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P K D
o t a k u #45

April 2024

3rd INTERNATIONAL PHILIP K. DICK FESTIVAL



Fort Morgan
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The Lesser known
Letters Issue

P K D

#45

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

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

The PKD 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

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

PKD **Otaku** Layout, Logo, Graphics and Typesetting

by Nick Buchanan n.buchanan@hotmail.co.uk

Introduction

by Patrick Clark

Stuff I've been thinking about lately:

by JPC

The invasion of the phildickian into the 21st century is now so common as to be unremarkable. *Of course* this is the way it is. The only explanation is that we have been absorbed into Philip K. Dick, Palmer Eldritch-wise. He is still alive...well, maybe not alive as that term is commonly understood. He *exists* in any case. And we are mitochondria wandering around in his «post-real» bulk, however that is ultimately constructed. Or, a variation, we are in cold-sleep and stored way too close to Jory/Bezos for anything good to develop there. Fucked in either case.

Or neither of these. Maybe Phil's cryo-preserved head is in a semi-alert state, like Victor Kemmings in "I Hope I shall Arrive Soon" and the Alcor computer is trying to keep him sane by feeding him entertainment, of which we are minor players, ourselves having no independent existence outside of this program.

Maybe "PKD Otaku" is the name of the program the Alcor computer is running for Phil's benefit.

The 1950s may have been the most science fictional decade in human history. Consider:

"...connect the dots between monster movies, nuclear submarines, and LSD...between Sputnik, brain washing, and TV dinners...Thorazine and magnetic tape, *Forbidden Planet* and

Scientology." (– Eric Davis on the 1950s)

Good time to be writing the stuff, if you could keep up with what was happening out in the actual world. Pay sucked, of course, but Phil was in his 20s then and probably that was okay. For a while. Those suburban dramas of his – total downers, man. No wonder it was the SF that got published.

Going to the dentist always calls up PKD connections. You, yourself, might be visited by a pharmacy courier with

a bag full of meds, a gold fish necklace and a pink beam right between the eyes. It's possible that the nitrous oxide is a time-travel drug that psychically connects you to Phil himself back in February 1974. Hey! That might even be you at Phil's door with a sack of pain killers and a gold necklace! Or it could be Phil at *your* door.

What does "win" even mean? Phil "lost" his life by dying too young, to be sure. As will we all. But looking back over that life you can see a number

of wins and losses. As do we all. Just before the end, he was finally making some money. Not really THAT much, I think, but enough to live comfortably enough for what turned out to be his last few years. And for the first time in his life. Considering how he often lived hand-to-mouth so that has to be a win. He didn't have to eat horse meat anymore. And he had a – what shall we call it? – a "quest". To figure out the Pink Beam, to find the re-born Savior, to write still another book, to argue with God some more. Surely that was satisfying for Phil personally, and maybe



for God, too. There was a bit of fame outside the usual SF world. His books were in print. The FBI/IRS/CIA did not seem to be pursuing him anymore, even if his ghosts continued to do so. He had good friends and what sounds like a happy social life. And while he was still crazy, he was no longer nuts. In the scheme of things, I'd call all of that a "win".

PKD as pulp psychoanalysts for 50s' suburban kids? I like the idea: Phil as Freud(!) shepherding the psyches of American middle-class youngsters through the trauma that was the second half of the 20th Century. But Phil "didn't help the psyches of children"; he messed them up instead. But that turned out to be good preparation for the rest of the 20th Century.

The post-TIME-SLIP books are pretty crazy, even by PKD standards. Maybe that is their distinction? They are also rushed, have big narrative lapses, hardly every end properly. In the OMG-what-a-great/insane/groovy-idea category they can't be beat. There was nothing like this in

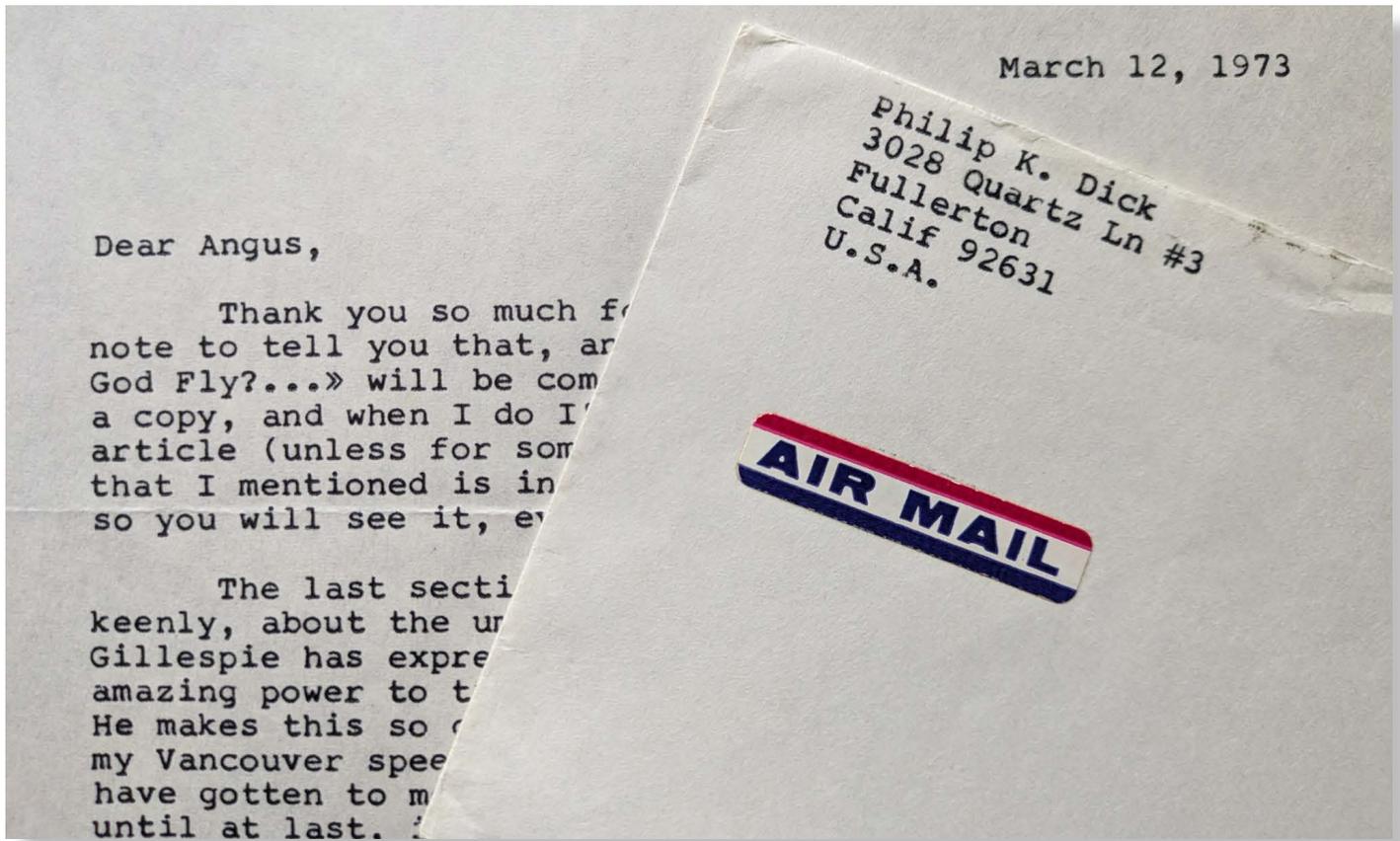
science fiction at the time – Phil was truly *sui generis*. But they also have to keep in furious motion or they would collapse into near incoherence. This is quite likely why we like them so much.

Phil both misspells and misused "priapsistic" in Chapter 3 of NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR. It's "priapistic" – a Doubleday typo or Phil's? – and it doesn't mean "horny". But even so, what a word to find in a science fiction novel in 1966. Did my 16-year-old self even notice the term? Hell no!

Here is something to consider, or maybe worry about: is there a Dark Web PKD site? If so, what would it contain?

I'm okay with anamnesis so long as it is targeted to minor specific memories. I just don't want a broad Pink Beam experience where I will then have to re-think my entire life and, more importantly, my current lifestyle. Too radical a change. I think that Phil's post-Pink Beam existence was not exactly an improvement.





Letters from PKD On humour, being misrepresented, and not letting down his characters by Angus Taylor

In September 1972 the fanzine *Energumen* published my article “Philip K. Dick and the Psychogenic Origins of Death by Meteor-Strike”. (It was republished in PKD Otaku #33.) Far from a scholarly assessment, it was an outburst of enthusiasm for PKD’s stories, emphasizing his humour and outré imagination. I did not know Philip Dick personally, but I had been reading his work for years. Imagine my pleasant surprise when, in February 1973, I received a very complimentary letter from Phil, sent in care of the editors of *Energumen*, Mike and Susan (Wood) Glicksohn, who lived not very far from me in Toronto. The following extract may be of interest for the light it casts on his attitude to his writing.

Most of all what made me so happy was that you see the humor in what I write. ... For years I’ve been reading and hearing

about the “morbid nightmare hallucinogenic intricate” novels I write, and that’s fine, I guess. But I never meant them to be that; I meant them to be precisely what you describe them to be, no less, no more. I have I suppose a strange sense of humor, but I enjoyed writing my novels; I have deeply loved my characters and fought for them as they faced all the weird and heavy stuff that perpetually comes down on their heads, as it does on ours. I admire them. A month ago I was quite ill with double pneumonia, and as I sat propped up in bed week after week trying to breathe, I searched about in my mind for a source of comfort and strength to fall back on. It came to me that my own characters – those you mention, as a matter of fact – would stand up to this situation with grace and humor and courage, and if they could then so could I. Actually, Mr. Taylor, I did a little fantasy trip in my head and pretended to myself that I was Leo Bulero and other admirable persons like that. And, really, it did get me through. How could I not

rise to what I had to confront, and still go on writing? I sort of owed it to them, my characters, if you see what I mean. Otherwise it would be like a big fat guy writing books on how to diet. I'm sure you understand.

I sent Phil a copy of the manuscript of "Can God Fly? Can He Hold Out His Arms and Fly?" and two more letters from him soon followed. His reaction to that essay was very positive "but oddly, I liked the shorter one better," he said, and then added "But perhaps that's because I saw it first and was so astonished to find so full a response to my work in it." I suspect what he liked was the unfiltered enthusiasm of the "Psychogenic Origins" article rather than the drier, somewhat academic (pretentious?) tone of the other.

"By the way –" he said, " I've just sent off a new and very long novel to Doubleday, FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID. When I had finished it, I believed it failed by and large to carry on the themes I'd always worked with. But having read your two papers, I can see that the new novel continues my long-time preoccupation with the theme of the value of human relatedness, which is to say love. Love and grief are the twin themes in this new novel."

Then in the following letter Phil described his current project: "You might be interested to know what I'm working on now; it is a novel called A SCANNER DARKLY and is an anti-dope novel, a major one ... I expect it to be worth more in terms of what I can offer in my writing than everything before added together. Much of what I am putting into it I did in my own actual life see and agonize over." He said that he and Tessa might well visit Canada "one of these days". And he concluded with "I hope we will meet; I hope all of us will meet. But really we have met. Truly. Already."

It was later that year, at the time of the World Science Fiction Convention, Torcon II, that I agreed to a proposal by Ted Pauls that I write a lengthy essay on PKD for a planned series on SF authors. My name had been suggested to him by Susan Glicksohn. I worked on the

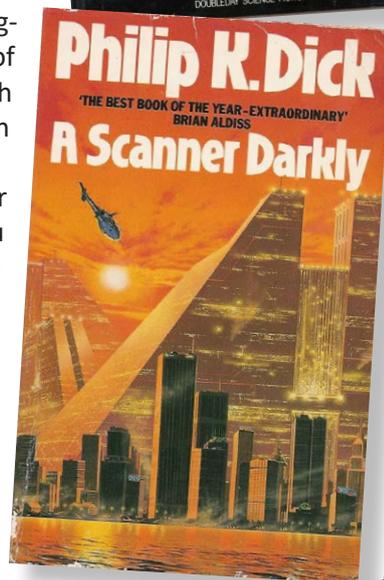
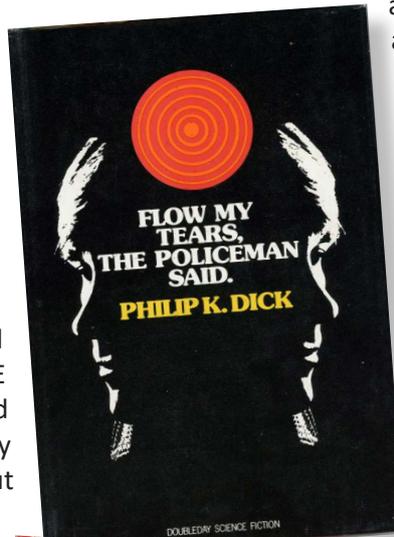
essay during 1974, expanding on my "Can God Fly?" piece, and completed it by October. The fact that I was employed at the Spaced Out Library (now the Merrill Collection of Science Fiction, Speculation, and Fantasy) helped keep my mind focused. I don't believe I knew anything of the visionary experiences Phil was having during this period.

In a letter he wrote to me in April 1975, he said he had read and enjoyed the newly published *Philip K. Dick and the Umbrella of Light*. But much of the letter was about his unhappiness with *Science Fiction Studies* and with Stanislaw Lem. He referred to "the academic-Marxist clique" at that journal and said, "I am very angry at the managed and pre-packaged slanted presentation of critical articles on me in SFS, but so it goes." He thought the journal was ignoring "the theological themes which have become increasingly more and more important to me" and claimed that "the articles evidently interlock, building up a picture of me determined on in advance."

In his PKD biography, Lawrence Sutin mentions that in May 1974 "Phil was paid what he regarded as an unwelcome visit by Marxist-oriented French literary critics; he reported the visit to the FBI."

In his letter to me, Phil said he had been visited at that time by Peter Fitting and Fredric Jameson. "Can you imagine Peter Fitting and Frederic [sic] Jameson meeting here in my apartment, each with his paper on me, and Jameson showing it to Fitting but being reluctant to let me see it? 'I'll send you a copy,' he said, but never did. Fitting did send me a copy of his, though. I did see enough of Jameson's to be able to identify it as the article published in SFS."¹

Unfortunately, Phil had his demons that led him to believe he was the victim of various conspiracies, and to attribute nefarious intentions to many who, even if their interpretations differed from his, were among the biggest admirers of his work. He was clearly upset by the idea that – in his opinion – some critics thought they knew better than he did what his work was all about. One SFS writer, he complained, "states that 'Phil Dick shows no genuine understanding of his own writing,' or words to that effect. God help us



¹ Peter Fitting, "Ubik: The Deconstruction of Bourgeois SF", *Science Fiction Studies* 2 (1975): 47-54; Fredric Jameson, "After Armageddon: Character Systems in *Dr. Bloodmoney*", *Science Fiction Studies* 2 (1975): 31-42.

when such people begin to assemble a synthetic picture, which, if the author cannot accept, the author is abolished summarily. ... They have picked out three or four novels and that is it. The rest will be sent into the vast shredding machine..."

Was Phil being horribly misrepresented? Not really. Despite his understandable irritation at having his theological concerns overlooked, critics were not wrong to see in much of his work a satire and critique of capitalist society and political power. Even if not foregrounded, it is commonly part of the fabric of his stories. Take, as one small example, this brief scene from *The Simulacra*:

The Theodorus Nitz commercial squeaked, "In the presence of strangers do you feel you *don't quite exist*? Do they seem not to notice you, as if you were invisible? On a bus or spaceship do you sometimes look around you and discover that no one, *absolutely no one*, recognizes you or cares about you and quite possibly may even – "

With his carbon dioxide-powered pellet rifle, Maury Frauenzimmer carefully shot the Nitz commercial as it hung pressed against the far wall of his cluttered office. It had squeezed in during the night, had greeted him in the morning with its tinny harangue.

Broken, the commercial dropped to the floor. Maury crushed it with his solid, compacted weight and then returned the pellet rifle to its rack.

As I've written, "Such an artifact not only reifies consumer perception of modern mass-media advertising, but also presents a concise vision of advancing technological manipulation of the human environment." But that's me being rather too serious, or at least one-sided. Academic analysis, however insightful it may be, doesn't get to the heart of the thing for the reader, which is that the passage is a crazy mixture of inventiveness, existential angst, and everyday annoyance at being pestered with advertisements – and it's *funny*!

Perhaps if critics had been more attuned to Phil's emotional side: his exuberance and humour and his dwelling on "love and grief", he might have been less distrustful of them. But once an idea or work of art is out in the world, it no longer belongs solely to its creator. (Darwin, Marx, and even Newton all had their ideas reinterpreted and repurposed almost immediately – leading Marx to announce that he wasn't a Marxist himself.) The phenomenon is presented vividly in Phil's early short story "The Preserving Machine", which tells of

a Dr. Labyrinth's frustrating attempt to preserve music in the form of living creatures:

Music would survive as living creatures, but he had forgotten the lesson of the Garden of Eden: that once a thing has been fashioned it begins to exist on its own, and thus ceases to be the property of its creator to mold and direct as he wishes. God, watching man's development, must have felt the same sadness – and the same humiliation – as Labyrinth, to see His creatures alter and change to meet the needs of survival.

