

Above Photo of Phil © Tessa Dick, by kind permission

June 2017



The Penultimate Truth - Explored

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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

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Editorial

by Patrick Clark

“The greatest menace of the twentieth century is the totalitarian state. It can take many forms: left-wing fascism, psychological movements, religious movements, drug rehabilitation places, powerful people, manipulative people; or it can be in a relationship with someone who is more powerful than you psychologically. Essentially, I’m pleading the cause of those people who are not strong.”

– Philip K. Dick



Armed Police Scarborough Beach, England May 2017

Fathers”. Those officials, very often police officials, are usually just doing their jobs but their “jobs” typically require expediency over humanity. The heads of State are sometime responsible, like Gino Molinari, sometimes feral, like Willis Gram, and sometimes pitilessly evil, like the Ultimate Benefactor.

Beyond his fiction, Phil was keenly aware of the turmoil of his own day: the post-war anti-communist hysteria, the war in Vietnam, and, especially, the Watergate scandal which he discussed so often in his letters from that period. He went public in his essays “The Nixon Crowd” and “Letters from Amerika.”

Given how the year 2017 is going so far,

Jami Morgan and Frank Bertrand thought a collection of essays and comments grouped around Phil’s 1964 novel *THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH* would be highly appropriate. Our contributors took the idea and ran with it. You will soon be examining the results. The essays range far and wide and are in many cases controversial. This is by intention: these are controversial times and, may I add, desperate times, too.

“A good deal of what Phil wrote was overtly political in nature”

This is an especially large issue of PKD OTAKU. There is much more than the special topic of *THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH*. Herein are some mem-

oirs of our old friend Perry Kinman taken from this world much too young. We have a report on the Fort Morgan Festival as well. And a fascinating look at Phil’s mainstream novels.

It is with deep regret, too, that we note the deaths of Anne Dick, Phil’s third wife, and Grania Davis, his close friend and one-time companion. Both on April 28th by some strange coincidence.

It has been, I think everyone would agree, a most tumultuous last year. Beginning with Brexit, then the election of Donald Trump, the continued rise of nationalist movements on both the Left and Right, the diminution of democratic principles, instability in the EU, war and terrorism breaking out all over the world. Where people were once focused on technology and economics, politics is the new topic of conversation, commentary and worry.

I suppose nowadays people think of Phil as a religious or philosophical writer. Or, still, a reality-bending writer. Or a religious/philosophical/reality-bending writer. But a good deal of what Phil wrote was overtly political in nature. Government officials, and in some instances the actual heads of State, are common actors in his stories. Consider *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*, *THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH*, *NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR*, *OUR FRIENDS FROM FROLIX 8*, *FLOW MY TEARS*, *THE POLICEMAN SAID*, *A SCANNER DARKLY* – and let’s not forget “Faith of Our

Reading PKD's Mainstream Novels as SF

by Douglas A. Mackey

It is not generally realized that *The Man in the High Castle*, published in 1962, was Philip K. Dick's twenty-first novel. It was his ninth science-fiction novel, the one that brought him fame and a Hugo Award, but he had written as well twelve non-science-fiction novels in the 1950s, which did not get published at that time. These were his attempts to break into the literary mainstream.

When I first learned of the existence of these books, well before they were published, I was fascinated by the titles. For example: *Puttering About in a Small Land*. *Mary and the Giant*. *In Milton Lumky Territory*. *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike*. They sounded like very offbeat fantasies. They sounded appropriate to the wild imagination of Philip K. Dick.

When I first got a chance to read them, in the mid-1980s, most of them still unpublished, I was working on my book on PKD (which appeared under the highly original title of *Philip K. Dick*). I sat in the CalState-Fullerton Special Collections and in Paul Williams' garage in Glen Ellen, California, reading the typescripts one after another. In my book this resulted in a chapter entitled "A Realist in the Wrong Reality."¹ I felt that Dick was trying to reveal the truth about life in the 1950s but it didn't quite work because it wasn't really his reality. He was there but he didn't really live there. It wasn't until he became adjusted to the fact that science fiction was his true home, that he started writing his masterpieces: *The Man in the High Castle*, *Martian Time-Slip*, and so on.

Because the manuscripts to three of the mainstream novels were lost, I am going to be dealing here with the nine that were eventually published. This year I read them all through for a second time. They have improved with age. I find the writing fluent and professional and the situations frequently as interesting as in the science fiction books. But for those who are sf chauvinists as I was in the 80s, I want to suggest that if you read the mainstream novels as

if they were sf, they will become sf. Let me explain.

Interestingly, there are a number of Dick's science fiction works that are only marginally sf. *The Man in the High Castle*, *Dr. Bloodmoney*, *We Can Build You*, *Valis*, *A Scanner Darkly*, *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*, and *Time Out of Joint* are nominally sf but most of these books honestly do not have that much to do with sf. Minus the scramble suit, *A Scanner Darkly* is a book about drug addicts. Minus the Lincoln simulacrum, *We Can Build You* is about a relationship with a schizophrenic. And *Valis*? It's scarcely categorizable at all.

These hybrid sf/non-sf books show that there is a continuum in the Dick oeuvre. In some books there is plenty of sf; something like *The Game Players of Titan*. Then there are the mixed ones as I have just described. And finally there are the mainstream books. In total we have 44 extant novels and I regard them all together as a sf metanovel. But just as some of Dick's novels have chapters that are clearly sf and others that have no particular sf feature, so the mainstream novels hold that polarity in terms of the PKD metanovel.

Time Out of Joint (1958) is a good demonstration of a novel that seems very normal and realistic until the moment the soft-drink stand disappears and is replaced by a piece of paper. The early chapters where Ragle Gumm solving

his puzzles every day and nothing much is happening—these are like the books where life goes on and there is no science fiction, and yes, things do happen but they stay in the realm of the mundane.

The key that makes all of this share the PKD brand, though, is that even when nothing is happening

on the surface, as in *Time Out of Joint*, something is happening below the surface. That something may manifest as a wild affair, an extremely dysfunctional relationship, a loosening of the sense of reality within a character...but any of these type of events the real event is an excursion into deeper PKD.

