gribbin, the acclaimed, but controversial author of *The Jupiter Effect*, which postulates, “*that on March 10, 1982, a rare planetary alignment could create such an intense gravitational pull that it might spawn world-wide tsunamis and devastating earthquakes*” (p. 3).

Niki ends up driving a rental car to LA, gets her interview, only to have it all spoiled when Dr. Gribbin withdraws his theory before an international media audience. In attempting to cope with the embarrassing fallout of Gribbin’s action, including the ribbing of one of her newer co-workers, Niki somewhat impulsively snaps back at him, “*I think I’m gonna look for a new job*” (p. 37). She then heads quickly for the nearby Public Library. And just as she reaches its top front step:

*“...she felt light-headed, dizzy, and braced herself against one of the big columns. The traffic noise, and voices of a couple passing by below, faded out. All she could hear was a high-pitched whine in her left ear. Everything looked gray and her field of vision narrowed.*

*“She blinked slowly, but when her eyelids lifted, something was wrong. The familiar Ottumwa landscape was gone – replaced by something that looked like ancient Rome”* (p. 39)

It should be noted that the narrative to this point has been interspersed with a second one relating the last days and hours of Philip K. Dick. And it’s at the end of chapter two when Phil’s spirit, yes, spirit, hints, “*the real adventure is just beginning*” (p. 33). What this real adventure turns out to be is setup in the significantly titled chapter three, “*Black Iron Prison or Palm Tree Garden.*”





The not so subtle “ancient Rome” allusion (just one of many creative ones to be ferreted out) to Dick’s novel VALIS is given even more emphasis when we learn that Phil’s spirit has been watching Niki walking down the street, and:

*“The experience was fascinating, like watching a movie. She’s not even a dark-haired girl, he thought reaching to scratch his head. He didn’t have any hair, or even a head. “Where am I? How did I get here?” he must have asked aloud.*

*“You can help her,” an authoritative voice boomed” (p. 40)*

The authoritative voice, Saint Pete, Gatekeeper, proceeds to inform Phil’s spirit that not only must he decide between Rebirth and Eternity, but also Phil has apparently not completed his mission:

*“Did you answer the question?”*

*“...You mean what’s real – really human?” Phil squirmed under the Gatekeeper’s gaze. “I guess not, but you gotta admit, I sure found a lot of ways to ask the question” (pp. 44-45).*

Phil’s spirit chooses Eternity and, to complete his mission, is assigned by Saint Pete to be a Guardian, on probation, for, yes, Niki. As Saint Peter pointedly explains, *“She’s a writer, but needs encouragement. She’s lost her way. You can inspire her. Be her muse, just as others were for you” (p. 45).* How she finds her way, with the help of Phil’s spirit, who in turn is helped by the Rev. James Pike’s spirit, is a story well worth reading. It’s one replete with intriguing Gnostic and Shamanist motifs, let alone the search to know herself Niki pursues.

The reader does need to remember, however, that this novel is not science fiction. It is, in fact, a 2011 Global eBook Award winner in the category of Spiritual/Metaphysical. In *A Kindred Spirit* Jami Morgan does indeed write about the afterlife, spirits, and some of the metaphysical elements in Gnosticism and Shamanism. But the reader shouldn’t let this overshadow enjoying Niki’s story and how she eventually discovers her own kindred spirit.

[FCB, 11/11, **4.5 out of 5** gold bookmarks]

## Wisdom Born Of Pain

**Tessa B. Dick: My Life On The Edge Of Reality.**

Charleston, SC: CreateSpace, 2011, 194 pgs.

ISBN: 13-978-146114690, pbk., \$19.95

**Book Review by Frank C. Bertrand**

© December 2011

**W**hether you consider this new book by Tessa B. Dick a memoir and/or autobiography isn’t that important. What is, are the paths and detours taken, and roads not taken in it. More significantly, it’s about who and what Tessa B. Dick is, and how she got to be that way. It is, in fact, a loud exclamation that says: Look at me. I am woman, and much more than just the

fifth wife of the famous American science fiction writer Philip K. Dick.