Science fiction and fantasy may be particularly subject to multiple levels of interpretation by readers and critics. Phil's early "mainstream" novels have their merits but realism was a constricting form for him. I imagine that in the parallel world where Philip K. Dick remained a writer of realistic fiction, he is a minor literary figure, remembered by critics as the author of a number of idiosyncratic but perceptive novels exploring the obsessions and anxieties of individuals on the margins of twentieth-century California.

In our world, of course, it was science fiction that allowed him to spread his wings. His prolific output through the 1960s and into the early 1970s was uneven in quality, but during this period he produced most of his best work. The secret, I think, is the brilliant integration of philosophical/metaphysical subjects and captivating story lines: the warp and weft of his fiction. It strikes me – others may disagree – that after the visionary experiences of 1974 his preoccupation with theological issues too often ruptured that unity.

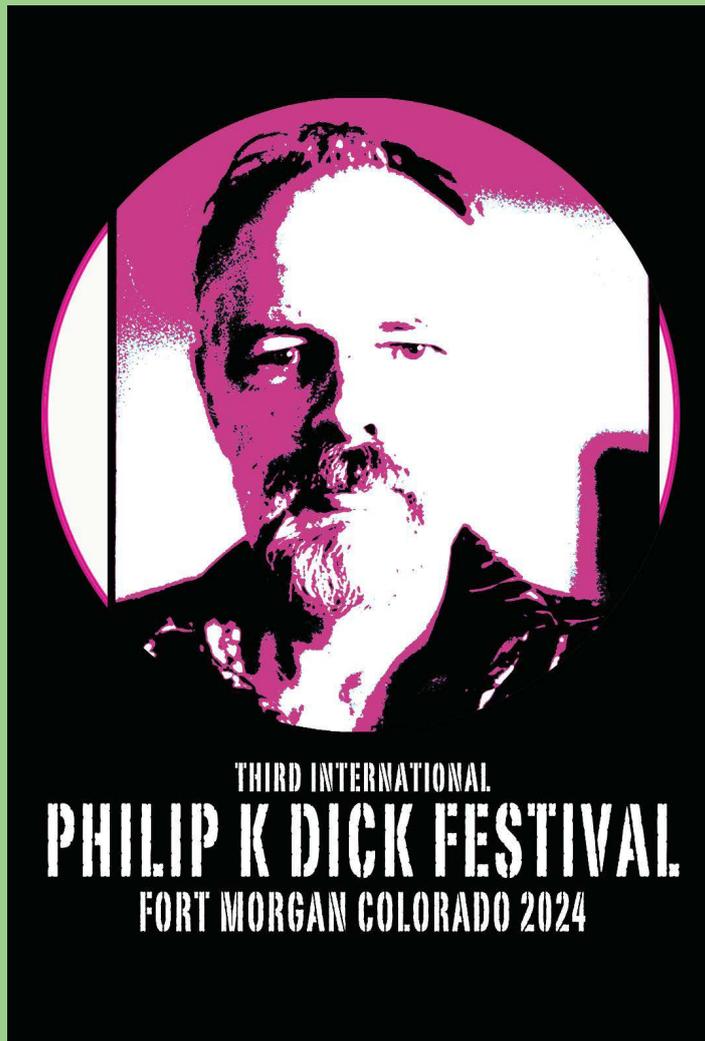
However one assesses his later fiction, in spring of 1975 Phil – notwithstanding rather paranoid fears – seems to have felt that his life was on the right track.

I have gotten into some very advanced religious experiences and theological concepts – it has been just over a year, beginning at the vernal equinox of 1974 that I suddenly penetrated through the veil, Maya (or was penetrated by a living entity of enormous wisdom and power, perhaps the Logos) and at last had the ecstatic opportunity to see reality as it is, which has been the goal of twenty-two years. I'm enclosing 3 carbon pages of notes I made recently...they will give you a little sense of what I have at last

come into, a safe harbor of the soul and mind.

The notes mentioned are from his exegetical writings. Many of them have to do with humanity's growing

awareness of God's wisdom and healing power. But all have to do with a subject that runs through much of his thinking and fiction: the awakening of the human spirit. Phil never did find lasting peace, but this philosophical optimism and his sense of humour buoyed him in his travels.



June 13-16 2024

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Fort Morgan welcomes PKD fans from all over the world for the
3rd International PKD Festival

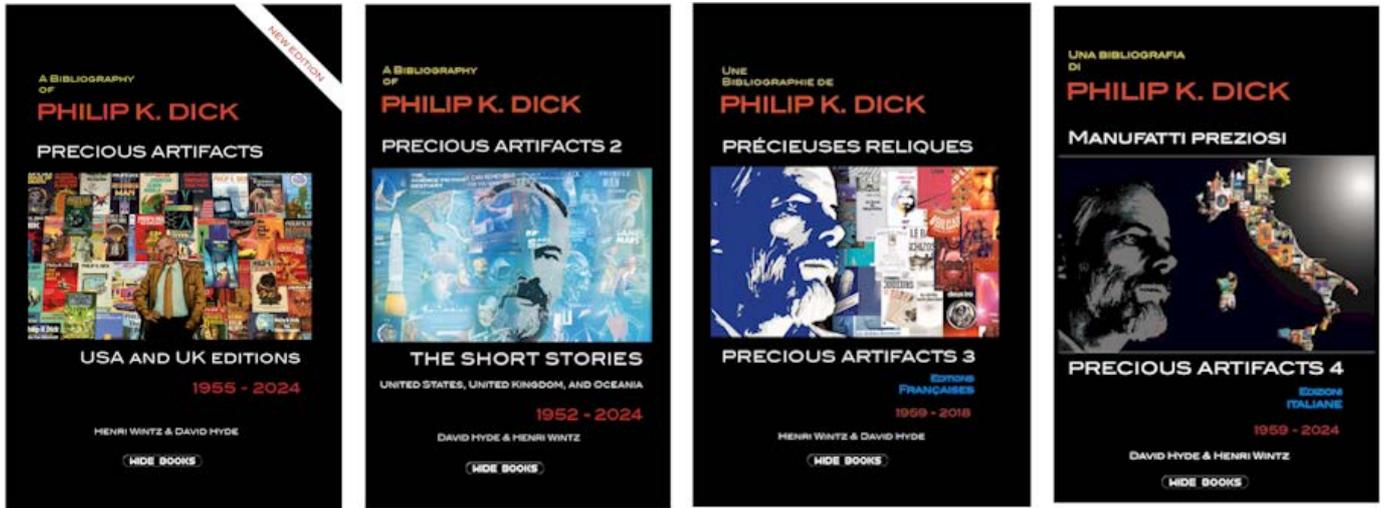
It's early summer on the beautiful Colorado prairie! Come, join your host Lord Running Clam and a complement of
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Festival Poster by Brent Houzenga

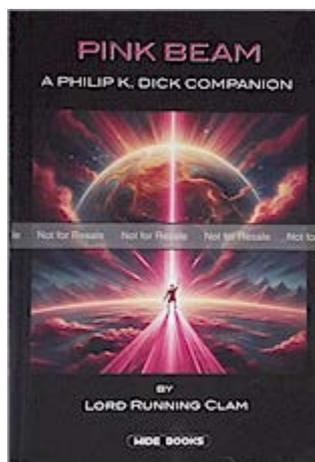
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WIDE BOOKS is also pleased to announce the long-awaited Second Edition of Lord Running Clam's landmark PKD chronology **PINK BEAM: A Philip K. Dick Companion!**
Coming soon in hard and softcover editions!



Proof cover just in!

Lord RC notes that the first Lulu edition of **PINK BEAM** is about to be unpublished.

This new edition is much better in every way. From the back cover:

This study of the work of the late, great science fiction writer, Philip K. Dick (1928 – 1982) by Lord Running Clam, covers each of PKD's short-stories and novels in chronological order. Many details of his writing career are assembled here for the first time so the reader can easily find the basic facts pertaining to any of Dick's stories.

PINK BEAM serves, then, as a first reference for these factual matters.

For this 2nd edition Lord RC has updated everything, although the basic text remains the same as the 1st edition. Readers of the Lulu edition will be pleased to note that whereas that edition has *dcclxxxiv* endnotes, this one has 900. Wide Books is pleased to present this 2024 edition of an essential Philip K. Dick reference.

Wide Books Publishing (wide-books.com)

Philip K. Dick Letters

Sourced by Patrick Clark



The following letters appeared in the “British Columbia Science Fiction Association Newsletter” fanzine. Mike Bailey was the editor at the time. Phil escaped California after the famous break-in and went to Canada in February 1972 as Guest of Honor for the 2nd Vancouver Science Fiction Convention, where he delivered his “The Android and the Human” speech. He ended up remaining in Canada until April of 1972 when he returned to the US after many dubious adventures. There is a good overview of Phil’s stay that I came across recently in the “WCSFAzine” Issue # 6, Feb 2008. WCSFA is the monthly E-zine of the West Coast Science Fiction Association. You can access the pdf at

<https://efanzines.com> › [WCSFA](#) › [WCSFAzine06](#)

During this time Phil met Bailey and the two formed a friendship that continued even after Phil relocated to Fullerton and began a new life. They seemed to have had a regular correspondence, some of which appears in The Selected Letters volumes. These letters from Phil, originally sent to Bailey, were subsequently published in the BCSFA Newsletter and so reached a larger audience. Spread out over several months as they are, presumably Phil gave his permission make them more or less public. He may have come up with the idea himself as way to carry on his disputes with Joanna Russ and Stanislaw Lem. Or Bailey could have proposed it.

None of the letters are dated in the fanzine but the assumption is that they are circa the time of the fanzine’s publication. Impossible to tell if any editing was involved as all we have is what appeared in the newsletter, not the actual letters themselves.

Letter to Mike Bailey July 1974

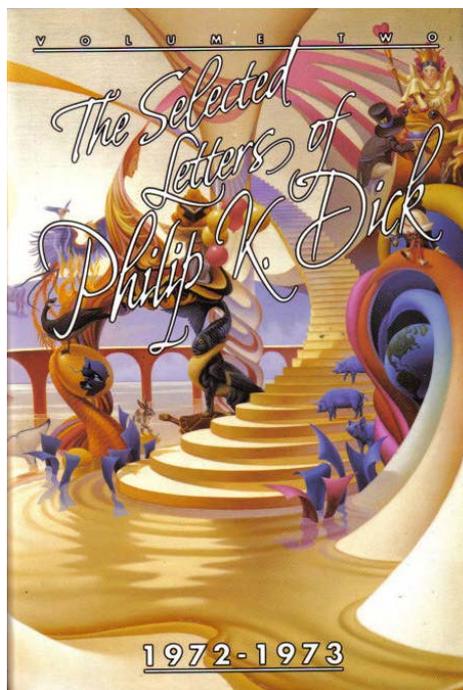
I hope you’re not dead, because it always disappoints me when someone I like dies (perhaps “disappoints” is the wrong word). Anyhow, I’ve waited and waited to hear about your fanzine but now I don’t care any more; all I care about is, Are you okay?

I’ll bet – pardon me if I am wrong – make that pardon me in any case – that you’re depressed from another love affair. I woke up that way this morning after being sanguine about it all for months and months; I guess it is because I made a typical depressive mistake: I put on an old Carol King track, which at once brought back memories. I don’t even know what memories they are; just knowing I was having Memories was enough. I decided to drive off a

bridge because I had lost What’s Her Name. But then as I was leaving the apartment, Tessa (my wife) came out after me having woken up and wondering what was wrong, I remembered, with a jolt, that Tessa is What’s Her Name and we’re married and she was asleep and she was asleep in the other room while I sat miserably pining away listening to Carol King. We bought the record last year, the two of us together.

In other news, our baby Christopher is almost a year old now and walks & talks (too a little). The cat is fine, too. I’m Guest of Honor at Westercon this year, but because of my high blood pressure I’m not going (I’ve had to cancel a lot of my public appearances). ((It’s alright, Phil, Bill Rostler was introduced during the banquet as being you and did a credible job.)) (So what.) However, I do hope to fly to England early next year to speak; Peter Nichols invited me, and I expect to be better than (I do that a lot).

How are you? How are you doing? What’s wrong? How



was the V-Con? Have you seen Jamis? (I know you haven't, but I like to ask.) ((But I have, Phil)) I got a lot of money in, finally, from ol' Scott, my agent. I guess I told you already that the trip to Warsaw fell through because Lem lied to me up onside and down the other, (like saying that Polish money wasn't good on their airline that flies to New York daily. LOL; I wonder how you buy a ticket if you are starting from Warsaw and coming this way.) (I can't even find out from the bastard if they went ahead and printed UBIK free without paying me, as they planned; I mean I not only did they rip me off, or tried to but they won't even tell me if they did or didn't. It's like me saying, "Did you rip me off?" and Warsaw says, "That's none of your business. Yank. Capitalist pig." Talk about exploitation...I guess I have my nerve, trying o find out. Lem refuses to answer my letters because I was rude to him, when in a letter I said it made me mad that my publisher printed only trash. You've got to be uppity to these people, Mike; they're very sensitive.)

What I really ought to do (in my dream world) is let Tessa write Lem a letter, since Tessa is very tough. It might go like this:

"Dear Mr. Lem,

I understand that you ripped off my husband's book, UBIK by lying to him and then lying to him some more, and then when he caught you lying you stopped writing entirely. If you do not pay him for the Polish printing of UBIK or at least tell him if you whether or not you went ahead and printed it as planned, I will fly over there some way, never mind how, and kill you.

"Cordially,

"Etc."

I wonder if that would work. In the best of all possible worlds she would do it and then they would mail me a lot of money, tons and tons of it and we'd live happily forever. In real life, however, one of the authority-types would intercept the letter and someone in a suit with a briefcase – or worse – would pay us a visit. So I guess this must remain a fantasy. But a nice one...

Also, I am writing a sequel to MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE. It is provisionally called VALISYSTEM A which I will not explain because I am bad with words. I do draw pictures

good, though. Enclosed you will find a color picture I painstakingly drew so as to cause it to resemble an actual photograph, in fact a color one, from a 35mm film, of me and my cat. I sort of got my own colors right, but I didn't have the right crayon for the cat, who's name is Blacky. So I colored him a kind of reddish salmon pink...but now we have to call him Pinky, until I get the right crayon...

I gotta go now, because as Tessa says, all the time now, my pencil is running out of ink.

It's crazy weather here – between 98 and 115 – we're sitting around throwing water at each other and being strange and wearing almost nothing, except Pink the cat who have no choice. Phil Dick

BCSFA Newsletter #13 "Son of Machiavelli": July 1974, pp. 3-4

BCSFA Newsletter: #18 Gonzo; **December 1974, pp. 3-4**

On November 26 I received an airmail letter from Phil Dick with the envelope postmarked October 26. I anticipated the contents to be something like, "Dear Mike. I've changed my mind. Send the letters back. Don't print them." But the contents were not so dramatic.

More than the average Joe, Phil Dick needs to be liked and I think it shows in the following letter.

"...Joanna Russ sent my letter back to me unopened (the carbon of which I mailed to you). With my unopened returned letter, Joanna included a short, formal letter telling me she would not accept letters from me until she learns, from reading my printed work, that I have come around and agree with her views.

"You know, Mike, to me it's incredible that someone will not write to you or accept letters from you until you agree with their viewpoint. What if we all did that? God, what a world that would be: a world of Joanna Russes, none of them speaking to each other because none of them totally agree with each other's views. You certainly can't base a society of that. What we see with Joanna is isolation and alienation, as well as boundless animosity and suspicion. Mike, I honestly think Johanna believes that my story in F&SF, "The Pre-Persons", was personally aimed at her. In point of fact, that story was written about 15 months ago, before I ever wrote to her or was at all aware of her, or had read any of her views. But I can't tell her that, since she returns my letters unopened.

“Interestingly, about the same time Johanna informed me that she would no longer read any letters from me to her, Stanislaw Lem (yes indeed) wrote me from Krakow, Poland to say that he would not read any letters from [me] to him, nor write any to me. Both Lem and Russ have slammed down the closed mind curtain. Anathema has been pronounced on me, and the faithful fall into place.”

PHIL DICK & JOANNA RUSS CORRESPOND VIA VERTEX

If you pick up a copy of the current issue of VERTEX, you'll find on the inside back cover an “open letter” to Joanna Russ from Phil Dick. That letter is a prequel to what follows. The story to which Ms. Russ refers is in the October F&SF, “The Pre-Persons”, (and it contains references to B.C. -- for example, Jamis Postlewaite is recognizable.) One comment: Ms. Russ' letter is carefully written. She is not choosing her words idly. (Incidentally, in the November GALAXY, Fred Pohl writes briefly of Joanna Russ' new novel, which is probably a “Frederik Pohl Selection”, The Female Man)

First Phil Dick to Mike

Bailey:

Hi there, ol' Mike. Look: you'll find enclosed herewith an exchange of letters between me and Joanna Russ, first hers to me, then mine to her. Go ahead and publish them. I think the world should know how Joanna feels, especially about beating up people who express opinions contrary to hers,

“I frankly don't take well to being told that ‘normally I beat up any son of a prick who expresses such views as you have,’ meaning me. When I wrote back to her I was tempted to say, ‘Ch yeah? You and who else?’ ((Joanna stands about six feet tall, Phil)) if this isn't the bigot incarnate: talking about beating up those whom you disagree with...well, her letter speaks for itself, as I hope does mine. I see the ghosts of brownshirts breaking the heads of everyone not a Nazi Party member...this is the Beast back, raving and ranting, ready to kill.