One pattern is that most of the heroes, or shall we say anti-heroes, in the mainstream books, are very often fix-it men for radios or TVs or cars, as was Dick himself; in other

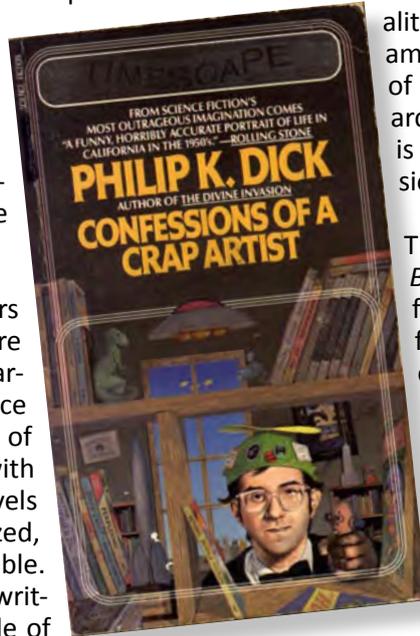
“When I first learned of the existence of these books, well before they were published, I was fascinated by the titles”

words, a practical scientist, a problem solver. The 1950s were a technological age. The kitchen was full of gleaming appliances, at least in the ads, and the cars were bright and shiny and television had burst onto the scene—we were not yet inured to the novelty and omnipresence of devices. The Dick mainstream heroes have familiarity with this territory. Even when fixing is not involved, as with Jim Briskin who is a dj in *The Broken Bubble*, he is involved with a technical medium, radio. This engagement with the technical ties the mainstream fiction to the science fiction.

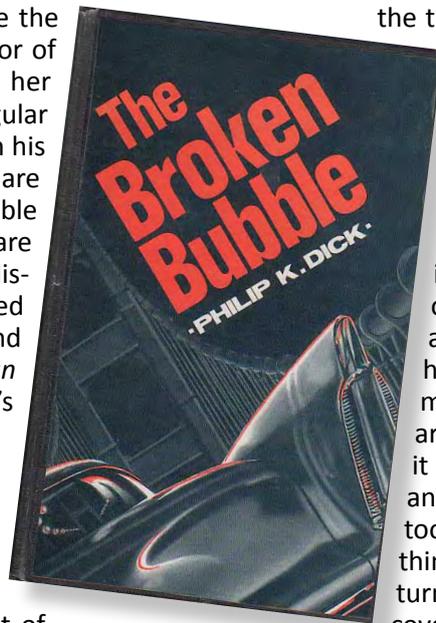
The relationship of the male characters with women is a major focus. But there is a lot of variety among the female characters and it is not that easy to reduce them to type. There are all the varieties of marital discord that we are familiar with from the sf but in the mainstream novels the women are particularly individualized, sharply characterized, and memorable. Faye, in *Confessions of a Crap Artist* (written 1959), might be seen as an example of the bitch-wife who, by taking a lover openly, goads Charlie, her husband, to slaughter the farm animals and take his own life. But one could as easily say that Charlie is crazy to begin with, and depressed from his illness and thus instrumental in his own demise. Reducing Faye to a type does not solve the mystery of the tragic, impulsive behavior of the couple, and it does not elucidate her brother Jack's autistic role in the triangular family dynamic. In PKD and especially in his mainstream novels, men and women are complex, contradictory, and not susceptible to easy categorization. The characters are quite unique. The ability to portray realistic characters is something Dick learned through his mainstream novel writing and which enriched the novels from *The Man in the High Castle* onwards. The people's mystery is the key to their history.

Another pattern in the mainstream novels we'll consider was nailed by Dick himself in an interview: "I wrote many novels that were not science fiction or fantasy. They all contained the element of the projected personal unconscious, or projected collective unconscious, which made them simply incomprehensible to anyone who read them, because they required the reader to accept my premise that each of us lives in a unique world."² The *idios kosmos*, or in other words the

personal reality, must give way to the shared reality, the *koinos kosmos*. But since Dick shows the shared reality often enough to be illusory, and the individual reality to be realer than real, it is not so simple as to say that when the individual's bubble bursts, the shared reality just takes over. There is a considerable amount of ambiguity about the permanence of any reality, and what the ontological hierarchy is—whether the shared reality actually is more fundamental than the individual vision.



This is the key to understanding *The Broken Bubble* (written 1956). It portrays a confused marital situation: Patricia is divorced from Jim Briskin but they are still seeing each other. Then there is a young couple, Art and Rachael, with whom Jim and Pat become enamored. Shortly we have a marital mess, with all the characters continually changing their minds about which partner they want to sleep with or marry or remarry or unmarry. On top of that, throw in some juvenile delinquents who provide a certain greasy comic relief. One is actually a would-be science fiction writer, who reads to a friend a whole chapter of a science-fiction novel he is working on. It is so common in these mainstream novels that Dick slips in references to science fiction, because in the PKD universe sf is always the subtext. In this case the teenager's science fiction story is a hilarious parody of a van Vogt novel about "an incredibly unique godlike superman," who meets a nude Goddess and the two of them go off to save the Earth together.



Everybody exists within their own bubble in this book. The most dramatic break occurs when Pat, who is a painter, has an amazing scene where she almost kills herself—"In the darkness of the apartment, she painted; she put more darkness around her. She lifted darkness and carried it about the living room and the bedroom and into the bathroom and the kitchen. She took it everywhere. She brought it to each thing in the apartment, and after that she turned it to herself." Jim returns to find her covered with blood.

So this is not just a book of its time. It exists just around the corner from the incomprehensible, trembling on the edge of just a little bit of insanity. If we remember the 1950s, these scenes could be part of the fabric. They cer-

tainly were part of Philip K. Dick's.

Puttering About in a Small Land (written 1957) is one of those books whose title attracted me, suggesting a touch of Jonathan Swift. Here, the small land of the title is Southern California in the 1950s. But the real smallness is in the contraction of the world of Roger Lindahl, a TV repairman. His marriage is suffocating, and he bears it stoically. But his work and his life are a kind of puttering. Then, when he meets a woman called Liz Bonner, who is all impulses and feeling, the order of his world is blown apart as they become sexually involved. Life quickly becomes ecstatic but complicated. And when his wife Virginia gets wind of the affair, she forces him into a new business arrangement where the power balance completely swings into her court. Then life becomes very contracted indeed.

The novel sometimes has an experimental flavor, when it goes into extended passages of interior monologue. Liz's ruminations, in their love scene, remind me a bit of Molly Bloom in *Ulysses*: "When I am like this, she thought, I don't get old. As long as I am lying here, holding him inside me, I neither sink nor fall. I do not go in any direction. I am simply me. As long as I want. As long as I can keep him there." Liz Bonner's quest for a kind of transcendent stasis contrasts with Roger's passages, when his reality starts to waver. Some passages remind me of the reduction into the entropy of *Martian Time-Slip*: "Nothing in the world was permanent. Even the stones became dust, finally. Even the earth itself."