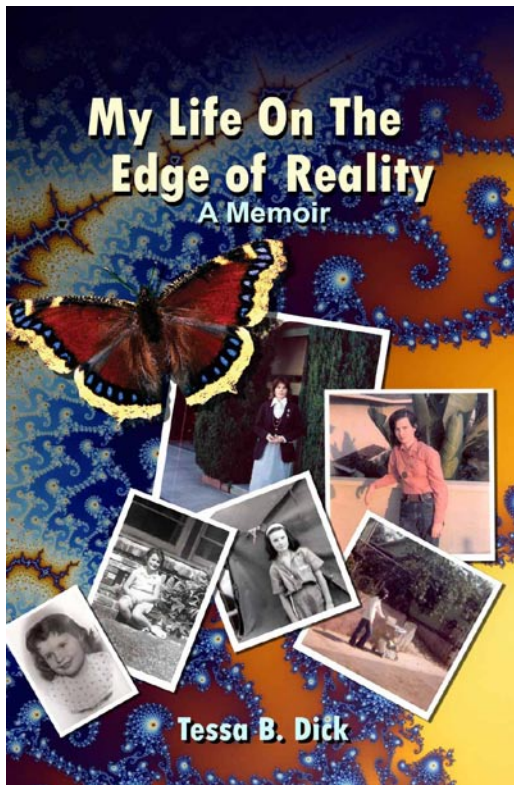
That much more, however, takes place in anything but an idyllic Norman Rockwell setting. Her life on the edge of reality, growing up as Leslie Ann Busby in Culver City, California in a dysfunctional family, is at times disturbing, heart wrenching and full of inner emotional turmoil versus outward action. To her credit she does not gloss over, or skip over, the rough spots. But it’s enough to make one think of the 1966 Beach Boys song, “I Just Wasn’t Made For These Times.”

There are, however, for most of us, special moments in our lives that become pleasant memories, the kind that help one deal later on with the absurdities of life. Tessa narrates these amidst the nine chapters that make up section one of her book, from birth (6-20-54)

through the end of High School in 1972, with chapter nine being aptly titled “Breaking Free.”

In chapter one Tessa writes that at age four:

*“I loved the bright colors of the Sunday funnies, and I wanted to know what the cartoon characters were saying. I usually skipped “Prince Valiant” because it had too many big words and it wasn’t funny. My favorite was “Li’l Abner”, even though it was harder to read than some of the other strips. Sometimes Steve would read “Dick Tracy” to me; I was fascinated by Tracy’s two-way wrist radio. Once I had learned to read, I began teaching myself to write by copying the words in the comic strips.” (pp. 22-23)*





Then, in chapter five we learn that:  
*"In the early years, Christmas was a magical time. Mom would light up the Christmas tree and dim the lights in the living room, heat up some apply cider with cinnamon sticks and play Christmas carols on the Hi-Fi. I loved to "Sing Along With Mitch" when she played the Mitch Miller Christmas Albums. The smell of frankincense takes me back to those happy times."* (p. 67)

Such happy times do not occur often enough in Tessa's memoir. The reader instead finds statements like: *"In fact, somewhere between my birth and when I started Kindergarten at age five, Mom's personality began to alternate between a caring mother and a demon from Hell."* (p. 20) Or: *"Mom continually characterized me as lazy, irresponsible and dishonest. No matter how hard I tried to be good and prove her wrong, she never was convinced that I would not end up in prison some day."* (p. 35)

It's in section two, chapter one, that Tessa writes about on July 1, 1972 she got an invite to a Beach Party from a girl, Ginger, she didn't know all that well. And, *"At that party I met a little-known science fiction writer named Philip K. Dick, went home with him that night and eventually married him."* (p. 108) The wedding took place in their living-room on April 18, 1973.

And it's in the three chapters of this section that Tessa relates what it was like living *"...a fairly normal lower-middle class lifestyle,"* with visitors almost every day, no car at first, learning about his past life and wives, *"...a habit he referred to as serial marriage."* There's also her role in the writing of **A Scanner Darkly**, the so-called "Pink Beam" episode, the birth of their son, Christopher, Phil moving out to save Doris Sauter and Tessa divorcing him.

Throughout all this Tessa is also able to give us some sense of the complexities of keeping Phil's writing ego happy, while at the same time trying to balance her own feelings and drives with support of his literary ambitions. But none of this section is necessarily new. Tessa has written about her relationship with Philip K. Dick before, in the 48-page booklet *The Dim Reflection Of Philip K. Dick* (CreateSpace, 2008).

In **My Life On The Edge Of Reality** Tessa B. Dick certainly provides riveting life experiences in the first two sections that can't be easily ignored or neatly pigeonholed. And up to this point in her book, it's an emotional yet stirring, if not discomforting memoir well worth reading. For me it's reminiscent of a line from Helen Reddy's

1973 Grammy Award winning song, "I Am Woman," which reads, in the chorus, "But it's wisdom born of pain." The reader might also want to compare with Joyce Johnson's 1983 National Book Critics Circle award winner, *Minor Characters*, about being Jack Kerouac's girlfriend for two years, or Maryann Burk Carver's 2006 book, *What It Used To Be Like: A Portrait Of My Marriage To Raymond Carver*.

She has chosen to add, however, one additional section and a kind of afterword that, I think, detract from what she accomplished in the earlier parts. I found section three, titled "Secrets" and the afterword comprised of 23 dreams, not really relevant to, or all that helpful in, understanding the first two sections. The secrets and dreams would work better in a separate book and therefore get the individual attention they need.

The short section four, though, does provide a kind of closure and bring her life up to date, wherein after teaching English and communications at Chapman University for 12 years, she has retired to a small mountain community to write a variety of fiction, nonfiction and poetry.

[FCB, 9/11, 4 out of 5 gold bookmarks]

## A Lack of Empathy?

### Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?