“In a previous letter to me, when she liked me, Joanna

suggested that my view toward women would be improved if I ‘slept with men for a while.’ This didn't make Tessa, my wife, any too pleased; can't say it turned me on either. At that point, Joanna was worried that I felt too highly about women. Well, I guess she's lost that worry, now.

“...I wouldn't worry about Joanna bringing legal action against you for publishing her letter without her permission; after all (one) you're in another country, and (two) her ill-disguised threat to beat me up is far more actionable, and its inclusion in her letter would certainly cause a court of law to consider me justified in asking you to publish it; after all, Joanna might get me, and no one would ever know who did it, since dead s-f writers write no tales.”

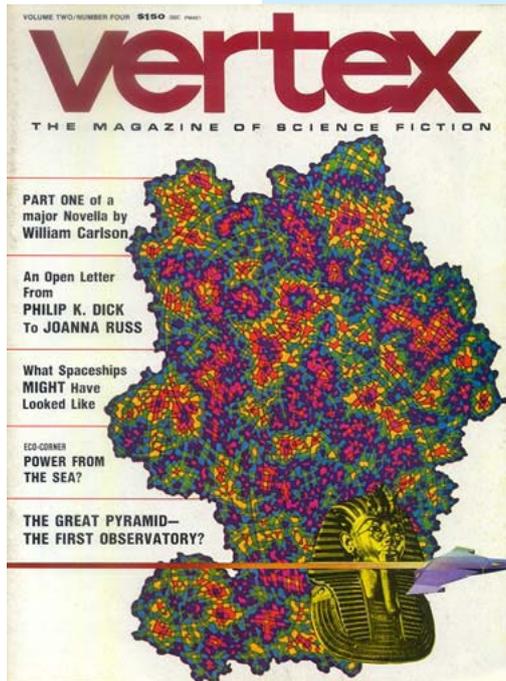
Next, Joanna Russ to Phil Dick.

“I don't know what to say or to write. I'm so hearsick (*sic*) and so angry that I can scarcely type. I feel as if you'd suddenly--in the middle of a friendly conversation --knocked me halfway across the room. I feel betrayed, very angry, and exceedingly sick.

“How can you be my ally? How can you be even a friend or a friendly acquaintance and write that piece of venomous propaganda in F & SF? ‘Written especially for this issue’ it says, too. If it were fifteen years old, the only honorable thing to do would've been to buy it back from Ed if you had to do it at 50¢ a week.

“It is straight Friends-of-the-Foetus anti-abortion propaganda, a ghastly tear-jerker whose basic premise seems to be that just as the only good Indian is a dead Indian, the only good woman is a woman who

is utterly powerless (or if not coerced into powerlessness, one who gives earnest of her being “good” by sacrificing herself utterly for men and male children). By God, let 'em have abortions and the next thing you know, they'll be murdering little boys. How can--how dare you! --write me anything at all about feminism or agreeing with me and then perpetrate this straight right-wing, completely misogynistic piece of --well, I don't know what to call it.



“And don’t tell me it’s about killing children; your choice of words (post-partum abortion, my God!) puts this right in the straight anti-abortion tract. It has every Catholic cliché, including the choice remark of an unusually dense Senator of several years ago that if abortions were permitted, they’d become a fad, little miniskirts. Jesus! Most people don’t even go to the dentist unless they have to; do you really think women will have surgical procedures performed for fun? And as far as your story reckons the realities of overpopulation, ecological disaster, and so on (none of which you believe in, quite obviously) the only conclusion I can draw is that you prefer the old tried-and-true methods of population control: plague, famine, and war. Thanks but no thanks.

“Jesus, man, do you know anything about the realities of what you’re playing with so glibly? Do you know the number of women who still have to get illegal abortions every year? Do you know how many die of them? Ordinarily I would simply beat up’ any son of a prick who had the absolute screaming gall to lay down pronouncements on things he will never have to do, choices he will never have to make, experiences he knows nothing about--and all this in the sobbily sentimental name of (male) children! Children it never occurs to him to take on the 24-hour-a-day responsibility for. No, mommy is supposed to do that. But mommy is a castrating bitch, But all the same, who gets the baby when the marriage splits up? Who is coerced by overwhelming custom (and law) to have the absolute, and many-years-long responsibility for the children? Not daddy! Did you ever stop and think about your story and wonder just a wee bit why there are no girl children being killed in it?

“Sure, everything’s the fault of Nasty Castrating Bitches. The same ones, presumably, who control Congress, the National Guard, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, the Government, agribusiness, the big corporations, law, medicine, and the police force. In a pig’s eye.

“I am so bloody sick of reading that thing. I don’t suppose it will convince anybody, but when I recall our own correspondence, I feel so completely and stupidly betrayed that I can only wish you had never written to Vertex, that I had never written back to you, and that the



whole miserable business had never happened.

“Your story is classic, bald, misogyny. Horrible women doings horrible things to poor little boys! My God. Talk about the unconscious! Everything is Mommy’s fault, but of course it never occurs to the men who usually talk this way to bring up their children themselves; you know, all that drudgery. And besides, if they did, they couldn’t blame Mommy anymore.

“You really suckered me in. In fact, I was writing somebody yesterday about the troubles you’d had-- obviously it wasn’t the U.S. government that broke into your house; it was Castrating Bitches. Civilization is being wrecked by nasty, selfish women, (Hemingway has not died in vain!)

“The Right to Life people are still extremely active, still trying to repeal the abortion laws (or rather, repeal the repeal) and the arguments they use

are exactly yours: that abortion will lead to infanticide (which is anthropologically as false as false can be) and euthanasia and God knows what. But what they really mean is that sex should be punished, that women can’t be trusted with the slight degree of power, or (if female) that bearing children is all a woman is good for, and if you want to find yourself in that company, all I can say is that you are sufficiently punished already.

“Did you know that mothers usually hate their daughters worse than their sons? And treat them worse?

“The only reason I can think of that you wrote the story is that you passionately believe every word in it and if so, as I said, you are not my ally or my friend or anybody I want to get within ten miles of, ever. Compulsory pregnancy is the name of the game, nothing more and nothing less. And this “post-partum abortion’ business is so ghastrilly and sillily dreadful that I will say nothing at all about it, except it would be really rather nice if you woke up Pregnant in about a month or so. But of course that will never happen. “I suppose I should’ve known not to trust you, or take what you said at face value. But I did believe it. One can even see, in the story, your hassles with the government and thinking about going to Canada--and what do they turn into? Nasty wives. Women just hate men (sure)

Joanna Russ - (1937-2011)

and they're child-murderers (sure) and the troubles of the world stem from castrating bitches who run General Motors, invented the atomic bomb, and are performing genocide in the Middle East (sure).

"Well, I'm sorry for the terror shown in the silly thing, but you would not like me if you ever met me; I think women should take care of themselves first, foremost, last, and in between. And if men have to learn to take care of each other as a consequence, you guys will just have to muddle through as best you can. Your story sounds exactly like the ancient Greek who said angrily that the Gods should never have created women, that men should be able to go to the temples and buy sons (adult, of course). That is exactly the set-up we have, by the way. A wan who wants children hires a woman (his wife) to bear them, rear them, and have the drudgery of caring for them and disciplining them. He plays with them once in a while (when their diapers are clean). He doesn't care for them; he owns them. The remedy, according to you, is either for women to be angels (which is nonsense) or women to be made even more powerless than they are now. (I almost hope it happens so that you'll have to live with it.) Enough. I can't express what I feel. You are convincing me that I must live always armed and on guard against all men and I don't like that. But it seems to be true. And if it is, it's your fault."

Joanna Russ.

And finally, Phil Dick to Joanna Russ.

"I'm sorry to see you spew such hate at me, but I can't really say I'm surprised. At least your letter was signed. It is precisely this kind of hate which I felt to be there in so many people -- not 'so many women,' as perhaps you would expect me to say, put people; after all, in my story, the worst person was a man: the driver of the abortion truck.

How little good comes of raging abuse, really, Joanna, except as I said in my Vertex letter, to wake up the placid types such as Poul. I, who am already

awake, only am more confirmed in my opinion that it is this very hate which justifies such polemical stories as the 'pre-Persons' which are attempts to portray that hate -- hate for the small and weak, but I guess, too, hate for men because in fact they are not small and weak but rather large and strong. I see people like you in the center: hating what is smaller, hating what is larger, but hating, hating, hating. And always raging. I would fear to be an embryo in your womb, Joanna; I'm sure my fate would be sealed.

"I had a wife once who destroyed a little child of mine which she had easy access to in her womb. It's a bitter memory, and much of the story was based on actual literal memories -- terrible memories. I think more good would be served to get psychiatric help for such killing, destroying people as that wife than to rant against my story about her. (Later on I had to hospitalize her; she became overtly homicidal toward me, and then toward others, believed my mother, her psychiatrist and the local sheriff's deputy were conspiring against her, and after I finally left her, she bought a gun to kill me with; you can see why I take this whole topic of wives-who-murder seriously.)

"That lady started by killing a new life within her and then after that turned to larger game. 'One day when you're off working,' she'd say, 'I'm going to take your cat by the tail and bash its brains out against the wall. You'll come home and find it -- any day now.' Toward the end of our

relationship she insisted that I get a vasectomy ; the Pill, she said, made her gain weight and hence it was unfair to her to have to take it, since this spoiled her looks.

"You say, 'Ordinarily I would simply beat up any --' etc., which is the sort of violent manic paranoid hostility which that woman showed, especially when she'd had too much to drink. She did beat me up, too; one time, with our little daughter in the car with her, she tried to ram my car head-on. Here is that hate again, with you this time,

expressed in so similar a way; perhaps hers went the route of pathological and yours has gone the route of fanatical



Philip K. Dick - Photographer unknown (possibly Anne Dick?)

ideology, but the root, I think, is the same in both cases, and justifies the story I wrote. It is important that even if persons of your Sort -- in fact especially because persons of your sort don't have insight, don't grasp the motor that drives them, don't realize the damage they do-- that stories such the 'Pre-Persons' have to be written. That story was written out of experience, Joanna, and neither you nor any other disturbed freak is going to gainsay me that. I lived that story once. I was there. I have had both girl and boy children, and during the time their mother was in the mental hospital I took complete care of those children in all respects -- don't lecture me, you calcified moribund scarecrow, about what fathers do and do not do in terms of raising children.

"Right now I am in court seeking custody of my daughter Isa, who is eight. Mentally ill, having been involved in radical left politics and violence and crime and drugs and now a Jesus freak, her mother was and is unfit to care for Isa, so I would like my daughter, please. There are in this world unfit women and there are fit men, whether you like it or not. If you feel you 'must live always armed and on guard against all men' I suggest that what you're really saying is that you must take this overfortified stance against all life -- hating everything that moves, fearing and mistrusting -- 'The Empty Fortress,' which is as I'm sure you know a metaphor for autism. However, it can hardly be my fault that you are totally defended against penetration by any 'ale. This calcified form must have reached its state long ago...'biological life goes on,' as a friend once said to me about someone we knew who was on heroin, 'but the soul had died.' What I have done to you, Joanna, if anything, if there is any viability in you at this point in terms of reception from outside your own head, is to inform you that all is not perfect in the kingdom of the deaf and dumb and blind. Sorry about that...

The Long Hello April 1975

April 1975

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

This is the text of a letter sent by Phil Dick to local FM radio announcer Bob Ness. When Phil was living in Vancouver he was interviewed by Bob on CKLG-FM and was somewhat unimpressed by the attention Bob gave to the girl he had brought with him.

Dear Bob,

I note in your recent letter that you say that Tess "sounds just right for me," not meaning me of course but you (that is Bob Ness). Since your letter was addressed not only to me (Phil Dick) but also to Tess (Miss Busby) she has already read it and is packing her suitcases that she may fly to Vancouver as soon as possible. She has sent away for a mail order course called, "Become a World Famous D.J. in Your Spare Time and Earn Huge Financial Rewards," and has informed her family and friend (she has only one) that she soon expects to be interviewed over a "famous and powerful Vancouver FM station" by "Fletcher Pizarro," and they should listen. She will be interviewed, she is telling them, in her capacity as "an ex-mistress of a somewhat known science fiction writer recently seen walking head-down very slowly toward the ocean (probably the Pacific) without looking back." His name, she says, will be revealed on the air.



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Bob, as you know, I'm generally amused when my chick is ripped off because usually it's by some seedy guy

within fist's reach, but here it has been done by mail and from another country and by a famous and powerful DJ who earns huge and unusual profits and like that, so what can I do? I've told Tess to say hello to you for me, and I've

described you in such exact detail so as to make it impossible for her to miss you when she touches down at Vancouver Airport. So you can be certain of corresponding to this description, I am enclosing it herewith:

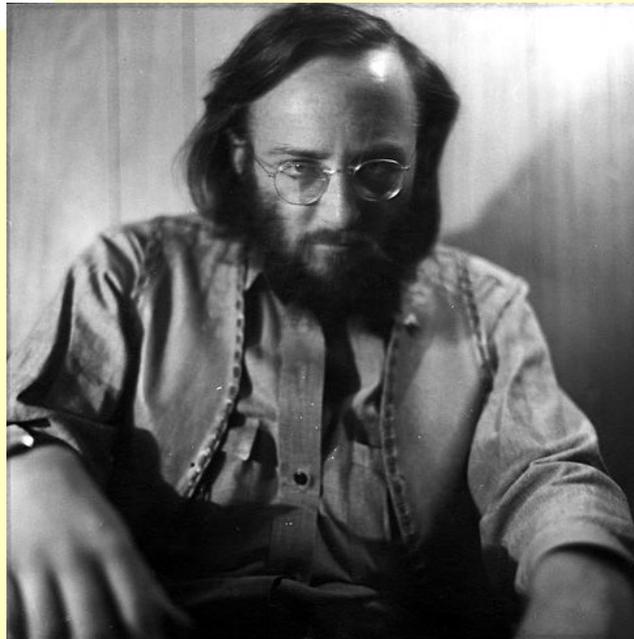
Look for a little short fellow about two feet high-with shovel-like hands, a great wart on the end of his nose, bulging eyes that twist about his head; he will be trembling with palsy, and his feet, which are the size of manhole (*sic*) covers, will be tap-tapping with random spasms as meanwhile he lisps (that type always lisps) sweet somethings to you like, "So's your old man" and "Hey baby I know you like me," and so forth. He will be trying to hold a bunch of weeds as a present to you, but in his smeary paws he will have crushed the juice of life from them and they will be limp and bent. Any symbolism intended here is purely deliberate. Also, he will be drooling. If you can't recognize him by these signs, ask the airport police; they'll point him out to you. They always do for newcomers to Vancouver; he's on hand to meet every incoming plane. Probably, if you attempt to talk to him, he'll tear your dress in his anxious efforts to communicate. Later efforts are even more distressing to the newly-arrived visitor to Vancouver, and I suggest that you spray him With a can of MACE and walk rapidly away.

I forgot to say what you'd be wearing, but I guess t at's optional. I could say "...wearing, if anything," but that might confust (*sic*) her. Good luck, Bob. By the way you can recognize Tess easily; she's the girl with her eyes below her mouth. One of those peculiar radiation-fallout birth defects the authorities suppress mention of. Do you have them up there? They still attract attention hown here.

Heh-heh. So much for that. Lots of luck, you two.

As I've probably mentioned, Tess is tall for her age (she's eleven, you know, but they've kept her back in school because of her learning-difficulties --she's still actually in the third grade, but ye're trying to keep up our hopes). I may incorrectly have given her age as older in a previous let-

ter; sorry. Also, I'm not sure what the legal situation is up there about co-habitation with a grammar school child; down here it's the death penalty, but fortunately (I'm sure I've mentioned this) Tess' father has a lot of influence with the authorities and so the various citations and warrants have been held back pending full restitution by me (what that "full restitution" might be I can't as yet figure out). Anyhow, the legal question will be yours from now on and I wish you more luck than I've had, which so far has been humiliation, terror and imprisonment staring me in the face day after day. One more point -- she'll be traveling in the baggage compartment again; because of the terrible sounds she emits now and then the different airlines have found it expedient to transport her with the suitcases rather than the people; we've always agreed to this because the alternative is for us to try to continue to keep her here with us, and as I'm sure I've mentioned,



that's a losing proposi-tioa. The medical costs alone have bank-rupted several of her boyfriends before me, iad (*sic*) as I've mentioned repeatedly her family has been financially ruined again and again and has been able to continue only by going into organized crime. Most of the profits, therefore, from organized crime in tais country go to pay Tess' medical and feed --I mean food-- bills, and I believe there is now a bill in the senate to grant her the status of a government tax loss, something along the lines of, if I understand the complex wording, of Lake Erie which has become

polluted and a menace to navigation as well...the analogy to Tess is perhaps unfortunate, but legal matters tend to be worded in a rather stilted and formal way, and I can't be held responsible for it.