There is some extraordinary writing in *Puttering About in a Small Land* which cause it to rank high on the list of Dick's mainstream novels. The interior life of the characters is fluid, questing, wavering, unclear and uncertain, but it constitutes the greater reality underlying the mundane puttering level. The book ends with Roger leaving California alone, ready to strike out in a new direction. The ability to do that is a breaking free of the chains of habit and enforced relationship, and going with the flow that the inner movement of consciousness represents.

The flavor in the stream-of-consciousness sections here render them fantastic as opposed to the more mundane, objective observer sections. Think of this book as a chronicle of a modern-day Lilliput, with the reader as

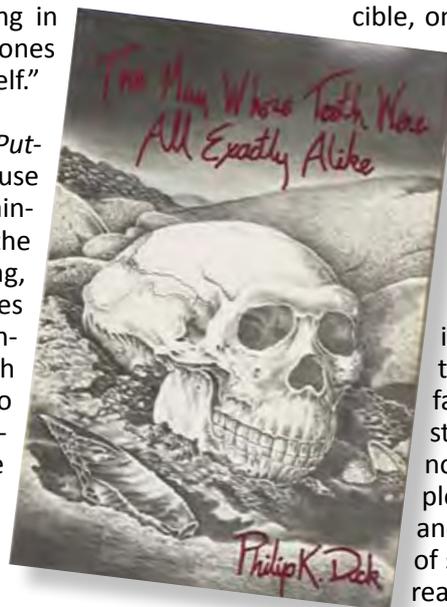
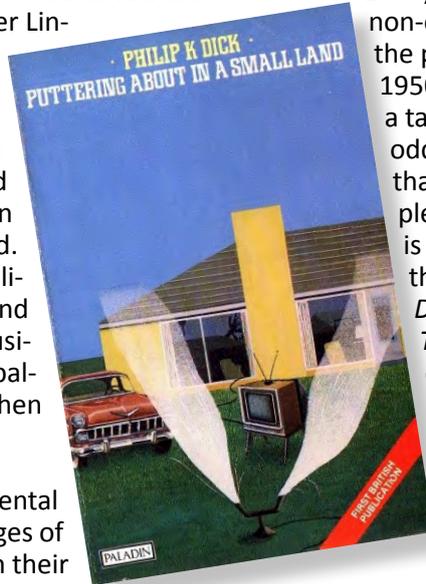
Gulliver. The genie definitely starts to come out of the bottle and the puttering level of life is suddenly, shockingly transcended.

The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike (written 1960) is another book whose title betokens non-ordinary reality. Despite taking place in the pastoral landscape of Marin County in the 1950s, there is plenty of conflict in the novel, a tale of a neighborhood feud which takes an odd turn into a fake archaeological discovery that causes one of the parties to make a complete fool of himself. The community setting is very reminiscent of *Dr. Bloodmoney*; the theme of "faked reality" corresponds with *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *The Man in the High Castle*. The amount of space devoted to the archaeological prank makes it almost an sf novel, with a premise that Neanderthal traits are still present in modern man. The rest of the time in the book is mostly devoted to fights between married couples. The disputatious relationship of Walt Dombrosio and his wife Sherry is particularly unpleasant. It is almost like modern people are possessed by their archetypal gender ancestors to torture each other. The Neanderthal traits do not just remain on the surface.

Is that what the book is about? It's hard to say. The whole Neanderthal subplot may just be a red herring, despite the title of the book. By the end it appears that Leo Runcible, on whom the fake skull prank was perpetrated, turns out to be the only person of integrity, as he buys the water company and spends his whole fortune fixing the town's polluted water. It is something of a moral tale in the end.

At the same time it's a fable with a mystery at its core. The skull of the man whose teeth were all exactly alike is an ultimate gnomon. As Dick said in a 1982 interview, that he had gotten a look at the way the universe really is but he can't fathom what it really is. At the core of this story is the same message. This book may not be reducible to a meaning. We see plenty of human conflict, we see the pros and cons of community, we see the striving of science to create a picture of consensual reality, but in the end the final "why" resonates like an echo in the skull.

Incidentally, there are many resonances of the names of the characters in the mainstream novels with those in



the sf novels. Rachael, for example, in *The Broken Bubble*, makes us think of Rachel Rosen the android in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* And Jim Briskin is also a character in *The Crack in Space*. These types of correspondences are not merely arbitrary, they are like hooks to the science-fiction reality, and thus the resonances to the world of greater meaning that can be found in the mundane, almost like the Ubik-ad messages.

Dick's early mainstream novel, *Voices from the Street* (written 1952) presents an interesting parallel with his first published sf novel, *Solar Lottery* (1955). Both books contain a charismatic cult leader: the preacher Theodore Beckheim in *Voices* and futuristic visionary John Preston in *Solar Lottery*. These characters set up a template of a recurrent prophet figure in Dick's sf: for example, Hawthorne Abendsen in *The Man in the High Castle*, Anarch Peak in *Counter-Clock World*, Wilbur Mercer in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, and even Philip K. Dick himself in *Valis*. Beckheim's fiery sermon sounds like a standard sf apocalypse: "The cities will be leveled; the plain will become endless ash; radioactive particles will fall like hot rain; the crops will wither and die from poison clouds; deadly bacteria will be carried by hordes of insects; the earth will tremble and split open from vast bombs..." Stuart Hadley's drunken rampage in the latter part of *Voices* plays out this vision on the personal level.

The most science-fictional of the mainstream novels is perhaps Dick's very first completed novel: *Gather Yourselves Together* (written 1950). I rather trashed this book in my 1988 critical study. Rereading Dick's initial attempt now, I find it extremely interesting and certainly worthy of being considered part of the great metanovel.

It takes place in China, in the late 1940s just after the communist revolution, in a factory that an American company, known just as The Company, has abandoned. Three Americans remain to make the transition of handing the factory over to the Chinese. This would have made a perfect setting for J. G. Ballard: not only the Chinese location, but the fact that the factory is abandoned and there are giant amounts of food and books that have been left behind. He would probably have thrown in a couple of drained swimming pools, but the point is he would have used the setting to intensify the sense of isolation. At this early stage of his literary development Dick doesn't seem to know how to do this, however, and the characters might as well have been in a deserted base on the moon. The lack of a real setting places us in a naked existential reality, a *No Exit* for a case study of American neuroses.

The book is downright strange. The characters are constantly flying off into daydreams and reminiscences. Strange that the main character is called Verne, spelled with an "e" like the science fiction writer. There are frequent conversations about jazz as befits 1950s Berkeley, which probably reflect the typical chatter between Dick and his friends at that time. Others include a hot vixen character Barbara, someone Verne was involved with four years before. And there is the young naif, Carl, who is in his early twenties and more than a bit of a geek. The sexual consummation between him and Barbara is the climax of the book. And then suddenly the story ends and everybody goes home—and the reader is feeling like he just ate at a Chinese restaurant.