**Dust To Dust Vol. 1** by Chris Roberson / Art by Robert Adler

Los Angeles, CA: BOOM! Studios, 2010, \$9.99, 126 pgs.  
 ISBN: 978-1-60886-027-2

### A graphic novel review by Frank C. Bertrand

© December 2011

It started sometime in 1966. As Lawrence Sutin, Philip K. Dick's best biographer, indicates: *"Through 1966 he completed his work on Ganymede and wrote Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? and a children's SF novel, The Glimmung of Plowman's Planet, a preliminary foray into mate-*



rial utilized in the excellent *Galactic Pot-Healer*" (Divine Invasions, pp. 151-152).

David Hyde informs us that "...Perry Kinman and Andrew Butler have it [Do Androids Dream] completed by June 20, 1966. Presumably that is the date the manuscript reached the SMLA" (Pink Beam, p. 163), as "The Electric Toad." If Kinman and Butler

are correct, there is an intriguing gap of 21 months until Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? is published by Doubleday and Co., Inc., March of 1968, in a hardcover first edition of 210 pages, costing \$3.95.

In a 9/30/81 interview, Philip K. Dick said about this novel: "That was written when things were really quite stable for me. Nancy and I had a house and a child and a fair amount of money. Things were good. 'At that point I was contrasting Nancy's warmth with the coldness of the people I'd known before. I was beginning to develop the idea of the human versus the android, the bipedal humanoid that is not essentially human'" (PKD In His Own Words, p. 182).

The rest, as the cliché puts it, is history, one that has Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? becoming its own industry, the latest manifestation of which is Ridley Scott agreeing to direct a sequel to the June 25, 1982 movie version, Blade Runner. Subsequent to the movie's initial release, Marvel Comics printed a "Super Special" 45-page comic book in September 1982, adapted by Archie Goodwin, and marketed as "The Official Comics Adaptation of Blade Runner."

Then, in 1994 an abridged audio book, running approximately three hours, featuring Matthew Modine and Callista Flockhart, was released (an unabridged version, lasting about 9.5 hours, read by Scott Brick, came out in November, 2007 from Random House as a tie-in for Blade Runner: The Final Cut). One year later, in 1995, appeared the first of three authorized novel sequels by K.W. Jeter, titled Blade Runner 2: The Edge of Human, followed in 1996 by Blade Runner 3: Replicant Night, and in 2000 Blade Runner 4: Eye and Talon.

In 1997 Virgin Interactive Entertainment published the PC game version of Blade Runner, designed by

David Leary and James Walls at Westwood Studios in Las Vegas, Nevada. After a twelve-year hiatus, in 2009 BOOM! Studios starts publishing a 24-issue high quality comic book limited series

adaptation, with artwork by Tony Parker, containing the novel's complete text. The following year brings a stage version of Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, adapted and direct-

ed by Edward Einhorn, at the Untitled Theater Company #61 in New York City.

That same year, in April, BOOM! Studios announce a forthcoming twelve issue prequel miniseries, titled Dust To Dust, written by Chris Roberson and artwork by Robert Adler.

Yes, prequel!

Little did Philip K. Dick realize what he wrought 45 years ago, or foresee what others would do to it. Dust To Dust is a graphic novel, or comic book, depending on how you want to define these two contentious visual concepts.

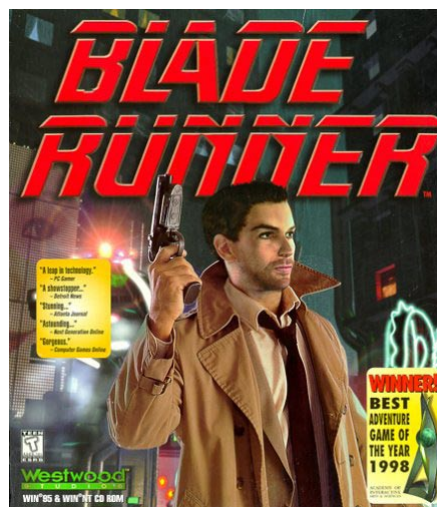
Graphic novels have, in fact, become both big business and respectable. Sales rose 13% from 2009 to 2010, for a total gross of \$340 million. The genre has at least one academic publication, Journal of Graphic Novels & Comics, and, in 2009, the prestigious MLA published Teaching the Graphic Novel, edited by Stephen E. Tabachnick. Then, from February 8-11, 2012, there is going to be a large Graphic Novels, Comics, and Popular Culture academic conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Why a prequel?