She is a sweet girl, really, attempting to wash the dishes from time to time, in her own way. It's amazing what the severely handicapped can accomplish, given time (in this case fifteen years is what the various specialists say -- that is, fifteen years before she can be expected to do the dishes without breaking most or all of them). I think by having known her I'm a better person; my patience is infinite (or at least long-suffering), now, from having watched her painstakingly again and again try to

Bob Ness (c.1975)

button her shoe (she has only one foot, you know). Trying, failing, try-ing again, over the months, never giving up, only having seizures of rage now and then and hurling everything around her out the window --but that's to be expected; frustration is intolerable for them, you see.

A final point: don't let her get near matches. She burned down Cleveland last week, but fortunately escaped with her coat only partially burned off. (Her coat of fur, I mean; as usual when she gets this way she removes her garments and piles them in a neat pile before breaking out of the house. We've taught her that, as a civility.)

Now, as to her diet. The usual foods only make her sick (we won't discuss that, of course), and what they're trying now is a severely restricted intake limited to fifty pounds of mud a day washed down with two or three cups of warm chicken fat. I've tried to keep the temperature of the chick-en fat at exactly her own body tempera-ture, which is approximately 107.6. That way she can absorb it better and the tend-ency she has to sneeze while consuming it (which creates a certain health problem to the neighborhood) is lessened. If this doesn't do --and she may decline all food for a time because of being homesick and disoriented in a new environment-- then consult with the qualified experts in your area. I would suggest that the Stanley Park Zoo probably has the right people, but you should research that thoroughly and not take my word for it.

Fortunately she is sterile.

Well, Bob, I guess this just about wraps it up as regards Tess, who has fallen in love with you already even before leaving Fullerton to go live with you forever in Vancouver and be on the air with you talking (or more likely mumbling and slobbering) along with you and ruining your career and getting you fired, not to mention getting the microphone all dirty. You'll really be happy, you two, I hope; it sounds to me as if you're meant for each other, and I am already consulting U.S. Customs (or rather Immigration; sorry) to make sure she can't get back into the U.S. once she crosses over to be with you, her dearly beloved. I mention this because it has long been my dream --and the dream of this government, with which I have been in consultation about her for years-- that eventually luck would have it that voluntarily she would leave this country and

roam elsewhere in search of food or whatever. I do think, though, and several highly-placed government leaders, as well as President Nixon, have off-the-cuff suggested to me that I inform you of this before you accept consignment of her at your end...in other words, Bob, while she is still lurching about her room attempting to pack her suitcases, before she starts out on a slow crawl toward Los Angeles International Airport to begin her long, one-way trip to you and Vancouver and CKLG FM, perhaps you would like

to reconsider whether she is in act-uality Miss Right for you. If you do wish to change your mind, it would be a mercy if you yourself would write her and tell her so. No point, of course, in going into cruel details (they are easily hurt); why don't you sort of mainly just tell her that you feel on second thought that your apartment is too small to house you both...perhaps the plumbing isn't adequate for her needs or something...

don't hurt her unnecessarily, Bob; they get hurt so much as it is. And they do get somewhat angry if they dimly sense a deliberate slight. So why don't you just knock out a chatty, folksy letter to her and just work the bad news in subtly? And then I'm sure you can find a nice girl up there in Vancouver of your own, and not have to rip off my chick; okay? And it'll be our secret that I wrote you at all. By the way -- if the above advice doesn't convince you to do what's right, I WILL GET YOU. Can you dig it? Please reply soon, as my patience is short.

Formerly yours, PHILIP K. DICK



“The Strange Vancouver Visitation of Philip K. Dick”

by Adrian Mack. *Montecristo Magazine*:
February 9, 2022

In 1981, taking the form of a goat, the Devil made an appearance at Stanley Park Zoo. There was at least one witness to this event: the science fiction author Philip K. Dick.

Some nine years earlier, Dick arrived at YVR clutching an old suitcase and a Bible. This visitation, too, had its witnesses, a number of whom caught the legendary writer at one of the receptions held in his honour at the 1972 Vancouver Science Fiction Convention, where Dick held forth on one of the major themes in his career. His speech was called “The Android and the Human”.

Even in a field populated by brilliant weirdos, Phil Dick was no ordinary sci-fi author. Born in 1928 as Philip Kindred Dick, his short but extraordinary life was haunted by the spectre of a twin sister, Jane, who died in infancy from malnutrition. Dick never forgave himself for surviving and he never forgave his mother, Dorothy, for what he believed was fatal neglect. When he passed in 1982, Philip K. Dick also believed he’d encountered God, or possibly an off-planet artificial intelligence—or maybe something even more outlandish than either—in a series of life-altering visions that threw an already unruly life into near-permanent disarray, eventually bestowing on Dick a kind of awesome grace.

But we’ll get to that.

The man who arrived in Vancouver from California on February 16, 1972 was merely a well-respected

practitioner inside a not-that-well respected field. He was also a speed-freak and a charismatic, outsized mess of a human. Phil Dick yearned for recognition as a mainstream novelist, but for 20 years had supported (barely) a super-chaotic personal life pounding out wild stories for pulp magazines and downmarket paperback publishers like Ace Books, smuggling his metaphysical obsessions—principally the question *what is reality?*—into vibrantly funny and compassionate sci-fi potboilers.



The best was yet to come, but Dick had masterpieces under his belt like *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965), and *Ubik* (1969). Published in 1968, the slim but elegant *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sleep?* would emerge in June 1982 as the movie *Blade Runner*. Phil Dick didn’t live to see its opening

day—he died in March of that year, age 53—nor could he imagine, as he churned out story after story in the ‘50s and ‘60s, that the paranoid Phil Dick cosmos would all come to pass, with its haywire governments, unhinged machine intelligence, unstable phenomenologies, split personalities, forged universes, and simulated human worlds overseen by demented demigods. Screen and TV adaptations aside, he seemed to compose an actual future. There is nothing more Phil Dick than a blandly terrifying company like Google, the false consciousness of social media, or a billionaire charlatan with his own space rocket (take your pick, we have more than one.)



There’s a fascination around Phil Dick’s Vancouver getaway, which lasted until late April. Declaring that he wanted to make the city his new home, Dick first spent time living with *Province* journalist Michael Walsh and his wife Susan, with whom, true to form, the author fell madly in love. After they kicked him out, Dick found an apartment

Illustration : Bronwyn Schuster

Philip K Dick circa 1929 - Photo courtesy of Tessa Dick

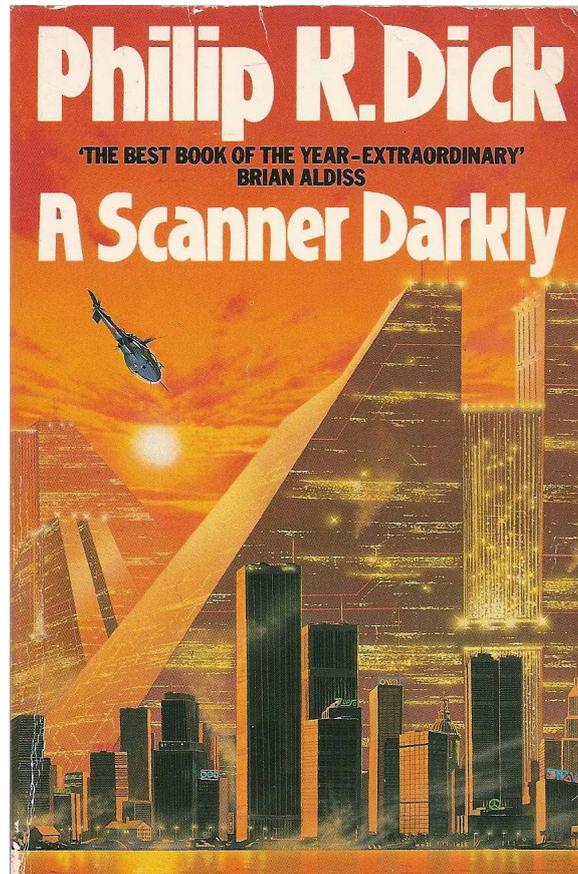
on Cornwall Avenue, where he made a somewhat half-hearted suicide attempt. Eventually, Dick found his way into the radical drug treatment program X-Kalay, hoping to finally beat an amphetamine addiction that had recently cost him a marriage and a daughter, and had reduced his Santa Venetia home to a crash pad for addicts, strays, and more than one hired killer. “Truly vicious people” is how he characterized at least some of his running mates in a letter written in 1973. Dick assumed it was the feds, however, who broke into his house, trashed the place, and stole all his files after blowing his safe wide open with plastic explosive. Others wondered if the real perp was the author himself. These experiences would be fashioned into another masterpiece, the sad but wickedly funny *A Scanner Darkly*, published in 1977 and later adapted into a fine Richard Linklater film starring Keanu Reeves.

So this was the Phil Dick who escaped to Vancouver, bringing his problems with him, and then hurried back home to pick up the pieces. In a 2017 BBC radio interview, Michael and Susan Walsh recount his dazzling brilliance and his destructive complexity. She wonders, in conclusion, if Dick was a psychopath. That’s a stretch, but all the same, we’re left with a sense of the man’s ferocious meatgrinder personality.

Less well known is the sweet interregnum Dick shared with another Vancouver resident, a photographer of some renown, in part due to her chronicling of the city’s punk era. But when Philip K. Dick met Bev Davies, she was a radical hippie art student living with her one-year-old son in a cosy house on Third and Yew. Here, it seems, Dick was soothed by an alluring vision of domestic peace and the one core value that sustains across his entire body of work: simple human kindness.

There was some commotion in 2009 when Davies auctioned a letter, received from Phil in May 1972, in which

he rhapsodizes over their brief friendship in Vancouver. “I needed the money. I went through a dealer in Vancouver that dealt with rare books,” she tells me from her home in Delta. Chuckling softly, she adds: “It’s also really selfish, because I just wanted to be part of the story.” However much celebrity he enjoyed back in 1972, which wasn’t that much, Philip K. Dick has become a major figure in American literature and the subject of obsessive fandom. The letter was tucked inside a copy of *Ubik* that Dick signed and gave to her, with the envelope and his return address in Fullerton, California fully intact—a detail that takes on more significance when Davies drops a minor bombshell later in our interview.



Davies had never heard of Philip K. Dick when she caught a radio interview with the author on CFOX. She was instantly enthralled. “He was talking about [Robert A. Heinlein’s] *Stranger in a Strange Land*,” she recalls, “and he said that if you took it and smoked it, you still couldn’t

get off. I thought that was hilarious.”

What did he mean by that?

“That it was a long, boring book!” she roars.

Between that and a very Dick-sounding bit about “showing photographs on the radio,” Davies was moved to call the station for an on-air question session. She doesn’t remember what she asked, but she’ll never forget what happened next. Within hours, Philip K. Dick was knocking on the front door of her Kitsilano home. “Evidently he was fairly impulsive when it came to young women,” she remarks.

There’s no dispute about that. Indeed, the Dick mythos is overcrowded with partners, platonic and otherwise, frequently much younger than the author, just as frequently locked into some mad whorl of extreme emotion. The fabled “dark-haired girl” is a constant in

Dick's life, across five marriages (and three children.) In his letter to Davies, Dick is candid about his latest obsession, "a black-haired groovy spaced-out foxy chick" named Linda, waiting for him in Fullerton like "destiny in a miniskirt." But the 44-year-old Philip K. Dick who took the twenty-something Bev Davies for a steak supper at a "quaint little restaurant" on Denman Street? He was all gentleman.

"I didn't feel any lechery on his part," says Davies. "Whether he wanted it or not, I don't know, but I didn't feel he was infringing, or setting stuff up, like, 'I can't go home, it's too late, I'll have to stay' —that kind of stuff."

It's possible that Dick had to meet the requirements of X-Kalay, where he was staying at the time. "He didn't tell me that. All I knew is that he had a curfew and he didn't live with his mom," she laughs. "There was a kind of mystery about it." Just as likely is that Dick found an oasis of familial calm and simplicity at the Davies home. In his letter he writes: "I remember so vividly your living room, the TV set, the overstuffed chair I sat in, you drinking tea, your bathroom with the weird soup ad, your little boy. Is all that still there? I hope so."

Davies reckons that Dick showed up, planted himself in that chair, and pondered that soup ad around half a dozen times in total. "He went into my bathroom and started laughing, and laughing, and laughing, and then was saying, 'Cream of Yerlec? What the fuck is *Cream of Yerlec*?' " she remembers. "We'd sit around my living room and talk, and then he would take whatever the conversation had been about and just tweak it a little tiny bit and turn it into something strange. We talked about it, my boyfriend and I, about how much fun it was to have him do that. You held your breath and waited to see what he added to the conversation you just had."

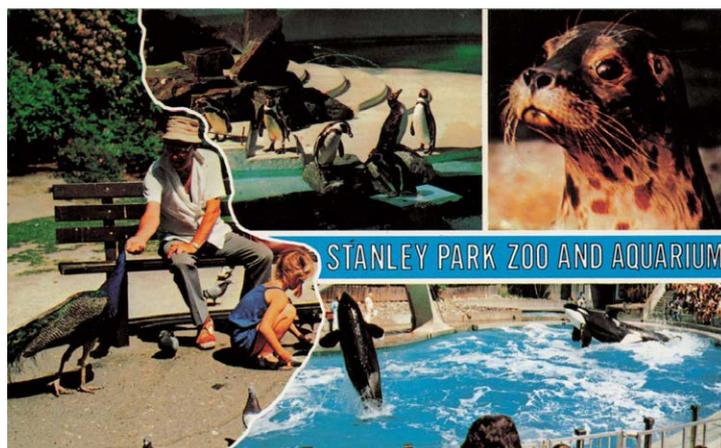
He was a champion fabulist. Friends were never sure what exactly was real with Phil, although he's remembered as outstanding company; a galaxy-brained, stand-up philosopher whose improvised raps on any subject were as mind bending and funny as anything

Dick ever put on the page. "Well, he was a writer," shrugs Davies. "That permeated all levels of his encounters with people, whether he was writing the book in his head or he was communicating parts of a past book. In some ways, looking back, I didn't really understand how all-engrossing his career was to him. I figured, you know, on weekends he wrote books. And I don't think I really understood what a star he was."

Davies also declares "that all of my life I've been strangely attracted to paranoid schizophrenics," and it needs to be addressed that Dick himself wondered if schizophrenia might explain his last decade on earth. She never heard the story, but Dick told others that he was abducted at one point by some goons who fired questions at him while they drove around Vancouver in a black limo. In March 1974, now remarried in California with a young son, Dick was seized by the first of a series of visions that continued till the end of his life; religious ecstasies and divinations that deepened his ontological quest for the true nature of God and reality, and that he subsequently wrestled with in over 8000 pages of a handwritten document called *The Exegesis*.

But schizophrenia, or something like it, doesn't quite explain the lucidity of Dick's remaining years or the practical advice he received, usually from a pink "phosphene" light beamed directly at his head. Most famously, Dick was warned of an invisible birth defect threatening his son's life. Rushing the child to the GP, it turned out to be true. There were witnesses to other wild anomalies. In Lawrence Sutin's biography *Divine Invasions*, then wife

Tessa confirms the tale of a radio that stubbornly continued to play after it was unplugged, although she didn't, significantly, hear the spiteful messages it was spouting at her horrified husband.



In his greatest work, 1981's *VALIS*, Dick casts himself as both Philip K. Dick and the character Horselover Fat, semi-fictionalizing what he bluntly terms his "encounter with the living God" and the rending of his psyche that ensued.

In his subsequent novel, *The Divine Invasion*, also from

1981, the Stanley Park Zoo becomes the location of Philip K. Dick's personal and passionately realized Gnostic gospel, complete with the fallen angel Belial, who appears as a goat. He describes Vancouver as "the most beautiful city in the world."

In his letter to Davies, Dick states "you were nicer to me than anybody else I met in Canada, and I'll always remember that." It ends with the plea: "Put your arms around me, Bev. Hold me. Nobody else ever will." Davies never replied, and didn't even realize that Dick had retreated back to California. The story might have ended there, if it wasn't for this: "I have something that I haven't told anybody else," she says, softly, as we wrap up our call. "I have a second letter somewhere."

Say *what?*

"Every time I go through an old stack of correspondence, I think, 'I'm gonna find it now.'"

It turns out that shortly after selling the first letter, Davies stumbled on a scrap of envelope with Dick's return address on it. Unless the first envelope had managed to reproduce itself, there was only one explanation: "It slowly sunk in. I was looking at it, going, 'Shit! There's a second letter!'" We'll let that further sink in with the marketplace of collectors and obsessives affectionately known as Dickheads. A *second letter*. And we'll leave Bev Davies here, searching through her *kipple*—that was Dick's invented word for all the junk we accumulate in life—as she clutches something like a tantalizing fragment of a holy relic, not yet unearthed.



KIPPLE

You may fight it - but you can never win

A Mysterious Document

by Andre Welling

The following recent interview with Philip K. Dick was forwarded to me by A. Glorzo, an acquaintance who studies Dolphin ontologies. He claims that this text was attached to an email that apparently was sent from his own account. That email had no body text and the subject line: "JOIN JETER AFTER-BOOK BENDER??" Even though Glorzo had no idea what it meant (it became clearer after reading the interview), it looked like one of his typical memos-to-self which were often written in all caps and had two to four question marks at the end. Gave him a chill, he said, and that he was afraid to "answer" to this mail.

Others believe this interview is an AI fake, possibly made by A. Glorzo. Then there's some who believe that "A. Glorzo" is not even a real person and in fact an AI avatar of Andre Welling or that they are the same person.