"The book is downright strange"

Occasionally we feel the presence of science fiction in this book, as we do in the other mainstream novels. Again, these references feel some-

how especially significant in this context, as if the real PKD-reality is peeking in. Carl is a science fiction reader, and furthermore he writes philosophy, and interestingly the theme is time and change. It's a prefiguring of the Exegesis. Sometimes the characters lapse into daydreams that remind one of the scenes of dissolution in *Martian Time-Slip*. "They would all die, and their remains would be turned under the ground, under the damp ground. Under the grass. Where the sun didn't shine at all. Where it was cold and dark, and things moved around. Blind things, reaching and feeling. Cold clammy things that touched and felt. That oozed along." These types of passages give an otherworldly feeling to the book. At these moments, this is no typical mainstream novel.

What *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland* (written 1960), Dick's last mainstream novel, shares with *Gather Yourselves Together*, his first, is the sense of surreality. *Humpty Dumpty* is a kind of absurdist fable à la Franz Kafka or Nathaniel West. It is the story of two men, Jim Fergesson and Al Miller, whose businesses and lives have been entangled for many years. But one day Jim, who owns an auto repair shop, decides suddenly to sell his property, and in so doing Al will lose his adjoining used car lot. Enter a mysterious character, Chris Harman, who gives Jim a tip on investing in a new garage up in Marin County, and Al immediately is suspicious. So he ends up hired by Harman himself, partly to spy on him, and partly because he needs the work, although it is the most bizarre and unlikely job, as a talent scout for barbershop quartets. As the novel progresses, the character of Harman becomes more and more enigmatic in Al's eyes. As we are seeing mostly through Al's eyes, we have to figure out what is paranoia and what is real. What we see more and more in the novel is the nature of Al's reality warp. And how difficult it is, sometimes,

not to misinterpret people's motivations.

By the end, after many twists and turns, where Al becomes convinced he is being pursued by Harman's gang of thugs, he finally realizes Harman is not a crook; he is actually trying to help Al and get his life restarted, offering him a kind of redemption. "Things are seldom what they seem. Skim milk masquerades as cream," Dick often said, quoting Gilbert and Sullivan. Falling off the wall, cracking the eggshell, we see that in *Humpty Dumpty in Oakland*, and all over Dick's novels, sf or non-sf, there lies this pattern.

My favorite of Dick's mainstream novels is *Mary and the Giant* (written 1954). In this, as in the others, the 1950s are portrayed as a very strange time, and to read them now is to time travel, making the reading an inherently science-fictional experience. But the temporal disorientation we experience reading this book is not just from having to adapt to a past time. It is from the shock of realization that Mary Anne Reynolds, the Mary of the title, is a very modern individual, modern in our terms, but she's living in the 1950s and she just doesn't fit. Her disorientation is our disorientation and the result is a sense of mystery and otherness—only here, instead of making the otherness explicit by using SF memes—androids, time travel, dystopias, and the like—Dick lets the otherness stay largely hidden and only hinted at.

The characters here are connected in terms of being in the music scene of a small northern California town. No heroes and heroines here: this is about their relationships, and their errant and fugitive attempts of awkward groping for love with each other in various combinations. The racial and sexual frankness of the book is extraordinary for the time period in which it was written, which may partially account for why it was not published at the time.

The giant of the title, Joseph Schilling, arrives in town to open a classical record shop. His origins are mysterious: "Perhaps he had come all across the world; perhaps he had always been coming, moving along, from place to place....He was so immense that he towered over everything." This mythic description introduces a note of fantasy into the drab small town setting.

Mary Anne Reynolds (of the title) is a very confused young woman who bats around ceaselessly from lover to lover, apartment to apartment, job to job. Joseph briefly be-

comes her employer and would-be sugar daddy. Although he appreciates her as a free spirit, the match is hopeless because of her headstrong and dilatory nature. Also, because she was sexually abused by her father, an older man like Joseph cannot be other than toxic to her.

Joseph is mysteriously drawn to her, as to a femme fatale, despite his better judgment. She eventually finds happiness with a younger musician, but in the ironic ending, Joseph does not.

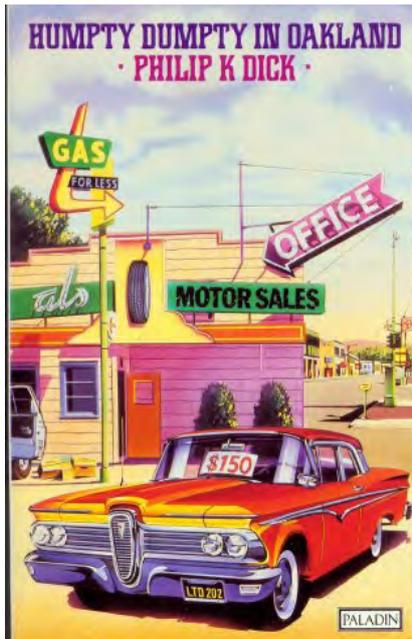
How do you solve a problem like Mary if you are Joseph? You don't; the answers stay hidden. He understands that she is trying to fit into a world that has not come into being yet; that may not exist for a hundred years. Her indecisiveness can thus be explained by the fact that she is trying to inhabit a different reality, as was Dick himself.

Music was an article of faith for Dick. And *Mary and the Giant* was one of his most musical books. His inclusion of music here as a constant background gives us the sense of the author's witnessing presence, designing the soundtrack of life in Mary's world while presiding over the eternal accompaniment to the dance of the wandering humans.

This implied narratorial witness is present in all the mainstream novels and I think this is what an editor was indicating when he wrote Dick's literary agent in 1959 in rejecting *In Milton Lumky Territory*: "I don't know what to say about Philip Dick. He has extraordinary talent, tremendous facility, and acute penetration. He is able to lay bare the essential core of a situation in a few deft strokes. He has a flamboyance and an extraordinary eye for detail. The problem: His outlook on life, which is bleak and as chilling as any it has been my misfortune to come across.... What he does is to write in flat understatement a detailed analysis of the emptiness of everything so that the writing takes on an emptiness itself... We have seen three of these now, and they all have the same vacuum-like outlook."³

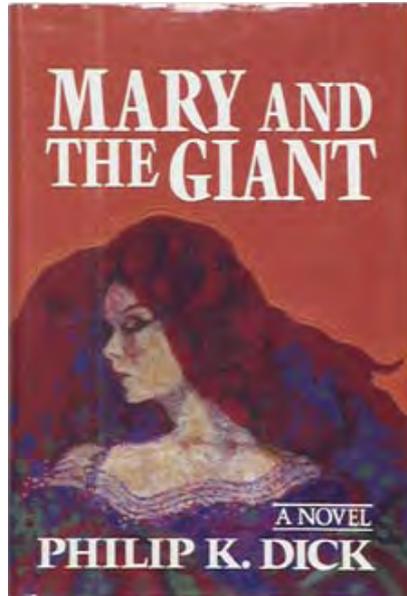
The thing that the editor was missing is that the act of reading these novels is one of leaving the earth, of achieving escape velocity. The reader, like a rocket ship, shoots out of the 1950s earth planet plane entirely, having cultivated the godlike status of Dick himself viewing from the vacuum, from the emptiness. And no book does this to us like *In Milton Lumky Territory* (written 1958).