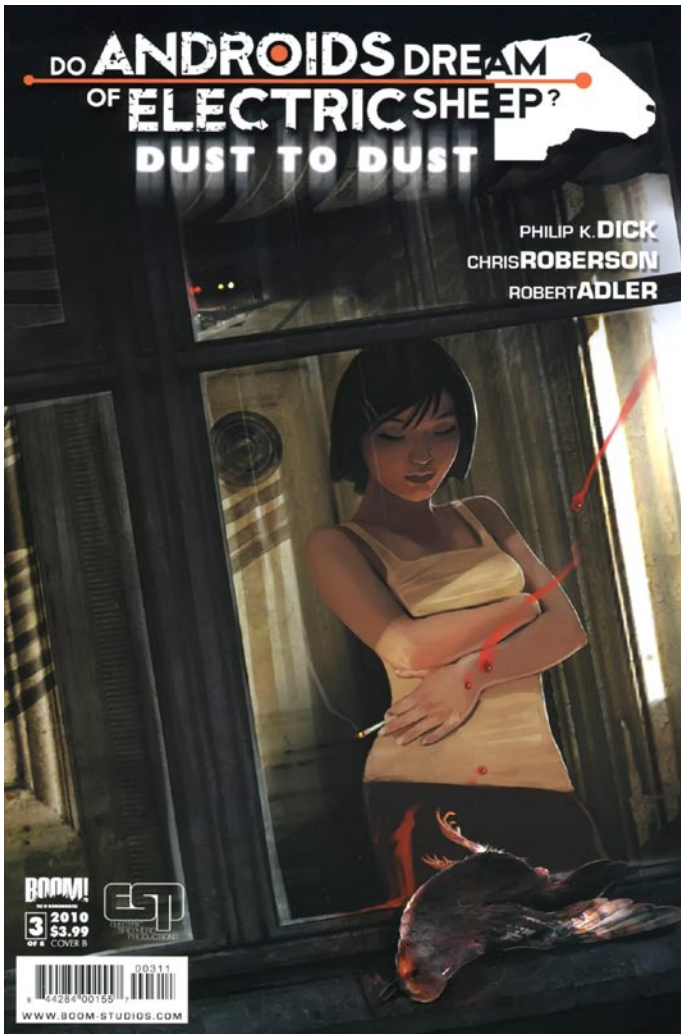
To make money from increasing graphic novel sales? Chris Roberson has stated that "...we've tried to make the comic work completely independently, so that a reader doesn't have to be familiar with the original novel or the adaptation at all in order to enjoy it" (Comic Book Resources, 4/29/10, p. 2). This is a reasonable explanation for the story, but not a cogent justification for making a graphic novel prequel to Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, to begin with. Readers are much more likely to wonder about what happens next, not the obverse. Thus, the rampant blog, chatroom speculation about what Ridley Scott is going to do. But, the critical reception to K.W. Jeter's three novel sequels has been underwhelming, with the third one being available only in England.

A happy little surge of electricity piped by automatic alarm from the mood organ beside his bed awakened Rich Deckard. Surprised -- it always surprised him to find himself awake without prior notice-- he got from his bed, stood up in his multi-colored pajamas and stretched. Now, in her bed, his wife Iran opened her eyes, blinked, then groaned and shut her eyes again.

"You set your Penfield too weak," he said to her. "I'll reset it and you'll be awake and --"







Yet, there is a prequel.

Granted, sophisticated textual and visual material can be found in *Dust To Dust*. It does look good, reminiscent at times of the best of *Heavy Metal* magazine. As Francisca Goldsmith aptly writes, *"Images here are not illustration that simply repeat or amplify text, but rather carry information not revealed verbally. Correspondingly, the verbal content provides information not present in the image; it is not a caption"* (The Readers' Advisory Guide to Graphic Novels, 2010, p. 4).

Such a narrative intersection between image and text, however, raises the thorny issue of critical evaluation. How does a graphic novel communicate its ideas? Should constructive criticism focus on story flow or graphic image? Or, do implicit connections between text and visuals require judging both?

This becomes more problematic in *Dust To Dust* as it attempts to portray a graphic/textual prequel to an already established literary novel, *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* with its own additional media versions and sequels. This back-story, as it were, is trying to correlate with an existing pool of background knowledge.

The reader ends up constructing graphic/text associations between what they already know and what *Dust To Dust* depicts in words and images.

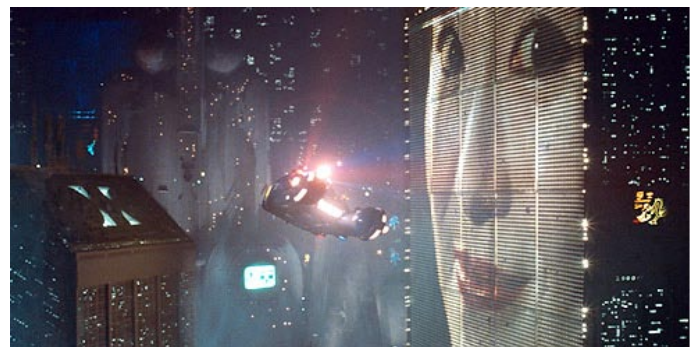
The story itself is told via Philip K. Dick's "multi-foci" point-of-view technique. In Book One (of four) we meet the three main protagonists, Charlie Victor, Malcolm Reed and Dr. Samantha Wu, as well as the primary antagonist, Commander Talus. Charlie Victor is a C-V model android built by the Grozzi Corporation (see chapter five in the novel) hunting runaway C-V androids. He is assisted in this by Malcolm Reed, a designated Special with an "empathy node" that enables him to sense lack of emotions in others. Sound familiar?