I believe this interview is a fake fake. It can't be a "pure" AI creation, whatever that is. Someone faked it as such. Being a fake fake makes the interview authentic, "real" again. Just as Phil intended.

INTERVIEW WITH PHILIP K. DICK / 06.02.2024

Interviewer: Mr. Dick, your forthcoming novel, "How I Died in My Spare Time and Came Back on Company Expenses", which is available in excerpts on 4Chan, created quite a buzz on the Internet. David Brooks of the New York Times called it "QAnon for Stoners". Others called it an "obvious AI fake." On TikTok it gave rise to the "Dying in my spare time" challenge. Is this all good news for you as a serious writer? Especially considering you're dead.

Dick: You probably expect me to say that you're dead and I'm alive. And what's a "serious writer"? I was a hack, remember? Now I'm a dead hack. But that does not mean that I think you're alive, mind you. Also being dead and all, I find the concept of "good news" to be rather abstract. But let's say, for the sake of argument, that I'm somewhat attuned to the goings-on in the realm of the living. The reactions you've described sound par for the course for my work. "QAnon for Stoners" – that's amusing. My novels have always been a magnet for those who like to read between the lines, sometimes finding more than I've put there. As for the AI fake

allegations, I've often wondered if reality isn't the biggest fake of them all. And challenges on WhatTok now? I suppose that's just the modern iteration of book clubs and literary debates.

Interviewer: The novel's title suggests a mix of humor and morbidity and a satirical take on corporate culture and the commodification of human life. Is there a deeper commentary on our current socio-economic systems, or is it purely a speculative endeavour, maybe even trivializing the concept of death?

Dick: Ah, you're digging for the marrow now, aren't you? The title, "How I Died in My Spare Time and Came Back on Company Expenses," is indeed a jab at the corporate ladder, the rat race, the endless pursuit of profit at the expense of the human soul. It's all there – the absurdity of our daily grind, the way we commodify our very existence. But to say it trivializes death? No, it's quite the opposite. It's an exploration of the thin veil between life and death, the mundane and the metaphysical. The real question it poses is: what constitutes real life and real death in a world where everything is monetized, even our time to breathe, to dream, to die? Is our current socio-economic system not a form of living death for some?

Interviewer: With such a strong focus on the dehumanizing aspects of corporate culture, do you see any hope for humanity, or is the novel purely dystopian?

Dick: Dystopian narratives aren't just warnings; they're also calls to action. They encourage us to reflect on our current path and consider alternative ways of living and organizing society.

Jeter: And don't forget the sandwiches, Phil! The sandwiches are crucial, man. They're like... metaphors for the layers of reality, you know? Each bite a different flavor, a different level of consciousness.

Interviewer: Yeah, apparently a specific type of sandwich

plays a pivotal role in your novel.

Dick: The sandwich in the novel indeed serves as a metaphor for the layers of reality we navigate. Each layer, each ingredient, represents a different aspect of existence – the physical, the metaphysical, the mundane, the profound, the bizarre, the ethereal. It's all there, in a sandwich. A simple, everyday object, yet so complex when you start to think about it. (Laughs) You should pay more attention to your sandwich!

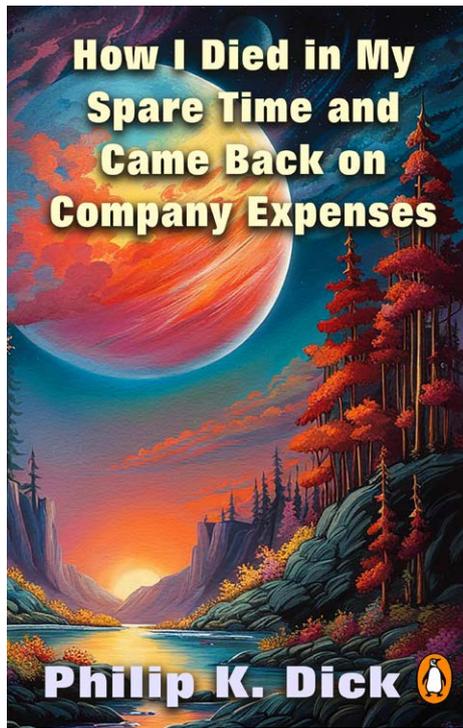
Jeter: (Laughing) Leave it to Phil to turn a sandwich into a metaphysical gateway.

Interviewer: Point taken. And what about the role of cats and German philosophy in the novel? Are they also part of this metaphorical layering, or do they serve a different purpose?

Dick: Cats, you see, are the ultimate anarchists, living embodiments of disdain for authority and the societal norms we humans tirelessly uphold. They exist in their own philosophical bubble, much like the German

philosophers who ponder the nature of being, existence, and nothingness. So, I've juxtaposed the aloof, self-sufficient nature of cats with the dense, often impenetrable musings of German philosophy to create a narrative tapestry that questions the very fabric of reality. Imagine a cat, sitting nonchalantly, or shall we say, planting its buttock on a manuscript of Nietzsche's 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra,' utterly indifferent to the human condition and its existential dread. That's the image I play with – the intricacy and absurdity of our deepest inquiries into life and death, set against the backdrop of an animal that cares for nothing but its immediate comforts.

Interviewer: Speaking of narrative tapestry, your novel apparently introduces a new angle on the concept of reality, a recurring theme in your work. Can you shed some light on how this novel explores that theme, especially with such a peculiar narrative setup?



Dick: This novel, “How I Died in My Spare Time and Came Back on Company Expenses,” toys with the notion of reality by suggesting that death might not be the final frontier, that perhaps it’s just another corporate loophole to be exploited. The protagonist’s journey through death and back is laced with bureaucratic red tape, office politics, and the absurdity of corporate life, suggesting that perhaps there’s no escape from these structures, not even in death. This recursive loop of life and death serves as a metaphor for the cyclical nature of our reality, where every end is just a new beginning under the same old rules.

Jeter: It’s like when I thought I overdosed that time, man. I saw the light, the whole shebang, but then I woke up back in this mess. It’s all a cycle, dude.

Interviewer: That’s a dark perspective. It seems like there’s a blend of humor and profound existential inquiry in your work. How do you balance these elements without diminishing the impact of either?

Dick: It’s a delicate dance, to be sure. The balance comes from the recognition that life itself is a blend of the tragic and the comic. The very essence of existence is absurd, and humor is our way of coping with that absurdity. The humor makes the pill easier to swallow, so to speak, while the existential inquiry ensures that the laughter is tinged with a sense of unease, prompting deeper reflection. The key is to embed the ideas within the characters and their experiences, making the philosophical exploration an integral part of the story rather than an add-on. The characters live and breathe these ideas; they struggle with them, joke about them, and sometimes even ignore them. The narrative itself is a journey through their internal and external worlds, a reflection of their quest for meaning in a seemingly meaningless corporate hellscape.

Jeter: Just don’t forget to have fun while you’re at it. Right, Phil? Maybe have a sandwich...

Interviewer: Back to the buzz and anticipation which those 4Chan novel excerpts already created. Will there be a real book release and promotion?

Dick: Being dead does complicate the promotional tour, doesn’t it? But let’s not quibble over minor details like mortality. As for the buzz, any reaction is better than indifference. If my posthumous work stimulates

conversation, challenges perceptions, or even spurs silly dances, then I consider it a success. As for the book publication, are they still doing that? With all those inter-web screens? But let’s assume for a moment that this novel will find its way into the hands of readers one way or another. Maybe through digital osmosis or psychic transmission. The medium is irrelevant, as long as the message permeates the collective consciousness. Or perhaps it’s already out there, circulating in the ether, waiting to be downloaded into your brain during a particularly vivid dream.

Jeter: Hey, maybe I can smuggle some copies back from the afterlife next time I’m on a bender. You know, give the people what they want.

Interviewer: Intriguing concept. Given the unique circumstances, how do you envision your audience engaging with your work? Through traditional reading, or perhaps more unconventional means?

Dick: In an ideal scenario, my readers would engage with my work through a process of osmotic absorption, imbibing the essence of the narrative through their very pores.

Jeter: Man, I just want them to get a good laugh out of it before it scares the hell out of them. Life’s too short, or too long, depending on how you look at it.

Interviewer: Finally, Mr. Dick, if there’s one thing you hope readers take away from “How I Died in My Spare Time and Came Back on Company Expenses,” what would it be?

Dick: If there’s one kernel of wisdom I could distill from the novel, it’s the reminder to question the structures that govern our lives, to recognize the absurdity inherent in our societal constructs, and to find the humor in our existential plight. Life, after all, is too bizarre and too precious to be taken entirely seriously. And maybe, just maybe, to appreciate the simple pleasures in life – like a good sandwich or the company of a nonchalant cat.

Jeter: And don’t overdose. Not even on philosophy. Trust me, the comeback is a bitch.

Interviewer: Thank you, Mr. Dick, and thank you, Mr. Jeter, for this enlightening and certainly unconventional conversation.

Introduction to THE DARK HAired GIRL by Norman Spinrad

Is THE DARK HAired GIRL simply a collection of the letters that Philip K. Dick wrote to various people, or is it a kind of novel? Fact or fiction?

The problem is that with Phil, it was never easy to distinguish fact from fiction, and not even, perhaps especially not even, for Phil himself.

And for me, who was not only his friend, but was around for some of the events described in these letters, it's even worse, because here and there my memory of events differs in some pretty strange ways from what Phil recounts here.

First and foremost is how and when we became friends in the first place. In one of the letters written from Vancouver Phil laments that his friends are scattered all over, including Norman Spinrad in LA.

But the only time I had ever even been in the same room with Phil before he went to Vancouver was at a party at a science fiction convention in Berkeley. I had agented him anonymously when I worked at the Scott Meredith Literary Agency, where Scott signed all the letters with his own name, I was a great admirer of his work, who had sold some of it, but had never spoken to him.

I wanted very much to talk to him at that party, but the room was full of weird people with weirder drugs, and the only thing he said, somewhat to my astonishment, was "This is too weird for me."

And he left.

Then, some years later, at the time Phil was holed up in Vancouver, I got a very strange phone call in Los Angeles late at night. From Phil.

The first thing he said was something like "I'm up here in Vancouver, my girlfriend has split, I'm very depressed, and I'm considering suicide. But I've got an offer from Willis McNelly to come down to Fullerton, in Orange County, to live. I read your story CARCINOMA ANGELS, and I thought I should talk to you first.

Now what's your honest opinion, should I kill myself or move to Orange County?"

And without thought or hesitation, I replied: "Well Phil, personally I hate Orange County. But you can always kill yourself later."

"Yeah," said Phil, "that makes sense."

And he did it.

And that's how and when our friendship began, at least to my recollection. In midstream. As if it had somehow existed before it began.

This makes it hard to write a preface to this book

without misleading the reader as to how to read it. Phil was always misleading not just to readers but to people. He was not a liar, but he was a consummate put-on artist. This seeming paradox resolves itself if you understand that when Phil was putting on someone else, he was also putting on himself.

He bullshitted constantly. He utterly disproved the maxim that "You can't bullshit a bullshitter." I witnessed him successfully bullshitting expert bullshitters. First and foremost himself.

It goes deeper than that. The letters in

THE DARK HAired GIRL express several aspects of Phil's philosophical, metaphysical, and moral world-view, sometimes powerfully, sometimes touchingly, sometimes hilariously, but collectively they still don't add up to the essential core.

There are good reasons for this.

With relatively few exceptions, the letters herein were written either to women friends, lovers, or wished-



Photo of Philip K. Dick & Norman Spinrad courtesy of Tessa Dick

for lovers. These letters are a kind of dance of masks, or better avatars.

It's a somewhat different Phil Dick writing to each of the recipients, and particularly when he is writing to one of these women about another of them.

This is not insincerity, but something far more complex which Phil himself comes close to elucidating therein, the concept that he has one reality, the other person has another, and in a real relationship, a third reality is created, a common reality, in which, nevertheless, the individual realities of the man and the woman are not subsumed.

That is, in any couple, there are three realities: his, hers, and theirs. Three realities are experienced at the same time.

Multiple realities.

The multiplexity of reality is utterly central to the fiction of Philip K. Dick and also to the essence of Phil the being, Phil the man.

Each of these letters presents an avatar of Phil to the recipient, whether entirely appropriate or not, but this is not to say that they are insincere, for each of these recipients, and particularly the women he loved, was in love with, wanted to be in love with, detested, feared, bedded, wanted to bed, called forth a different avatar of Phil.

Not only are there three realities present in any real man-woman relationship--his, hers, and theirs--but the "he" is changed by the "she" and vice versa. You are never quite the same person in relation to two different people. This is not insincerity, this is an aspect of the multiplexity of reality.

Which is the "base" reality? Which is the "real" Phil Dick?

None of them. All of them.

Phil was one of the wisest people I have ever met. One of the most insightful, most philosophical centered,

most metaphysically astute. An elevated consciousness. A transcendent being.

But not when it came to women.

When it came to women, Phil was a fool for love.

And sometimes for something a good deal less than love.

Without getting too personal--that is without naming names and thus insulting people--I can say that I knew some of the women to whom these letters were written, and also some of the other women Phil had been involved with, and, well, Phil never did really find the sort of woman appropriate to the grandeur of his soul. Indeed, he seldom even chased after one.

Phil was a naif when it came to women. A romantic naif. Oft times a romantic naif with an unslaked erection.

God came to Adam, and He said: "There's good news and bad news. The good news is that I'm giving you two new organs: a brain and a penis. The bad news is that you can't use them both at the same time."

In the case of Phil, his love life was always complicated by the full-time functioning, for better and for worse, sometimes much worse, of a third organ--his great, open, forgiving, and loving heart.

Such a man can all-too-easily be manipulated, consciously or not, for ends that are understood, or not, by lesser beings, morally and spiritually lesser beings, and particularly by what Phil calls "androids," or "simulacra," people devoid of caritas, of true empathy.

A story that Phil told me:

He was researching Nazi archives for THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE and he came across a letter written to his wife by a concentration camp guard.

In it this "man" complained that he was having trouble sleeping. Not because of moral qualms, but because he was "constantly awoken at night by the cries of children."

This, said Phil, is not a human being.



"We are living in a computer programmed reality and the only clue we have to it is when some variable is changed."

Philip K. Dick

(Metz Speech 1977)

Graphic by Nick Buchanan - available as a T-Shirt, Greetings Card, sticker, etc. <https://www.redbubble.com/people/palligap/shop>

Thus, in a way, the “dark haired girl” of THE DARK HAIREED GIRL, what Phil so knowingly and rightly calls his anima, a feminine archetype, a “dream girl” in both the trivial pop culture and deeper sense, is in a way a kind of inverse of an avatar, an empty image of unfulfilled desire into which he sought to fit, or evolve, various real women, with varying but never perfected success.

It is telling that something as superficial and divorced from personality and spiritual essence such a required aspect is. The opposite of the blonde whom gentlemen according to one song are said to prefer.

And for Phil, another aspect of his anima was its waif quality, as exemplified in another song, GOOD BYE RUBY TUESDAY--“who can pin a name on you, when you change with every new day”--the “foxy hippy chick,” beautiful, sexy, hip, but lost, ditzy, in need of a saviour.

In the real world, such street girls or strung-out addicts, or Valley Girls--and it is all too telling that Phil herein usually refers to them as girls, not women--too often suffer from an anomie, a flattening of affect, that at its worst approaches the lack of caritas of the “android” or “simulacrum.” More often than not, this is what has made them what they are, and not the reverse.

A man like Phil--generous, open-hearted, loving, and yearning for a woman (or girl) upon whom to lavish his generosity, his love, to nurture, to save, to raise up, and in thrall to the self-generated image of his dream girl, his anima--is easy prey to such, well, “chicks”.

All they really had to do was impersonate the anima, become his dark-haired girl, as the simulacra impersonates the human, and viper or not, he would take them to his bosom. They didn’t even have to have sex with him, some did not, some even slept in the same bed with him without fulfilling his desire, the anima turned succubus, the succubus as eternal cockteaser.

Phil once said that he never succeeded on this level with one of these women in question because she was really in love with me.

Wrong. The reality was that she wasn’t really capable of or interested in being in love with anyone.

And yet, Phil on another level, in another reality, knew all of this, deeply even, as he demonstrates in this book. Yet he was powerless to transcend it. Or perhaps never lucky enough to encounter the true equal who could rescue him from it. Or perhaps worse still, was too in love with the anima of his dark haired girl that he could not have fallen in love with such a woman even if he found her and she was eager.

As I read what I have written, I am admittedly troubled by the feeling that I have gone too far, that these matters are and should remain private.

Yet, at least by my reading, these matters are precisely what THE DARK HAIREED GIRL is centrally about, and it is impossible to write about the book without delving into them.

For this book is neither a novel nor a memoir nor a philosophical treatise though in another way it is all three. What it mostly is is a collection of very personal love letters by a great writer who was a mighty and sometimes troubled spirit, a man of enormous learning and erudition, and surely the greatest metaphysical novelist this planet has yet produced, but written mostly to women unworthy of him.

Phil Dick was also my good friend, Phil Dick was also a true Christian in the best sense of the word, and Phil would probably chide me for saying such a thing.

Who knows, maybe he would be right. Maybe there will be readers of this book more worthy of what is written herein than those to whom the letters were originally written. Maybe there will even be readers uplifted by it, in which case even I will have to admit, and gladly, that such a naked exposure of the troubled and loving heart of Phil Dick is worthwhile if even one dark haired girl is lifted up thereby into the bright white light that always shone through it.