This emptiness is what is so effectively captured by the



overriding image of Milton Lumky himself, in his infirmity, aging, diseased body, presiding over a dying landscape, beset by insects, loneliness, and endless hours driving down the highway. It's a David Lynch-like figure, half clown and half saint. Milton Lumky is a salesman and the novel takes place in his "territory"; that is the states that he covers in his business, the Washington-Idaho-Oregon area, but more than that it's the emotional and philosophical territory that he represents. He is not the main character so it is odd that the book is named after him. But because it is, "attention must be paid," as in the case of Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman*, a work that might have been on Dick's mind when he wrote this novel.

But actually Lumky is not the main character in the novel at all. That would be the young ambitious up-and-coming salesman Bruce Stevens, who learns from Milt and is dogged by him, as if by his conscience, which he has by and large not developed yet. This becomes a not-so-subtle morality tale, a story of truths and untruths and consequences, in a landscape that we call onomatopoeically Milton Lumky territory, a forbidding,



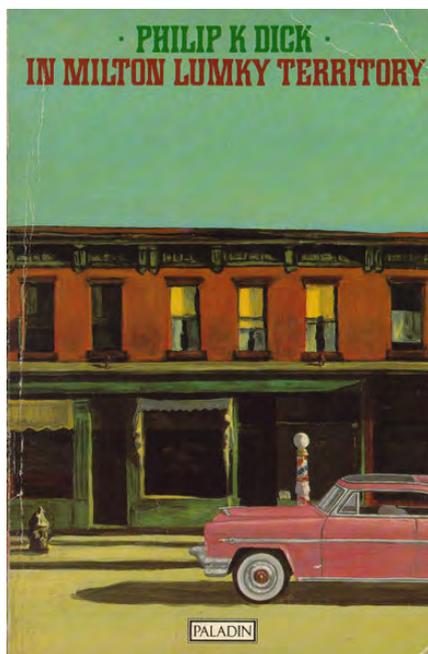
becomes fact. It is a complex psychological and spiritual journey which you would expect to find in speculative, not realistic, fiction.

When Dick finally reached the end of his journey of these nine brave novels, paddling upstream in a vain attempt to join the mainstream, he finally realized that he was the stream and the only place he could get to was his own head. So his next book, his twenty-first, was *The Man in the High Castle*. In that, Dick took everything he had learned from writing his remarkable series of unorthodox, uncategorizable attempts at literary breakthrough, shifted fully into sf, creating new and amazing hybrids that stretched and broke genre conventions. The rest is science fiction history as well as literary history.

¹ Douglas A. Mackey, *Philip K. Dick* (Boston: Twayne, 1988).

² David Streitfeld, ed., *Philip K. Dick: The Last Interview and Other Conversations* (Brooklyn, NY: Melville House, 2015) 68.

³ <http://www.philipkdickfans.com/mirror/websites/pkdweb/milt%20lumky.htm>

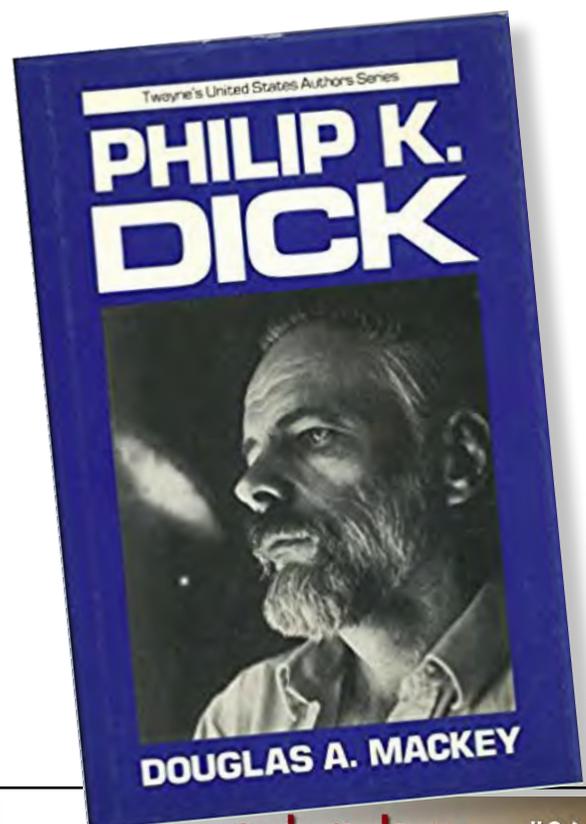


sometimes hell-like place aptly described in the opening paragraph by the brown hairy insects that have smashed themselves in hordes on the windshields of all the cars in Montario, Idaho.

This novel has the structure and discipline of a Greek tragedy. The plot contains a very painful lesson for the hero having to do with a bad business deal. Yet it has a happy ending. Dick's novels generally do not end in despair, though

there is a fair quantum of non-solace getting there. In fact the novel finds its climax with a trip into Bruce's past, with his sins as a young boy, and then his plunge forward into an imagined alternate future, which then

Douglas A. Mackey is the Author of Philip K. Dick
(Twayne's United States Authors Series)



Notes for the ‘Man in the High Castle: Philip K. Dick and Fake Realities’ Panel

by Patrick Clark

By 1961, Phil hadn’t written science fiction in years. With the exception of expansions of his stories “*Vulcan’s Hammer*” and “*Dr. Futurity*” into novel length for Ace Books done in 1959 and 1960, the last SF he had written was “*Time Out of Joint*” in 1958. He has spent the intervening years working on his mainstream novels.

Time Out of Joint (1958)
 Nicholas and the Higs (1958)
 Milton Lumky (1958)
 Crap Artist (1959)
 Humpty Dumpty (1960)
 The Man Whose Teeth (1961)
 High Castle (1961)

Paired characters:

Robert Childan - Mr. Tagomi
 Frank Frink - Ed McCarthy
 Julianna Frink - Joe Cinadella

Mr, Baynes - Consul Reiss
 Paul and Betty Kasouras (“Wu”) -
 Wyndam-Matson (“Historicity”)
 Hawthorne Abendsen - I Ching

Should the I Ching be considered a character in its own right?