Dr. Wu works in a research project at the Presidio on why animals are more susceptible to "dust" from World War Terminus than humans. She does so with a Dr. Penfield. And Commander Talus is the apparent leader of one group of runaway, malfunctioned C-V androids. The first thing we see him say is, *"All organic life will be extinct, soon enough"* (p. 21). Sound even more familiar?

The plot has Charlie Victor and Malcolm Reed contacting Dr. Wu about the possibility of a runaway C-V android working on the research project staff, said individual then kidnapping Malcolm, which is the "cliff-hanger" ending Book Four of volume one.

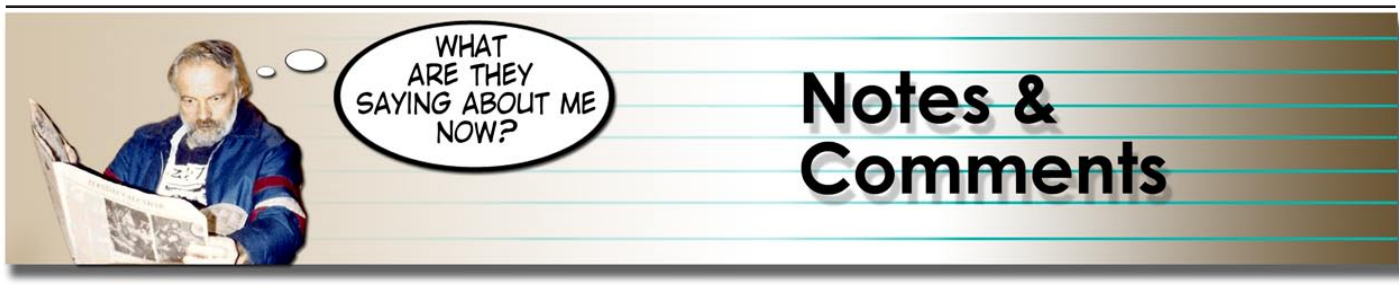
No doubt those who enjoy graphic novels will find *Dust To Dust* visually entertaining and should read it. Readers who are also Philip K. Dick fans, if not purists, will find not just the notion of a prequel to *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* disconcerting. There is no pagination in *Dust To Dust*, which makes finding and referencing particular panels or passages less than convenient. But its salient difficulty is familiarity. As the pithy idiom states, familiarity breeds contempt. That is, the better one knows something, the more likely one will find fault with it.

The, at least, implicit familiarity in *Dust To Dust* is, I think, distracting if not intrusive. Sure, one could "read" just the graphics, and not the text. Anyone familiar with *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, however, might well end up asking what the perpetrators of *Dust To Dust* dream of. [FCB, 12/11, 3 out of 5 gold bookmarks]



From the motion picture *Blade Runner* 1982





## From Ted Hand

I see similarities in the presentation of religious ideas in **MAZE OF DEATH**, **A SCANNER DARKLY**, and **RADIO FREE ALBEMUTH**, which seem to look at the darker side of Dick's theories. At the end of RFA we have a powerful critique of the VALIS experiences—if they don't mean anything in terms of the real world, what do they mean? I also see more spirituality in **SCANNER** than is usually remarked—I think he's playing with the idea of redemption and problematizing the way we look at sin—but the outcome is again rather bleak. In **MAZE** we have an allegory of our spiritual longing, but ultimately the situation of the characters turns out to be quite claustrophobic.



he had received a message from God telling him the modern world was a fraud, a simulacrum laid over a reality that had not changed since the first century AD. He understood, or came to understand as he wrote about his experience, that this might be a delusion, and that it might be understood as a metaphor—but, uncomfortably for modern sensibilities, only in the way that St Paul or St John the Divine might have been regarded as deluded, or that the Gospels should be read only metaphorically.

Dick's theology, though not quite orthodox, is not noticeably more odd or problematic than that of Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena or St John of the Cross.

## From Paul di Filippo's review of the EXEGESIS:

Any science fiction fan alive in 1974, told that nearly forty years later the writer of such lowbrow paperback originals as **Clans of the Alphane**

**Moon** and **The Un-teleported Man** would be included in the prestigious Library of America series and also have his philosophical diaries appear from a major publisher, would have regarded such a situation as proof positive of alien invasion, space-time

warpage, or engineered drugs dumped into the global water supplies.



## From William Gibson's Paris Review (Summer 2011) interview:

I was never much of a Dick fan. He wrote an awful lot of novels, and I don't think his output was very even.

I loved **The Man in the High Castle**, which was the first really beautifully realized alternate history I read, but by the time I was thinking about writing myself, he'd started publishing novels that were ostensibly autobiographical, and which, it seems to me, he probably didn't think were fiction.