Norman Spinrad and Philip K Dick in Disneyland

Phildickian Musings

by Andre Welling

I got the strangest A SCANNER DARKLY vibe...

Soon the last person knows that we are living in a PKD world. It's the ruling meme now. Isn't it funny how this enfolded over the last two decades? We knew it back in '98. And earlier. And we will see chatterbots and have ansible interfaces that routinely pass the Turing test. Google Search will understand humans better than they themselves, playing Go against them simultaneously. Insect drones will deliver micro LSD. And IoT mall doors may shut especially for us because they know all our cards are maxed out or our citizen score is subpar. And, right, you can choose your bubble reality already. The biggest crowd. Mercer's only a click away. Moon's the next destination. A little something for us Internauts.

14 years old I just discovered magazine porn and PKD. Mind blown, senses sharpened, eyes further weakened.

It will be more of a PKD world if the surveillance tech starts developing personal grudges and gets moody. When you pissed off your nosy door or bicker with your passive-aggressive fridge. Any number of cackling mad scientists could have said that before setting up the buzzing electronic brain hell-bent on Global Thermonuclear War. Or mass micro-drone attack (through your ear straight into your brain)

He saw it coming how technology will penetrate our sense of privacy, self, and agency. Didn't we see it coming? I did

Maybe some AI can construct some new PKD novels from the Exegesis by cut and paste?

But the truth is: PKD was always medium popular among

the SF crowd, until Tom Cruise and Steven Spielberg made him fully mainstream so that Silicon Valley startups make PKD robot heads.

How can the PKDictionary not have "VALIS"? This must be some omission-as-code...

I can affirm that PKD did prepare me for an uncertain future alright. Our future = the unfolding present. Was anyone of us really surprised by the arising threat of "deepfakes"? Or "bots presenting as humans"? "Pre-Crime", "Smart Drugs", "Targeted Ads", "Resurrected Swine Brains in Vats", "Post-Truth Politics"? Come on, it's all in the holy books (maybe not swine brains, exactly)! PKD either predicted this present, or he made it happen (different scenarios available). The question is still open.

I am not optimistic about frozen head's future viability in general. I guess Phil would have loved his robot version and kept it in his living room. He would be confused from time to time as to who was the real Phil (it's the libido, stupid!). He would relegate all interviews and chores to robot Phil.



I would give the kids EYE IN THE SKY to read maybe, because it's funny. That reality where you cannot curse? They could imagine how reality would be like if their mom, dad, crazy uncle, or school principal ruled it. They could venture about how certain individuals even without Bevatronic ontological mumbo-jumbo do shape the reality of large groups of people. Maybe you're

not getting stung by a bee when cursing but you may be getting ticketed and fined (or flogged) by the vice squad of the Religion Police.

Where are those PKD "On Drugs" and "On Reality" and "On Cats" books (forthcoming "On Sheep" and "On Paranoia", I guess we save "On Religion" for much later...)? Nobody

pitched the estate yet? Shall we offer editorship? I mean, we had “On Music” all set-up and good to go (I must have the resulting excel sheet somewhere), back in the (PKD list) day.

I just want to add that I find Mark Fisher’s view on UBIK as a speed-freak dystopia sublimated into a Lacanian game very agreeable. That’s good thinking. Keeps us wanting, like drugs, sex, or advertising.

PKD foresaw chaos theory for real. A roll of dice, and the solar system changes. A paper slip flutters in fake Ohio and a revolution unfurls on Mars. See a golden necklace twinkle and the walls of the Black Iron Prison tumble.

I like this idea having a MARTIAN TIME SLIP by your bed instead of a bible. As a bible.

I have a Phildickian moment in any bigger shopping mall. Or when the call center agent doing his customer satisfaction review call wants to know whether I found one of like 26 aspects of attending my latest on-site date with a bank clerk - Completely Satisfying, Very Satisfying, Satisfying, Not Satisfying, or Absolutely Not Satisfying? She actually repeated that phrase with each of those questions, like how timely I was escorted from the waiting area to the clerk desk according to my pre-set date time (they might have kept me waiting for about 90 seconds... so) or how I found the “atmosphere” and the response to my questions. Or anything. And she appeared to be a human being. But she passed the Turing/Voight-Kampf test only when she reluctantly laughed after I remarked at some point how no sane individual would dissect and rate his boring basic social transactions on such paranoid-obsessive scales. I’m sure she got 30 questions at hand to inquire about my experience getting two croissants from the baker shop. The first greeting from the bread seller at the counter - was it Completely Satisfying, Very Satisfying, Satisfying, Not Satisfying, or Absolutely Not Satisfying? For me that’s a Phildickian moment and the definition has to cover that. Also ominous deeper meanings. Being a PKD otaku means that you scrutinize any company name, label, paper slip and graffito for messages of the dead or those outside the black iron prison.

I’m a bit lost here. Phildickian might be transgressive but transgressive isn’t necessarily Phildickian.

The anti-terror craze, especially at airports, and the high frequency and cheapo maximum efficiency / zero redundancy processes of modern “hubs” leads to an

unusual power of single individuals who can slip into the gears and grind the whole operation to a halt. It’s Dickian somehow, a sudden reality change brought forth by the bumbling average Joe or Jane Citizen who for some reason (just opening and passing the nearest strange door or crossing cluelessly a “line” in the back of some distracted guard) become enemy sleeper agents from Mars, triggering massive shocktrooper manifestations.

It’s really beyond surreal and so it’s naturally the professional sitcom critics that have the clearest grasp of the mechanics of the Age of Trump. And how ‘he’ is indeed the first animatronic president as foretold by Philip K Dick (I say).

I even got a bit of how it felt to be alive as Philip K Dick when reading his stuff. That’s how I knew he was an artist, not just a quirky Scifi hack.

But aside from that, there’s no doubt that PKD was the biggest ‘advocate’ of German culture and tidbits in the US SF crowd. He just loved those German words and the heavy stuff of Germany’s philosophers and composers. The thing-in-itself (Kant) is rattled into its aletheia or unveiling (Heidegger) when Herbert Schönheit von Vogelsang meets Pris Frauenzimmer in Bayreuth, location of the world’s first fully immersive multi-media experience, the (first) ‘Ring’ as “Gesamtkunstwerk” (Wagner). Götterdämmerung, presto!

It is really high time for a handy sharp-focus EMP device as we approach that PKD age of pestering ad bots and neurotoxin-dart delivering automatons.

Why not suppose that PKD’s shizotronics weren’t entirely fictional and there had been a Horselover Fats beneath the Philip K. Dick persona all along (maybe even a Chipdick K. Kill lurking in the background), sometimes taking over completely (bi-cameral breakdown, multiple personality disorder). So it was Horselover Fats ransacking the file cabinet without Phil knowing. What was he after? Well, I guess, stuff that would alert Phil to what Horselover was doing when he took over.

We truly live the future Phil told us about. Are we really all dead and he’s alive? Just drinking black roast coffee, man, with sugar, and I’m fucking sweating from the drug, hammering my keys and hearing ‘Calexico’. It’s eight o’clock in the morning and grey and drizzling but no flapple to be seen.

Phil is a very rich and very old geezer now who thinks about having his head cryo-preserved. He spends most of his time talking to cats about religion. Most cats of course are atheist.

I found Phil's mainstream novels arty enough. At least they were pretty original in my opinion: Psychological middle-class dramas with no clear morals or tidy endings. Angsty slice-of-life explorations that maybe could be filmed as Japanese anime?

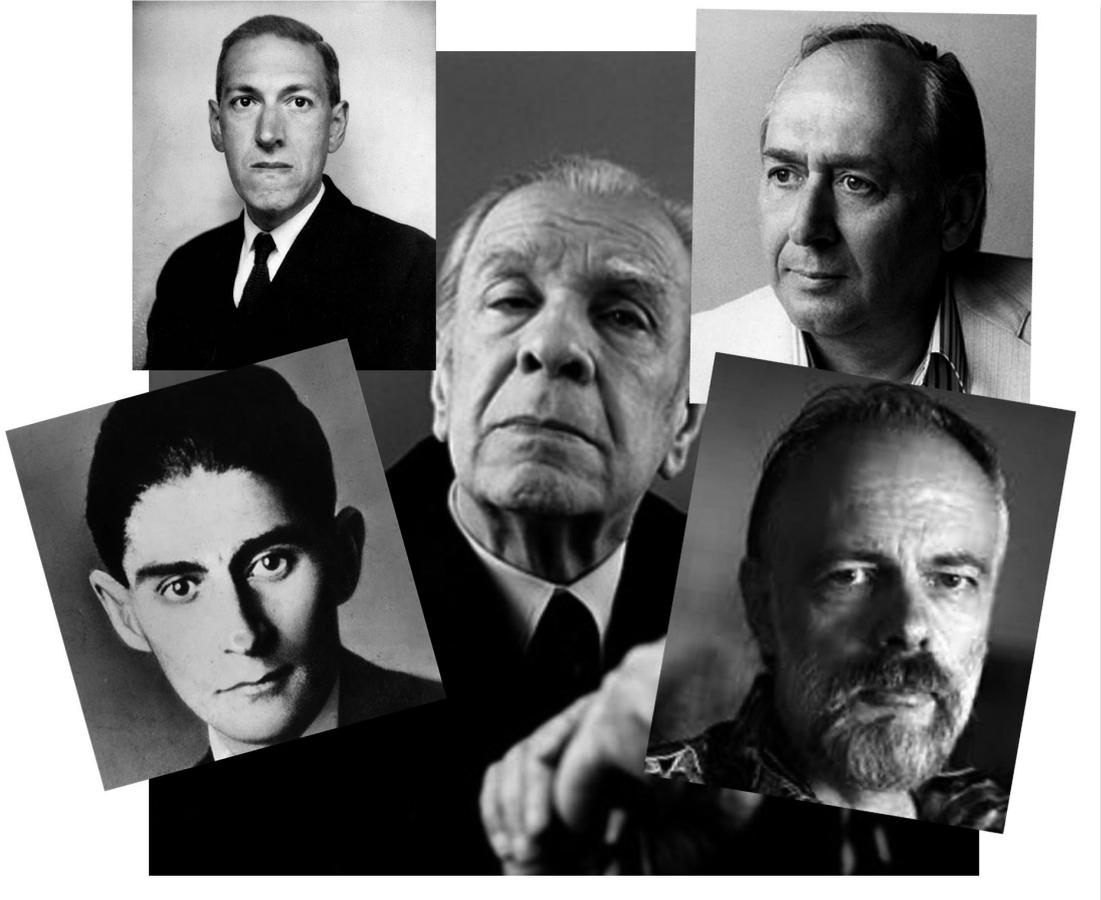
Are we holding space people to a higher standard? In a PKD-casted space crew everybody would make "stupid mistakes" all the time for any reason: hubris, daftness, drug-addledness, love pains, hangover, depression, schizophrenia, distractedness, disaffectedness, visions, the spirit of perversity. It's not a complete list.

The Divine Invasion is a killer title, though. Maybe Horselover Fats did write DIVINE INVASION, as Patrick says, using Phil's I-Ching set to determine which page of the Exegesis to deploy in a given chapter.

I never considered Phil to be a hardcore philosopher or even theologian but he obviously wanted to be seen as such.

See, we are HERE! It's that PKD fake worlds wise-talking appliances future we are living right now. Depressed, annoyed? Ask Dr. Suitcase.

Everyone is fucked up in a PKD novel. And they all have fucking bias. That's the point, that's the people's



Kafka, Lovecraft, Borges, Ballard, & Dick

multiverse, with a bent towards "the darkest timelines". Phil gave not two shits about the possibility of space travel and technology. Maybe with the exception of advertisement technology.

They should have the complete unredacted FBI "Solarcon" X-files on Philip and Stanislaw Lem and Tom Disch and their vast conspiracy. They also have bios of his sister from timelines where she lives.

Imagine Phil in the current social media info wars. Phil with a smartphone. Would he be a vaccination sceptic with all that info on the vaccine being some bioweapon and mind control uplink to the anti-VALIS G5 network. I dream that David Lynch films UBIK, but with rabbits.

"Kafka, Lovecraft, Borges, Ballard, Dick" - that's a good posse all about the horrors under the smooth surface of the mundane.

So Philip K. Dick is the Patron Saint of the Age of Deep Fakes? (Who even has a heart for the ennui and self-

deprecation of hard-working disinformation retweet bots.)

A reason to live in a PKD world? Women's day-glo nipple fashion. Working flapples. Ontic drugs. Ubik. Also: Smoking and Othering women.

Dick fills in the ominous SF middle class gap, "Comfortably able to meet basic needs and some wants", that's Rick Deckard. Joe "Repairman" Chip is one tier down.

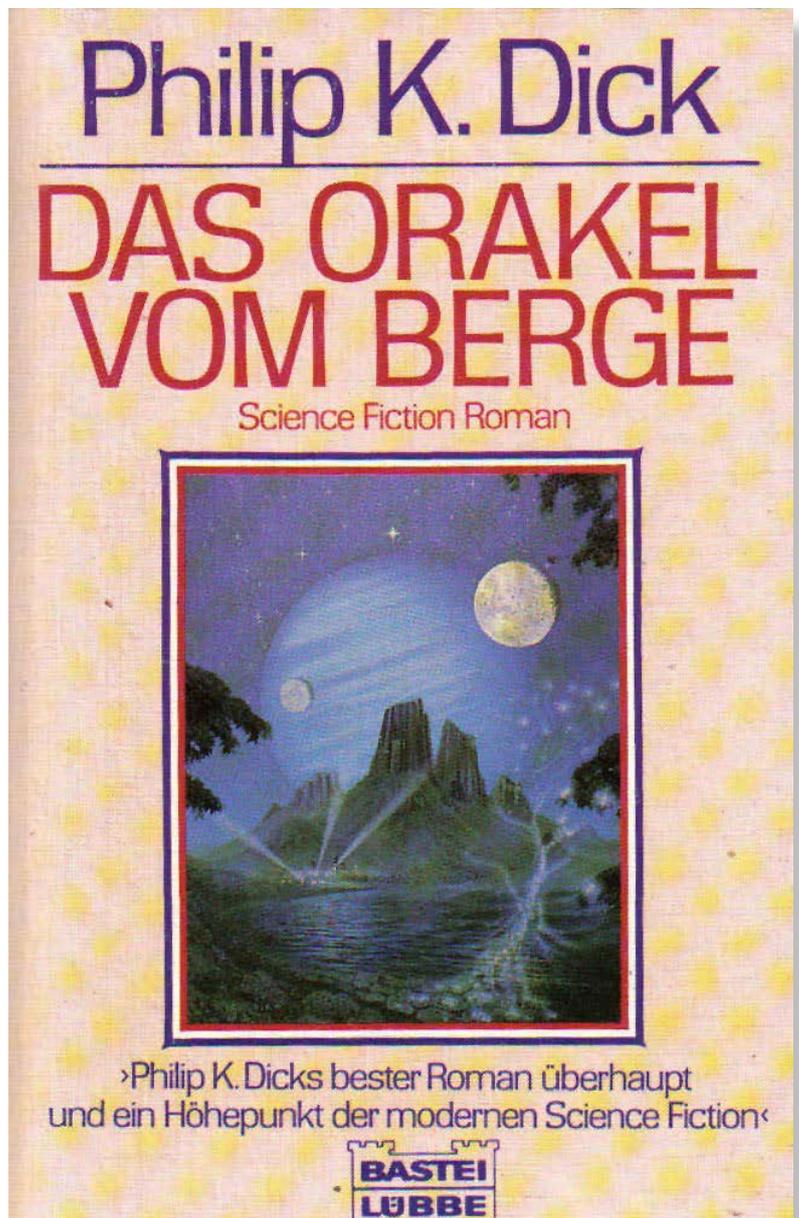
PKD on the German MITHC:

Sourced by Andre Welling

They didn't know that I could read German. A publisher bought it in Germany and began to translate it, and when I learned that they'd bought it, I said, "Oh, no, you're not going to put that book out in Germany without letting me see the German translation." I said, "Listen, Scott, we're not going to let them publish that book lest I read the galleys. It's gotta be *sine qua non*. It's gotta be a condition." Well, they didn't have galleys. They just had the typescript, so they had to send that to us. When I started reading that thing, I could see that they had destroyed the book. They'd turned it into a travesty of itself. I actually burst into tears when I finished reading it. Here was my best novel, right, and they said, "We didn't know you could read German." They actually said that in their letter. They gave me five days to read it, and my German got very fluent. I stayed up night and day with my Cassell's German-English Dictionary and I read every single word, comparing the German line by line with the English. They hadn't changed any of the political parts – all the anti-Nazi stuff was still there. They'd just turned it into a cheap adventure novel. I remember one part where it read: "*Tagomi stolzierte einher wie Wyatt Earp.*" Now, I never mentioned Wyatt Earp in my book. "Tagomi

swaggered like Wyatt Earp"! "Tagomi swaggered like Wyatt Oorp"!