Robert Childan is the key character in the novel, not Mr. Tagomi. Childan is the only character who changes, is in fact redeemed at the end of Ch. 11.

“Fake” reality require a “true” reality against which to judge itself.

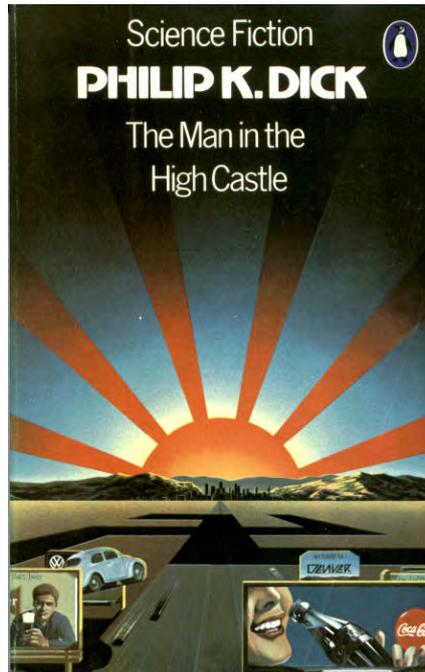
Some of Phil’s realities:

- **Fake** – the deliberate, conspiratorial creation of a bogus reality by an outside power (*Time Out of Joint*, *Maze of Death*); a subset of this would be implanted false memories (*Imposter*)

- **Psychotic worlds** – wherein a person is drawn into the private world (*idios kosmos*) of another person (*3 Stigmata*, *Flow My Tears*) or self-delusion (*Recall Mechanism*)

- **Accidental** – unintentional byproduct of a technological device (*Eye in the Sky*, *Ubik*)

Abendsen admits the I Ching “wrote” *Grasshopper*. Phil admitted in an interview that the I Ching “wrote” much of *High Castle*.



Are there fake realities in *High Castle*? The I Ching says yes. The whole world is fake.

Fake realities in *High Castle*: the fake antiques; the world described in “*Grasshopper*”; the world depicted in the novel *High Castle* wherein the Axis powers won World War 2 – and the novel itself, written by Philip K. Dick, is also a fake reality. All novels show a “fake” reality insofar as they are not “real” (it’s fiction) though it still may be “true.”

Does historicity = true reality? Or does “wu”? The “wu”-infused pin transports Mr Tagomi to the “real” San Francisco, the one we, the readers, know.

Three people are saved in *High Castle*: Frank Frink, Mr. Baynes and Hawthorne Abendsen; three die: Joe Cinadella and the two SD agents.

High Castle is a mainstream novel, not science fiction. We know this because we get a definition of science fiction in Ch. 7. In reference to *Grasshopper*, Betty Kasouras says, “Science fiction deals with future, in particular future where science has advanced over now. Book fits neither premise.” Her husband Paul disagrees: the book “deals with alternate present. Many well-known science fiction of that sort.” (Sly wink and a nudge from Phil here?)

How in the world did this novel win the Hugo Award? It depicts a fully realized world but, really, not much happens; a bit of spy stuff, a bit of assassination scheme. The bulk of the work is introspection on the part of the many characters complicated by the use of the I Ching. There is actually almost no SF apparatus in the book. We hear

about Nazi expeditions to Mars but the rocket passenger plane is the only new device we see. Well, of course there is the whole thing about who won WW 2...

Chilean book jacket



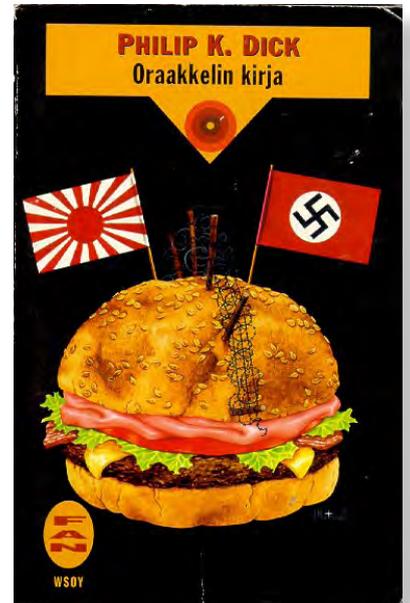
When the I Ching, at the end of Ch. 15, states that Germany and Japan lost the war – what does it mean? How are the characters supposed to understand that? And how are we, the readers, supposed to understand it?

But let's leave the last words to Phil himself:

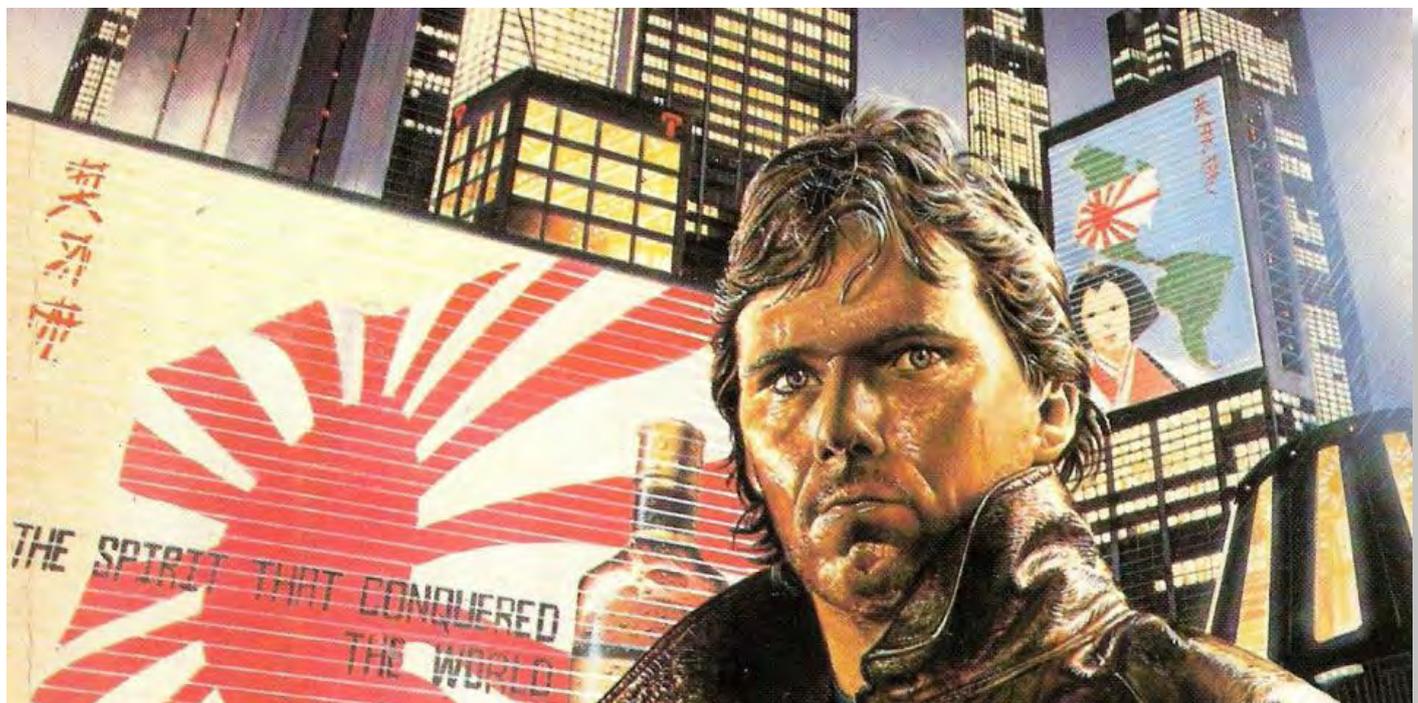
"In *The Man in the High Castle* there is a novel-