*"I was never much of a Dick fan"*

## From Andrew McKie's review:

But in one respect, PKD is out of step with the times. The Baudrillardians are happy to have him point out that time is an illusion; that the authorities are out to get us; that God can talk through cheesy television advertisements; and that, with the endless refractions of different media playing the same message back and forth, nothing is quite as it seems. But they are happy for him to do so just as long as it is a fun metaphor making an important point but not to be taken seriously.

Judging by these journals, however, what Dick thought was much more dangerous. He maintained that, in 1974,

## Some Warren Ellis comments on PKD:

I almost wish someone would conjure a Philip K Dick in Second Life, like the missing android of a year or two back. He'd enjoy the girl with error-message eyes: someone blinking around the evidence of fake reality. Second Life is very much the Philip K Dick experience, some days. He had a comedy notion that everything is fake but you, and the massive team of builders constructing the world around you—that it takes 12 hours or whatever to fly to Japan because the builders have to get there first and construct it for your arrival to keep the il-

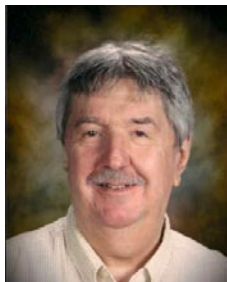


lusion going. If you fly fast in Second Life, you eventually reach the point where you're traveling more swiftly than the system can deal with — and, as you look around, you see that the world hasn't quite assembled around you yet. You've outpaced the builders, and they're having to work double-time to get the walls up and the road down before you notice...

San Diego, for me, encapsulates the Philip K Dick Condition in which we live today: just like his paranoid concerns, San Diego looks like it was assembled from flat-packs just before you got there, and will be folded up and put back in the warehouse an hour after you leave.

#### From Frank Bertrand:

**S**imulacrum Statistics? In the Modern Language Association (MLAS) database for the years 1952 (when PKD had his first published short story) to 1982 (when he died), there are a total of 28 items listed. For the 30 year span that's an average of 1.07 items per year. Now, carefully consider this: from 1983 until June, 2010 (PKD has been very much dead all this time!) there have been a total of 259 items in the MLA database. For the past 27 years that's an average of 9.59 items per year, an almost 900 per cent increase! Hmm, is this another indication of American writers being more popular academically when they are dead than when alive?



***“Dick didn't believe in systems or in Mom and apple pie”***

#### From an interview with Jonathan Lethem in 21C Magazine:

**H**e existed in the world and it just permeated him. Mid-'50s America was overwhelmingly alive in his vision, in such a way that he saw it simultaneously as a present and as a future. He saw the makings of the late capitalist experience embedded in that mid-century triumphalist post-war moment. And it's as though he experienced it all, in all its absurdity and its tragedy, as this overwhelming vision. And he just jotted it down as frantically as he could. And the books are so raw with that perception that they still feel like a desperate attempt to record an arriving moment. I think



that's the experience of reading Philip K. Dick. He seems to be frantically trying to transcribe an arriving reality that is urgent and totally fresh.

#### From K.W. Jeter's Dr. Adder pages 160 to 165 in the Signet edition:

**O**n the screen, two men were sitting behind a desk, the front of which was lettered SCIENCE FICTION IN THE CLASSROOM — AN AUDIO VISUAL APPROACH. Limmit nudged Edgar in the ribs. The boy broke off his conversation and turned to face him. “What is this, anyway?” asked Limmit, nodding sideways to indicate the television.

Edgar shrugged, disinterested. “The educational channel. For lit classes they haul out these old hacks they've got on ice and have 'em talk about their books. This semester we've been doing whatchacallit, um... science fiction.” He turned back to his friends.

Limmit poked him again. Aren't you interested?” he asked. “That's Philip K. Dick up there.”

“So?” said Edgar, sneering. “If he is such a dangerous shit, how come they want me to study him?” He turned away again.

[Okay, it's really “Lars Kyrie” up on the screen, not Phil. But Edgar's point is well taken. Fortunately things take an unexpected turn on the television screen.]



#### From Greg Tate, “Minority Retorts” in The Village Voice:

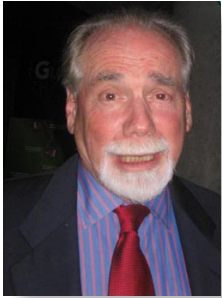
**D**ifficult to imagine Cruise or Spielberg, avatars of wealth, privilege, and domesticity, lasting more than five minutes in a Philip K. Dick worldview. Dick, like Burroughs and Kubrick, is all about the disintegration that occurs when doubt unravels belief in a Perfect System. Dick didn't believe in systems or in Mom and apple pie, which is why he seems so prophetic now, when the corporatization of consciousness has become such a totalizing, repressive, and relentless force. Being our two leading product managers for same, Cruise and Spielberg could never give despair and dystopia their due the way Ridley Scott did in Blade Runner and even the horrid Black Hawk Down.