The thing about this Phil interview is that he quotes it wrong but there IS a Wyatt Earp in the (first) translation, but in another sentence. This blog guy found out that the last novel that the translator translated before TMITHC was - a Western potboiler. So some residue of that work clearly crept into his translation work on Phil's novel, "triggered" mayhap by the Americana guns of Tagomi.
– Andre Welling



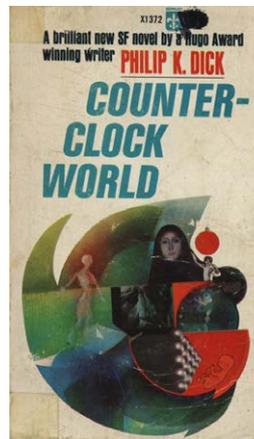
Roberto Bolaño BURROUGHS

For some of those of my generation, William Burroughs was the affectless man, the shard of ice that never melts, the eye that never closes. They say he possessed every vice there was, but I think he was a saint who attracted all the sinners in the world because he was gracious and unwise enough never to shut his door. Literature, his livelihood for the last thirty years, interested him, but not too much, and in that regard he was like other classic American figures who focused their efforts on observing life or on experience. When he talked about what he read one got the impression that he was remembering vague stretches of time in prison.

His observations on certain hard drugs give him a kinship to the great chroniclers of hell, except that in Burroughs there's no moral or ethical motive, only the description of a frozen abyss, the description of an endless process of corruption. Language, he said, is a virus from outer space, in other words, a disease, and he spent his whole life trying to fight that disease.

PHILIP K. DICK

by Roberto Bolaño in *Between Parentheses* (2004)



In my long conversations with Rodrigo Fresán about Philip K. Dick in bars and restaurants around Barcelona or at each other's houses we've never run out of things to say. These are some of the conclusions we've reached: Dick was a schizophrenic. Dick was a paranoiac. Dick is one of the ten best American writers of the twentieth century, which is saying a lot. Dick was a kind of Kafka steeped in LSD and rage. Dick talks to us, in *The Man in the High Castle*, in what would become his trademark way, about how mutable reality can be and therefore how mutable history can be. Dick is Thoreau plus the death of the American dream. Dick writes, at times like a prisoner, because ethically and aesthetically, he really is a prisoner. Dick is the one who, in *Ubik*, comes closest to capturing the human consciousness or fragments of consciousness in the context of their setting; the correspondence between the story he tells and its structure is more brilliant than similar experiments conducted by Pynchon or DeLillo. Dick is the first, literarily speaking, to write eloquently about virtual consciousness. Dick is the first, or if not the

first then the best, to write about the perception of speed, the perception of entropy, the perception of the clamor of the universe in *Martian Time Slip* in which an autistic boy, like a silent Jesus Christ of the future, devotes himself to feeling and suffering the paradox of time and space, the death toward which we're all heading.

Dick, despite everything, never loses his sense of humor, which means that he owes more to Twain than to Melville, although Fresán who knows more about Dick than me, raises some objections. For Dick all art is political. Don't forget that. Dick is possibly one of the most plagiarized authors of the twentieth century. In Fresán opinion, *Time's Arrow*, by Martin Amis, is a shameless rip off of *Counter-Clock World*. I prefer to believe that Amis is

paying tribute to Dick or to some precursor of Dick (let's not forget that Amis's father, the poet Kingsley Amis, also champion science fiction and was a great reader of it). Dick is the American writer who in recent years has most influenced non-American poets, novelists, and essayists. Dick is good even when he's bad and I ask myself, though I already know the answer, whether the same could be said of any Latin American writer. Dick portrays suffering as forcefully as Carson McCullers. And *VALIS* is more disturbing than any novel by McCullers. Dick seems, at moments, like the king of beggars, and at others like a mysterious millionaire in hiding, and by this he

may have meant to explain that the two roles are really one. Dick wrote *Dr Bloodmoney*, which is a masterpiece, and he revolutionized the contemporary American novel in 1962, with *The Man in the High Castle*, but he also wrote novels that have nothing to do with science fiction, like *Confessions of a Crap Artist*, written in 1959 and published in 1975, which shows you how well-loved he was by the American publishing industry.

There are three images of the real Dick that I'll carry with me always, along with my memories of his countless books. First: Dick and all his wives – the incessant expense of California divorces. Second: Dick receiving a visit from the Black Panthers, an FBI car parked outside of his house. Third: Dick and his sick son, and the voices Dick hears in his head advising him to go back to the doctor again to inquire about a different illness, very rare, very serious, which Dick does, and the doctors realize their mistake and they perform emergency surgery and save the boy's life.

How Do You Know You're Reading Philip K. Dick?

By James Tiptree, Jr. December, 1986

I think, first and pervasively, it was the strangeness. Strange, Dick was and is. I think it was that which kept me combing the SF catalogs for more by him, waiting for each new book to come out. One hears it said, "X just doesn't think like other people." About Dick, it was true. In the stories, you can't tell what's going to happen next.

And yet his characters are seemingly designed to be ordinary people - except for the occasional screaming psychotic female who is one of Dick's specialties, and is always treated with love. They are ordinary people caught up in wildly bizarre situations, running a police force with the help of the mumblings of precognitive idiots, facing a self-replicating factory that has taken over the earth. Indeed, one of the factors in the strangeness is the care Dick takes to set his characters in the world of reality, an aspect most other writers ignore.

In how many other science fiction stories do you know what the hero does for a living when he isn't caught up in the particular plot? Oh, he may be a member of a space crew, or, vaguely, a scientist. Or Young Werther. In Dick, you are introduced to the hero's business concerns on page one. That's not literally true of the short stories in this volume (I went back and checked), but the impression of the pervasiveness of "grubby" business concerns is everywhere, especially in the novels. The hero is in the antique business, say; as each new marvel turns up, he ruminates as to whether it is saleable. When the dead talk, they offer business advice. Dick never sheds his concern that we

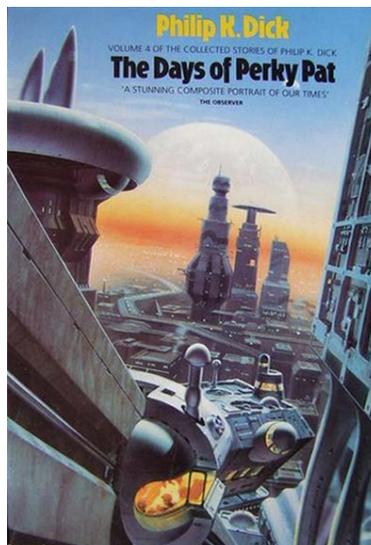
know how his characters earn their bread and butter. It is a part of the peculiar "grittiness" of Dick's style.

Another part of the grittiness is the jerkiness of the dialog. I can never decide whether Dick's dialog is purely unreal, or more real than most. His people do not interact as much as they deliver monologs to carry on the plot, or increase the reader's awareness of a situation.

And the situations are purely Dick. His "plots" are like nothing else in SF. If Dick writes a time-travel story, say, it will have a twist on it that makes it *sui generis*. Quite typically, the central gee-whiz marvel will not be centered, but will come at you obliquely, in the course, for instance, of a political election. And any relation between Dick and a nuts-and-bolts SF writer is a pure coincidence. In my more sanguine moments, I concede that he probably knows what happens when you plug in a lamp and turn it on, but beyond that there is little evidence of either technology or science. His science, such as it is, is all engaged in the technology of the soul, with a smattering of abnormal psychology.

So far I have perhaps emphasized his oddities at the expense of his merits. What keeps you reading Dick? Well, for one thing, the strangeness, as I said, but within it there is always the atmosphere of *striving*, of men desperately trying to get some necessary job done, or striving at least to understand what is striking at them. A large percentage of Dick's heroes are tortured men; Dick is expert at the machinery of despair.

And another beauty is the desolations. When Dick gives you a desolation, say after the bomb, it is a desolation unique of its kind. There is one such in this book. But amid the desolation you often find another of Dick's characteristic touches, the *little animals*.



The little animals are frequently mutants, or small robots who have taken on life. They are unexplained, simply noted by another character in passing. And what are they doing? They are striving, too. A freezing sparrow hugs a rag around itself a mutant rat plans a construction, "peering and planning." This sense of the ongoing busy-ness of life, however doomed, of a landscape in which every element has its own life, is *trying to live*, is typically and profoundly Dick. It carries the quality of compassion amid the hard edges and the grit, the compassion one suspects in

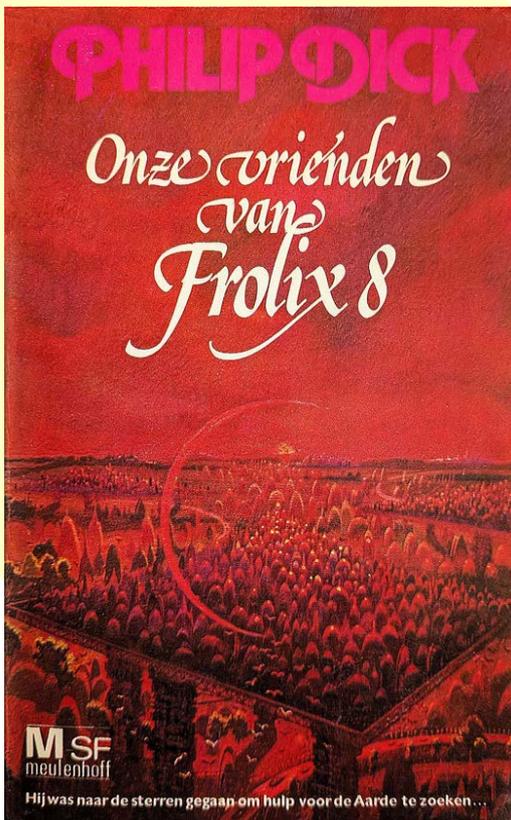
Dick, but that never appears frontally. It is this quality of love, always quickly suppressed, that gleams across Dick's rubbed plains and makes them unique and memorable.

This piece was reproduced in the UK 1989 Grafton tpb
collection of short stories: *The Days of Perky Pat*

PKD in Dutch

by Angus Taylor

In 1978 the Amsterdam publisher Meulenhoff issued a paperback titled *Het Heelal van de Dromers: Een Verkenning in de Wereld van de Science Fiction* (The Universe of the Dreamers: An Exploration of the World of Science Fiction). The book was a knowledgeable short introduction to the field and its history, and to fandom. It included two short stories – by Isaac Asimov and Larry Niven – and was illustrated with black-and-white images of magazine covers and other artwork, together with photos of various authors. It also listed hundreds of available titles translated into Dutch, many of them from Meulenhoff. A number of prominent authors were briefly profiled, among them Philip K. Dick. Here, translated from the Dutch, is what was said about Dick:



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Philip Dick (1928)

A man who clearly stands out in the gamut of SF writers because of his completely hypothermic, deadly calm tone and his neurotic, often paranormal adventures in which many strange things happen. They usually take place in the USA, not too far in the future, in which reality turns out to be surprisingly relative, but extraterrestrial locations are presented too. Dick's perpetual protagonist is an American with a pithy name, always a resigned victim of circumstances, who struggles through a crisis in his life with great difficulty and also, more or less in passing, influences a concurrent crisis in the survival of his world, but incidentally as a side effect. He is also often bullied by

a nasty archetype of a woman with castration desires.

A little specialty of Dick's are the seemingly fortuitous finds that populate his books, such as his talking household machines, even kettles and doorknobs. They usually have a naive, cheerful character (unlike the people in Dick's books), but otherwise nothing human is alien to them.

They are meddling, often corruptible, and happy to accept tips. However, they are never "cute".

Dick has written three dozen novels and many stories, or perhaps one novel in three dozen installments. Two-thirds of his work has already been translated, which may be surprising with such a writer who is

not widely known. A few years ago Dick's work underwent a drastic change, as can be seen in *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* and *A Scanner Darkly* (in preparation, Bruna Publishers).

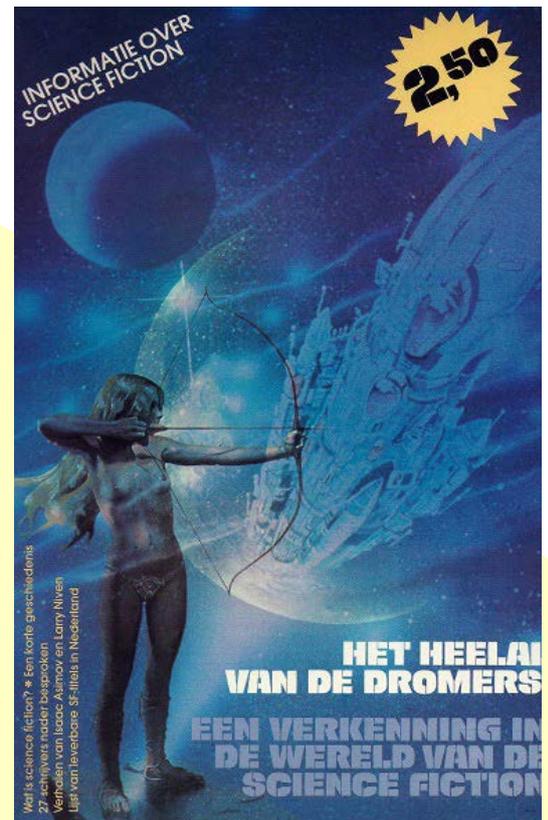
Recommended:

Ubik (which leaves gaps in reality),

Now Wait for Last Year (time travel by hallucinating, or vice versa),

*The Man in the High Castle** (classic case of "if this one historical event had turned out differently"; set in the present, after a small deviation in history resulted in an Axis victory in World War II).

*Dutch title: *Larzen in de Nacht* (Boots in the Night)





Notes & Comments

Two reviews of the French edition of The Dark Haired via Google Translator:

Philip K. Dick, *La fille aux cheveux noirs* (2002)

She is Emily Hnatt in *The God from the Centaur* [3 *Stigmata*], Donna Hawthorne in *Substance Mort*, Sherri Solvig in *Siva* [Valis], Rybys Romney in *The Divine Invasion* ... Multiple, fantasized, she goes through an existence marked

by mystical experiences, doubt and drug abuse. Her hair is black as night; an invariant, demiurgic figure, she is every woman Philip K. Dick has known and loved. *The Girl with Black Hair* brings together all the letters he sent to this mysterious muse, a character as real as it is virtual and the *raison d'être* of his literary work. At the turn of this one-way correspondence,

where fiction and autobiography mingle, appears implicitly the portrait of an author who made his life his best novel.

*

This thing is not a novel, nor a story ...at least that's what I got from it. K. Dick seems honest in the disclosure of his correspondence on the subject: his loves. Apart from these letters to Bob, whom I suspect to be Bob Arctor, the character of "Dead Substance" I believe that the whole thing is a real correspondence....because with K. Dick, you never know. It always swings us from one reality to another.

In this collection, which has long been publicized as his last writings, we learn a lot about the author and his way of loving women unconditionally. We discover the muses who have delighted his fans in his stories. He ends it all with an exclamation point worthy of his greatest efforts.

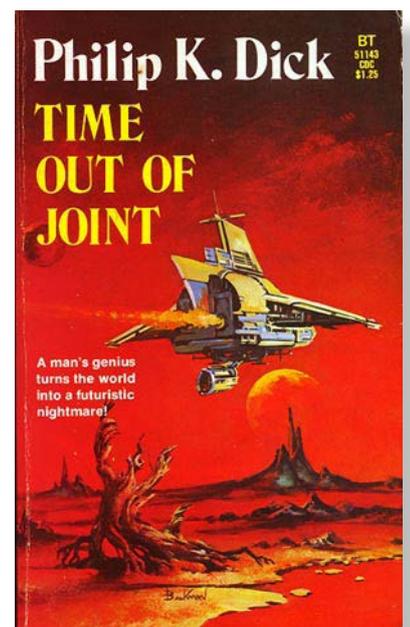
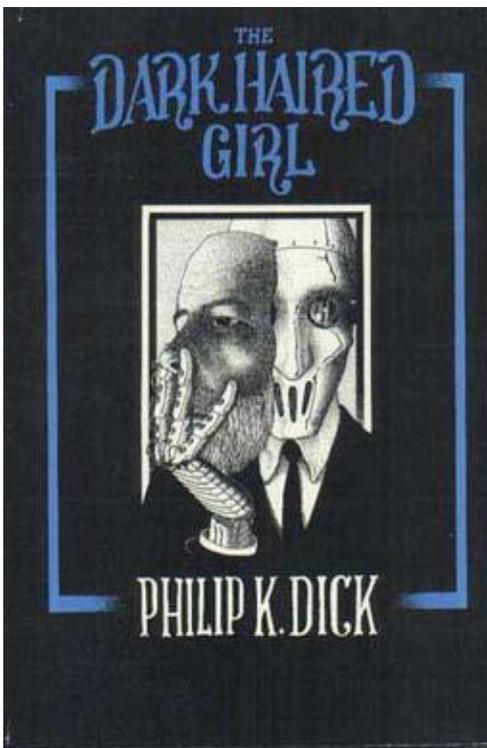
Not a must, but for SF and K. Dick freaks like me, it's a must to get to know the author better.