ist, Hawthorne Abendsen, who has written an alternate-world novel in which Germany, Italy, and Japan lost World War II. At the conclusion of *The Man in the High Castle*, a woman appears at Abendsen's door to tell him

what he does not know: that his novel is true; the Axis did indeed lose the war. The irony of this ending—Abendsen finding out that what he had supposed to be pure fiction spun out of his imagination was in fact true—the irony is this: that my own supposed imaginative work *The Man in the High Castle* is not fiction—or rather is fiction only now, thank God. But there was an alternate world, a previous present, in which that particular time track actualized—actualized and then was abolished due to intervention at some prior date. I am sure, as you hear me say this, you do not really believe me, or even believe that I believe it myself. But nevertheless it is true." – *"If You Find This World Bad, You Should See Some of the Others"* (1977)



Finnish book jacket

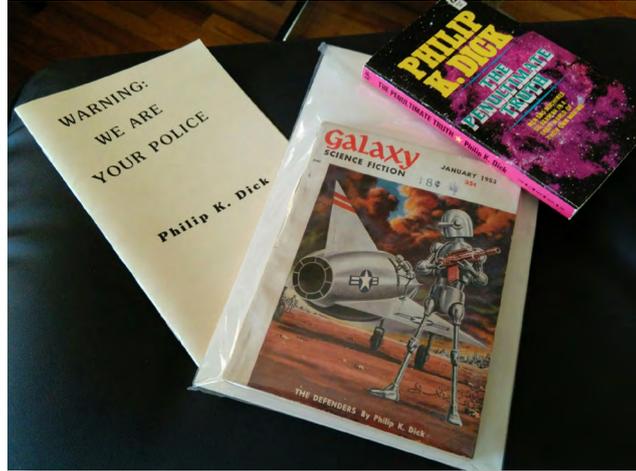


Penguin books cover art by Jamie P. Keenan

A Penultimate Mess

by Otaku Yance-woman jami Morgan

“Everything the government tells you is a lie.” That’s how Philip K. Dick summed up his 1964 novel *The Penultimate Truth* (TPT for future reference.) He made the now iconic comment in a 1978 fanzine interview (to Joe Vitale) a decade after TPT was published, in fact after Watergate and Richard Nixon’s resignation. PKD biographer Lawrence Sutin called *The Penultimate Truth* “Phil’s most pointed examination of the lies woven by government.” Even though Sutin (and many others) felt the novel was plagued by problems, it’s the themes we want to fully explore in this issue, and with good reason.



Who knew that in 2017 TPT would hit the charts as a best seller? As our new President often proclaims, “No one knew!” Of course, it’s because of Trump that this so-called lesser work of Phil’s is now red hot, along with George Orwell’s novel *1984*. We’ll dive into these renewed Nixonian and Orwellian comparisons that proliferate on social media.

With each passing day, this 50 yr old novel becomes MORE relevant. For instance, Phil’s famous concept of real vs. fake is on full display in TPT. So much so that (**SPOILER ALERT**) the nuclear war that had driven everyone underground was literally #FakeNews*, a ploy to keep the working-class tank dwellers busy building robots in underground assembly lines so the wealthy could live above ground in posh comfort with the bots (“leadies”) for laborers.

Despite mixed references (in later years from Phil) about the war being a “hoax”, it’s clear there had been a limited nuclear-war (in the novel) that Yancy and his men perpetuated to keep the workers suppressed. Cheyenne, Wyoming is still a “hot spot” (as in radioactive) in 2025. That prediction is too close for comfort given current “loose nuke” talk with Korea.

*Instant footnote: I use the hash tag, which is not in TPT, but IS the current way of noting trending topics on Twitter and social media where the term #FakeNews has literally exploded over the past few months.

As a former journalist and early adopter of computers (pre-internet online technology and still a gadget geek)

I thoroughly enjoyed Phil’s concept of post-nuclear war survivors still getting news feeds from a computer generated simulacrum. But I assure you in the 1990s when I first read it, NO ONE knew how prophetic some of the other themes and ideas of TPT would become in the 21st Century. I thought we had left behind Cold War tactics, actually all war-mongering. I had hopes of an enlightened society where old PKD “pot boiler” pulps would be quaint. HA!

PKD readers, especially *PKD Otaku* fans, know how Phil felt about the government in the early 1970s Nixon era: suspicious, distrustful, and yes, paranoid. But, a decade earlier our nation had faced a FAR more terrifying crisis—the assassination of JFK and the conspiracies that formed around it. That’s the climate in which Phil wrote TPT.

Thankfully we have several “senior” Dickheads around for informed analysis and history of TPT. Most SENIOR of all (by his own admission) is our own totally Otaku Frank Bertrand.

Frank was first published in a French fanzine with his 1981 comments from Phil (the result of snail mail correspondence, actual letters, you can find in the 6th Volume of *Selected Letters*.)