## From Robert Silverberg's "The Days of Perky Vivienne" in Asimov's Science Fiction:

**W**e live in the twenty-first century. Philip K. Dick helped to invent it.

The standard critical view of Dick, the great science fiction writer who died in 1982, is that the main concern of his work lay with showing us that reality isn't what



we think it is. Like most clichés, that assessment of Dick has a solid basis in fact (assuming, that is, that after reading Dick you are willing to believe that anything has a solid basis in fact). Many of his books and stories did, indeed, show

their characters' surface reality melting away to reveal quite a different universe beneath.

But the games Dick played with reality were not, I think, the most remarkable products of his infinitely imaginative mind. At the core of his thinking was an astonishingly keen understanding of the real world he lived in—the world of the United States, subsection California, between 1928 and 1982—and it was because he had such

powerful insight into the reality around him that he was able to perform with such great imaginative force one of the primary jobs of the science fiction writer, which is to project present-day reality into a portrayal of worlds to come. Dick's great extrapolative power is what has given him such posthumous popularity in Hollywood. **Blade Runner**, **Total Recall**, **Minority Report**, and half a dozen other Dick-derived movies, though not always faithful to Dick's original story plots, all provide us with that peculiarly distorted Dickian view of reality which, it turns out, was his accurate assessment of the way his own twentieth-century world was going to evolve into the jangling, weirdly distorted place that we encounter in our daily lives.

*"He had such powerful insight"*

### From the Internet:

**B**ring Me the Head of Philip K Dick BBC Radio Play 2009 - Gregory Whitehead's dark, surreal and satirical drama, set in

contemporary America, centres on a deadly futuristic weapon in the shape of the android head of science-fiction writer Philip K Dick. Invented by a shadowy research unit inside the Pentagon, the head - which believes it actually is Dick himself - is wreaking havoc on society and must be stopped before it finds its body.

Phil and Tessa circa 1974



## IMPORTANT APPEAL:

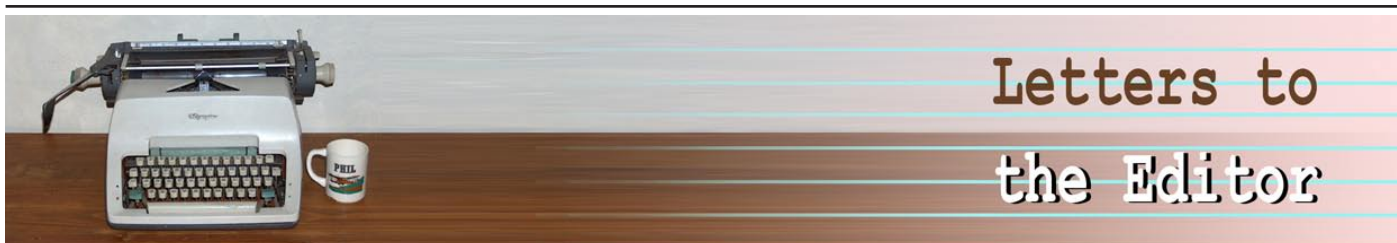
For complicated reasons, Tessa Dick (Phil's wife 1973-1977) is close to becoming homeless and needs your support and help.

If you feel you can help her in any way, please send her something via her paypal account:

[tuffy777@gmail.com](mailto:tuffy777@gmail.com)

Thank you.





## Dick Jokes?

Dear Patrick,  
In rereading your witty and informative speech, "PKD & Me," in PKD Otaku No. 21, I ended up highlighting just one thing, at the point where you are talking about "...one of the most disheartening aspects of the PKD boom is its deadly seriousness." You go on to say:

*"Which is too bad because craziness and humor are such a big part of Phil's appeal to me. Maybe "crazy humor" is a better way to describe it. Humor, in truth, may very well be the answer to Phil's "what is human" question. Only humans laugh. I don't remember the androids in ELECTRIC SHEEP laughing."* (pp. 14-25)

Now, PKD would like to support your salient observation with:

*"I find sorrow in humor and humor in sorrow, and not only in sorrow but in the mighty, the seriousness of life, the great weighty matters that assail us and determine our destiny..."* (Selected Letters, Vol. 1, p. 106)

Then, in Phil's November, 1978 introduction, "Now Wait For This Year," to **The Golden Man** story collection, he writes:

*"I see disorder and sorrow, and so I have to write about it; but I've seen bravery and humor, and so I put that in, too. But what does it all add up to? What is the vast overview which is going to impart sense into the entirety"* (cited in: Philip K. Dick, eds. Olander & Greenberg, 1983, p. 226).

You, and PKD Otaku are one of the few cogent attempts to answer Phil's important question: "What is the vast overview which is going to impart sense into the entirety?"