*

NOTED

Philip K. Dick's *Time Out of Joint*, published in 1959, performs a similar estrangement of realism, as well as presenting another version of unworlding. The novel is remarkable, in fact, for the painstaking way in which Dick constructs a "realistic" small town America. Two years after the first Disneyland park opened – Dick would become a frequent visitor to the park in LA – the novel treats literary realism as a kind of Disneyfication. In a classic moment of Dick ontological vertigo, the novel's painstakingly described small town is revealed, in the end, to be an intricate system of pasteboard frontages, hypnotic suggestions and negative hallucinations (we shall return to the question of negative hallucinations later). The pay-off can just as easily be read in terms of critical metafiction as science fiction, for what is any setting in realist fiction if not the same kind of system? How is any "reality effect" achieved using the literary equivalent of these simulacrum techniques? In *Time Out of Joint*, the machinery of realism becomes, then, re-described as a set of special effects...

What is remarkable is the way in which Dick was capable, in 1959, of already identifying those stereotypical features of the American Fifties which would come to define the decade in



retrospect. It is not Dick's skill in projecting into the future that is to be admired – the novel's 1997 is confected out of generic SF tropes, far less convincing than the ostensibly fake Fifties world it embeds – but rather his capacity to imagine how the future would see the Fifties. It is the Fifties already envisaged as a themepark: an anticipated reconstruction...In this lukewarm world, ambient discontent hides in plain view, a hazy malaise given off by the refrigerators, television sets and other consumer durables. The vividness and plausibility of this miserable world – with misery itself contributing to the world's plausibility – somehow becomes all the more intense when its status is downgraded to that of a constructed simulation. The world is a simulation but it still feels real.
– Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie* (2016)

*

THE NOBLE NEUROTIC

Philip K. Dick was influential on Cyber-Punk, in that his novel *A Scanner Darkly* touched on what is crucial in Baudrillard's disintegration into neurosis: "Biological life goes on, everything else is dead. A reflex, machine-like, like some insect repeating doomed patterns over and over. A single pattern. The failed codes of an escape combination. But how can you truly escape yourself?"
– Mark Downham (1988)

*

In reference to vocalist Eleni Poulou:
Her whispered lyrics are creepy and haunt the zone of Philip K. Dick, suggesting lucid dreaming and dislocated personality states, people stepping outside themselves, "outside of time" like Bob Arctor, the undercover cop from *A Scanner Darkly* who fails to recognize himself in surveillance footage. – Kek-W, *The Wire* (2023)

*

At that first convention, I met also Philip K. Dick and within months, we'd begun a correspondence of lengthy bimonthly letters which continued for the next couple of years. (Excerpts from many of those letters later appeared in the 1972-1973 and 1974 volumes of THE SELECTED LETTERS OF PHILIP K. DICK.)

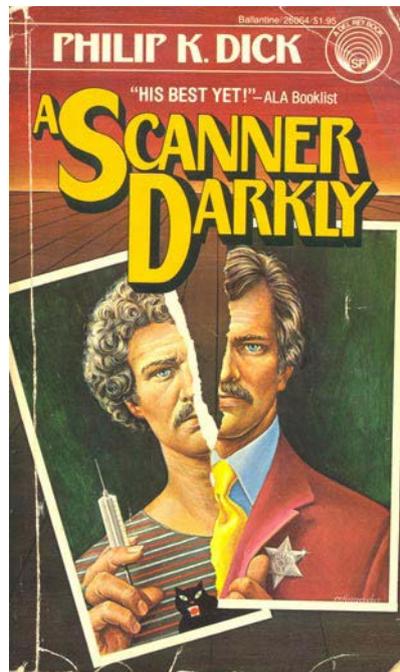
While I'm on the subject of PK Dick: One of my side jobs during the store's early years was as a script reader at United Artists. When Mike Medavoy, then a mere

development executive, found out I was knowledgeable about science-fiction, he told me if there were any books that I thought would make good movies, he'd pay me to write up a synopsis/analysis. One of the first books I did that for was Dick's DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP? which resulted in the book getting its first option. (It eventually became the movie *Bladerunner*, but not through United Artists.) It was also the first time in the history of United Artists that a book recommended by a reader had actually been optioned. Phil Dick sent me a postcard, which read (in part):

"I read your synopsis, etc. on ANDROIDS and I have never seen a novel of mine boiled down like that where it made sense and everything fitted in. I mean, you showed why each element was there. I had never imagined that this could be done with a novel of mine; people always told me there were dangling parts that were not really functional, but my god, Sherry, you proved them – and me – wrong! God bless you. What a trip!"

– Sherry Gottlieb

*



Barbie

"The Days Of Perky Pat" came to me in one lightning-swift flash when I saw my children playing with Barbie dolls. Obviously these anatomically super-developed dolls were not intended for the use of children, or, more accurately, should not have been. Barbie and Ken consisted of two adults in miniature. The idea was that the purchase of countless new clothes for these dolls was necessary if Barbie and Ken were to live in the style to which they were accustomed. I had visions of Barbie coming into my bedroom at night and saying, "I need a mink coat." Or, even worse, "Hey, big fellow... want to take a drive to Vegas in my Jaguar XKE?" I was afraid my wife would find me and Barbie together and my wife would shoot me. – PKD to SMLA April 18, 1963

You would think that there would be some wink/nudge to "Days of Perky Pat" somewhere in "Barbie" but I didn't see any. On the other hand, the whole movie is a kind of

version of “The Penultimate Truth”, isn’t it? And Barbie Land is obviously some sort of shared hallucination – the color scheme just screams that conclusion, not to mention the suspension of things like gravity and the fake horizon and such. Some hint of “Eye in the Sky” here or even “Flow My Tears”, perhaps? Is Barbie lying on the floor of the Bevatron or did Ken slip her a dose of KR-3?

The best way to understand “Barbie the Movie” is to realize that the entire film is taking place in the mind of some little girl playing with her Barbie doll. The script says as much insofar as the titular (heh, heh) Barbie we watch suddenly has flat feet and cellulite because the adolescent girl who used to play with her in “the Real World” [sic] has lost interest and turned hostile to her doll. So Barbie devolves, UBIK-like. Is the little girl in cold-pac?

Of course you can always find a Phildickian aspect to just about anything. That’s the world we live in. Phil, Germanophile that he was, might very well have known about the “adult-themed” German doll precursor to the Mattel iteration. Hence his concern that his wife might catch him and Barbie in the bedroom together. Uh, not to cast aspersions on our guy, but that sounds suspiciously like a masturbation fantasy. - JPC

Greg Costikyan:

Ares Magazine July 1981, p. 24

“The most brilliant mind on any planet, says *Rolling Stone* on the cover of Philip K. Dick’s *Valis*; one wonders how they know. The quote is representative of, however, the recognition and acclaim which Dick has received both within and without the SF ghetto. Despite critical and academic acclaim, Dick continues to sell rather poorly, the fault lying in the cerebral

and often confused nature of his prose.

Dick may not be the most best SF mind on any planet, but he is certainly the most idiosyncratic on this planet. The themes he chooses are bizarre in the extreme, as looney as some explored by Heinlein in the last few years. For example, one novel deals with a world in which objects keep regressing in time: look away from the fridge and five minutes later it will have turned into a vintage 50s fridge with rounded corners and a level handle; five minutes later and it will be an 1890s tin-plated ice box. As a result, much of Dick’s fiction is either poorly thought out or simply incomprehensible; but much of it is extremely good.

The protagonist of *Valis* is Horselover Fat, a German translation by way of Attic Greek of Dick’s own name. Fat is a middle aged man who is experiencing a nervous breakdown and used LSD for an extended period. At some point, he believes he sees the divine light of God, and starts to develop a weird cosmology of his own. This universe, he believes, is an essentially flawed and evil one, but an entity from a more perfect universe has invaded and is seeking to bring love and justice. This entity is alternately Jesus Christ or a secret satellite manned by three-eyed aliens from the future. Eventually, Fat half-persuades his friends of his vision, and then meets another group who have come to similar conclusions independently.

In essence, *Valis* is a novelistic exploration of questions of epistemology and solipsism – the sort of thing which Robert Anton Wilson does but without, perhaps, Wilson’s



sense of the absurd. It is one of Dick's more coherent novels and is certainly worth reading for those who do not mind a little mental work in their leisure time. While Dick's ideas are intriguing and he does manage, at times to transmit a sense of unexpected and chill syzygy, this is not enough to fill the gap caused by the abandonment of the traditional tools of storytelling. The plot is minor, the characterization poor, and the prose unexciting; philosophy and deft manipulation of mood are not enough to carry the book.

Philip K. Dick

Phil had talked about writing an article for *The Patchin Review* criticizing publishers for being unreceptive to the work of new authors. He chose that topic because I'd asked him for an "impassioned" piece, and that was the only subject he felt angry about. Phil was not an angry or frustrated man; he was far too generous for that. I first met him in 1972, but I didn't begin to get to know him till I interviewed him for *Dream Makers* in 1979. I realized then how much I admired him and enjoyed his company, and after that I visited him in Santa Ana whenever I could. He made me feel welcome and well liked, as I expect he made many people feel. He was gregarious and, quite apart from his wit and his warmth, he was one of the most impressively intelligent people I have ever met. And now he is dead, and I lose a man who had become a friend, and we all lose one of our very finest writers, just when his work seemed finally to have resolved all its early mystical strivings. I believe, in fact, he was beginning a whole new phase of his career.

But all that potential is lost, and in his absence the dull merchants continue glutting the field with their stupid ideas and incompetent prose. I doubt that any of them will suffer the cruelly premature fate of Philip K. Dick, because, possessing less inspiration, they are less obsessed, less haunted by vision, less liable to exact a toll on themselves. How awful that there should be a correlation between divine insight and mortality. The ones we need most, we lose first.

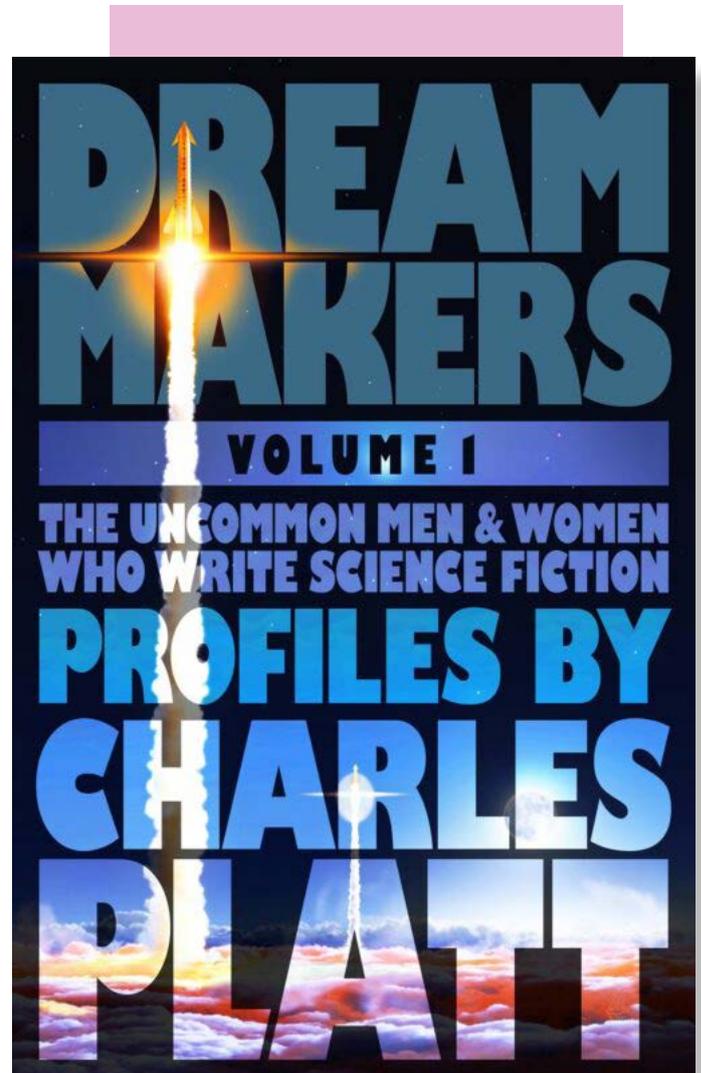
I last spoke to Phil a few days before his stroke. I'd never heard him sound so cheerful. He was very, very happy with his life, and mentioned his upcoming trip to New York and to Metz. He chided me for running a "scurrilous magazine" and joked that I could come sleep on his living-room floor when I'd succeeded in alienating all my

other friends. I told him I'd been commissioned to write an article about him for *Horizon* magazine; we agreed that I should call him again a couple of weeks later, for some quotes to put in the piece.

But by that time, it was too late. There will never be any more quotes, or books, or strangely wonderful evenings in Santa Ana.

I will miss this man.

— from Charles Platt, *The Complete Patchin Review*, pp. 255-256. [Originally appeared in his zine *The Patchin Review*: April-June 1982]



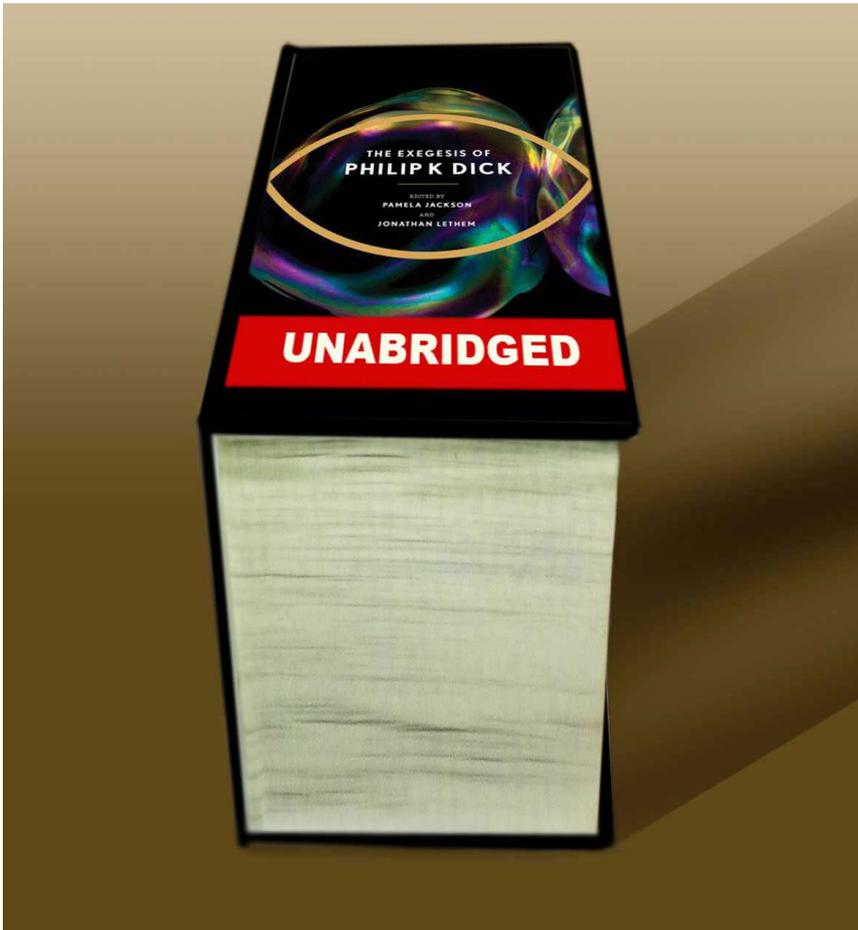


Letters to the Editor

March 18, 2023

Hi Patrick,

Sorry I'm late getting to this. I must've spaced out your earlier request. But here I am now and have just read your article. I'll comment: It all makes sense to me. I don't have Tessa's book that I recall but your remarks about exegesis/eisegesis had to be said (and FCB has also done so). You view the word exegesis from 3 directions and they all bear on what it is Phil is doing with the EXEGESIS. Actually, I think you hit it right on the head. He was a Christian, which we know from many sources, and he wanted to mix in some warped gnosticism for who knows why (an important question: where did he begin his affair with Gnosticism?) And his trying to incorporate Zoroastrian notions perhaps led him to, as you suggest, resolve the issue of the truth in his own mind - and in his novels and EXEGESIS.



And your bringing in the fact that he was a career science fiction writer, used to juggling this sort of thing, adds another heavy influence to the mix. I'm about where you are on this -- as you can see in a PKD OTAKU essay I wrote, which title I forget, with Hercule Poirot, and which was translated into our little PKD Play at the 2019 Festival. If this is so, then the EXEGESIS is a science fiction novel. Except it's a quantum leap from the standard fare presented

in most sf novels and the mainstream too. It's a precursor and a forecaster of our present fucked-up early 21st century world where to be a writer it is not enough to just write books, you have to be on a million forums online, on TV, etc. Your whole public life becomes your story; your novel. This Phil managed to do 25 years before the internet. That's one reason why he's the greatest writer of

the 21st century (although he died last century). Honestly, Patrick, PKD makes pale most all other fiction of our time. That's why he's a fucking genius!

Run that baby! All the best - Dave

June 9, 2023

Patrick, that typo (?) in your intro isn't good enough.

" For all you know ChatJPG is composing this while I am in the kitchen making a cup of coffee. "

I guess everyone understands that you mean ChatGPT but the (best) GPT-variant that would write the intro would actually be ChatJPC. So I don't see "ChatJPG" as an error but an intermediate form from GPT --> JPC.

And nice hearing from Christoph. He cleared up the Wyatt Earp thing once and forever. And, yes, the one thing that always bugged me about BLADE RUNNER was that stupid checkmate "surprise". (RU shitting me?) And I always thought that it's even a daft movie / TV trope. For non-chess players.

Andre

Graphic by Nick Buchanan