And such a "vast overview" must include his sense of humor, even "black humor." But there has been hardly any meaningful explication to date about Phil's use of humor in his short stories and novels. One of the few I've come across is by Meva Ayşe Akgiray in her 2004 dissertation about PKD, wherein she incisively writes:

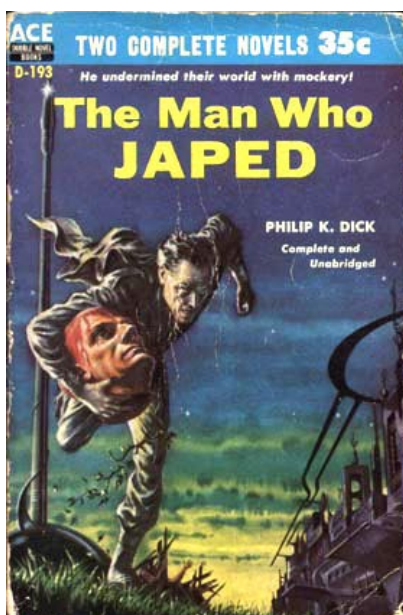
*"...they also have a sense of humor, which makes*

*them comedy noirs. It is this humor that saves Dick and his characters from destruction"* (From Science Fiction to Postmodernism in Three Novels of American Writer Philip K. Dick, p. 39).

The challenge, then, for those of us who believe the fiction and non-fiction of Philip K. Dick deserves much better than it has gotten to date, is to focus on what he actually wrote, not what someone thinks he wrote or tells us he meant to write. And this must include Phil's use of humor and comedy noirs.

In fact, I would argue that the one novel that best epitomizes all of this is **The Man Who Japed**.

Yours in kipple,  
**Frank C. Bertrand**  
© November 27, 2011



## All Present and Correct?

Regarding: *"It is just as easy to think of the future pushing the present into the past as to think of the past generating the present and moving toward the future..."* -- Philip K. Dick.

I don't know if you sent this (postcard) to me to goad me into formulating a treatise on notions of causality and temporality (i.e., time) or if you meant this as a commentary on our mutual current experience of "getting older" (i.e., not being dead guys yet.).

***'A force pushing the present into the past.'***

It's all relative I suppose, but that would mean that any future event can be considered sort of a force pushing the present into the past.

Modern civilizations owe their mastery over the material world to a notion of causality in which things that occur earlier in time, and which correlate highly with events later in time, are considered causative. The closer in proximity to the next event, the more likely that the previous event is considered as the immediate antecedent event. If the correlation is high (say 100%) then we feel confident in assuming that the antecedent event caused the next event.

Of course, this is just the poor way that humans have of understanding and describing events in the world. We could just as easily talk about the gods and their control of things, which in fact has been done. The benefit of our current conceptual / theoretical model of "what is" is that it allows us to predict things, and to have mastery over manipulating everything from the basic elements to complex biological molecules.

So, Dick's "*it's just as easy...*" statement points to the "convenient fiction" of the current world view. There are lots of convenient fictions, of course. Things we need to believe as a society, as a particular group, as a couple and as an individual so we can function without giving up our notion of free will.

Free will. You may recall my earlier machinations at trying to reconcile free will with a deterministic view of things. I really never have come to terms with this. It is much as Phil says. As easy to believe one as the other. So, given

that this is so, the question is not which one is true, but which one you want to believe? Which one serves you better? If the future pushes the present into the past, who is in charge? If our present is a passive recipient of the future, what drives us to act? To make decisions? To plan? We need to believe our present selves can influence the future. Otherwise there is no hope. And without hope there is only despair. This may explain why much of Dick's writing is filled with negative imagery. He may not be wrong about reality, but his method of coping with reality is not all that desirable. Yes, yes, just because you're a paranoid schizophrenic doesn't mean the FBI is not out to get you (double negative intended). But is this really how we want to live our lives?

Okay, way to serious here. Would have preferred some lighter, more humorous associations to this whole topic. But it is what it is. Any way, you started it.

Lee



**BLADE RUNNER**

A LADD COMPANY RELEASE IN ASSOCIATION WITH SUE RUPP FILM SHOW  
TRADE: JAMES BRICK A JAMES COMMUNICATIONS COMPANY  
© 1982 The Ladd Company. All Rights Reserved





Illustration © 2012 Nick Buchanan

**Otaku** is a zine made by fans for fans.

It exists to celebrate, explore and discuss the work of Philip K. Dick.

The Otaku Team have enjoyed the writing and ideas of Philip K. Dick for decades, and continue to do so.

The subject of Philip K. Dick benefits from diverse perspectives, opinions, and insights.

In this zine we hope to explore the Novels, Short-Fiction, Non-fiction and ideas of Philip K. Dick.

If you would like to contribute (a letter of comment, an article, essay or review) please make your submission in MS Doc, Rtf or Txt form to the Otaku Team c/o Patrick Clark via email:

[pkdotaku@gmail.com](mailto:pkdotaku@gmail.com)

All submissions are welcome and considered, but we cannot promise that all will see print.

Thank you for maintaining the dialogue!

-- The PKD OTAKU Team

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