He has been a regular contributor to *PKD Otaku* since the first issue and reminds us that as many as four early PKD short stories included bits of what became *The Penultimate Truth*:

- “*The Defenders*” *Galaxy Science Fiction*, January, 1953
- “*The Mold of Yancy*” *IF Worlds of Science Fiction*, August 1955
- “*War Veteran*” *IF Worlds of Science Fiction*, March 1955
- “*The Unreconstructed M*” *Science Fiction Stories*, January 1957

I actually have the 1953 *Galaxy* mag, and took an inside photo of the precious artifact (shown here.) TPT is clearly a merger of Yancy (from *IF*) who is controlling an off-world totalitarian society via surveillance, “intel”, computers and most importantly doing so as a virtual pitch-man who appeals to “a certain rural mind” (actual quote from

Photo by Jami Morgan (items from her own collection)

story—so Trumpian!) Phil adds in underground bunkers and the “fake war” from “The Defenders.” (Leady robots become Lantano’s “leadies” in TPT, and John Edward Yancy, a rather pleasant “philosopher”, turns into the sinister Talbot Yancy.)

(What’s up with recycling so many character names? Runciter (of *Ubik* fame) shows up as the developer Runcible in TPT. Peter Taverner from the “Mold” story later pops up as Jason Taverner, a celebrity in PKD’s “Flow My Tears” novel. I purposely called my own protag Niki, after Phil’s many “Nicks”. Maybe someone can dig into all that in a future Otaku issue.)



Art from “The Unreconstructed M” called a Novelet in “The Original Science Fiction Stories”

Both Sr. Bertrand and I are astounded at the pace with which Phil wrote TPT, even if he was drawing on prior material and concepts. Frank writes:

“The manuscript for *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* **and** the outline for *The Penultimate Truth* were received by The Scott Meredith Literary Agency (SMLA) on the **same date**, 3-18-64!!! What this means boys and girls is that while Phil was writing *The Three Stigmata* (January-March 1964) he also managed to do an outline for *The Penultimate Truth*. The completed manuscript for the latter work was received at SMLA 5-12-64. This implies that Phil wrote *The Penultimate Truth* in the March-May 1964 time frame-- along with two other novels, *The Zap Gun* and *The Unteleported Man*. Busy

little writing beaver he was.”

The general consensus is while TPT is a gold mine of great concepts, the execution suffered from Phil’s “downhill racing” pace as contemporary writer Thomas Disch called it in his famous—or should I say infamous afterword “In the Mold of 1964” (which appeared in both the BlueJay TPB 1984 Edition and the mass paperback by Carroll & Graf, 1989.) Disch says, “The Warren Commission issued its report [on the JFK assassination] in 1964, the same year *The Penultimate Truth* was published. Neither won a Hugo... indeed both were too hastily written.” Whether you read TPT or not, Disch’s remarks are legendary. You can find his afterword here: <https://www.press.umich.edu/pdf/9780472068968-26.pdf>

As Frank found, this fast and furious pace took place as “Phil filed for divorce from Anne Dick on March 9, 1964.” Frank speculates the frenzied March-May writing was done partly in Berkeley and partly in Point Reyes Station. However, if Disch is correct that he actually wrote TPT in TWO weeks, he was probably one place or another—most likely back in Berkeley.

Phil claimed, in Gregg Rickman’s biography, “In six weeks I did 1,200 pages. They are just not good books because I was writing much too fast, and I didn’t have any real audience.” (*Philip K. Dick: In His Own Words*, pg. 166.)

Perhaps more shocking to me, than Phil’s frantic writing pace (exaggerated or not), was discovering that it was George Orwell, not PKD, who created the concept of “thought police.” HOLY COW! After all, the *Minority Report* movie focused on Phil’s fascination with teeps (telepaths) and precogs (who could pre-ID “future crime”). I know, “The Minority Report” short story has a slightly different slant than the Tom Cruise movie, but future readers may not have such Total Recall ;)

In Orwell’s 1984 (published in 1949**) it is Big Brother who actually does not exist, yet is the “Cult of Personality” who distorts reality via historical revision. Those at the Ministry of Truth, like Winston Smith, toil at rewriting past newspaper articles to conform to Big Brother’s message. In TPT Talbot Yancy is a simulacrum (a computer “bot”) programmed by the so-called Yance Men. Their greedy leader, Stanton Brose is a perfect metaphor for current presidential adviser Steve Bannon, the evil godfather of Internet #FakeNews used to confuse the masses.

I feel Phil should have mentioned (in some footnote somewhere) that he was heavily influenced by Orwell. You know, the way those of us influenced by PKD give credit for riffing on *his* ideas (like homeopapes, VALIS and just wait til you see how I handle “West Dems and

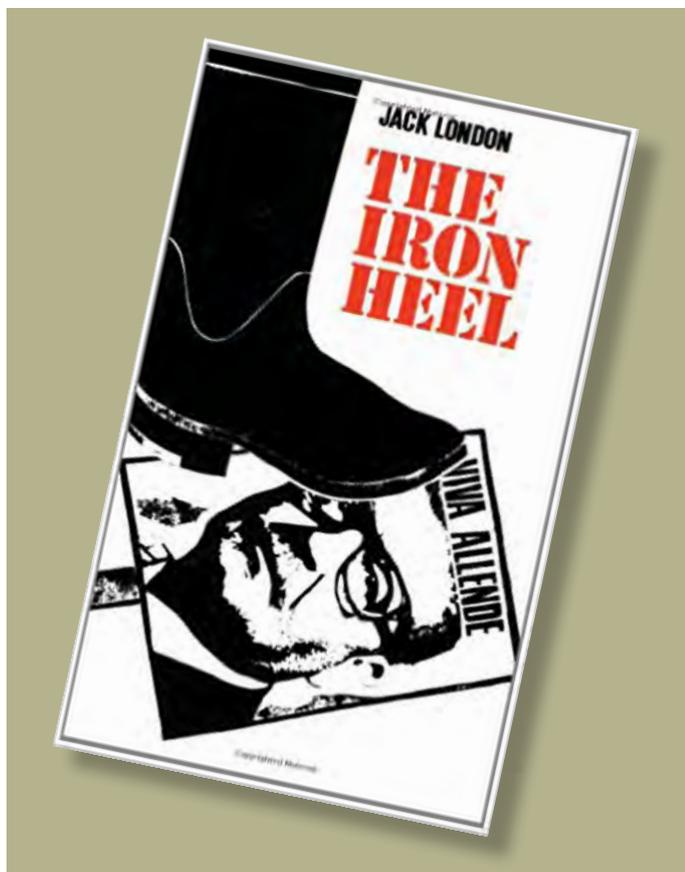
PAC Peeps”*** in a future story! ;) But, as our esteemed Otaku Editor Patrick points out, “Orwell was the default totalitarian dystopia guy; Phil probably figured everyone knew that so no need to note the connection.”

** George Orwell intentionally transposed his current date of 1948, but publication slipped to 1949. It’s so Dickian to have the 48/84 anagram factor as we do with PKD’s 28/82— he was born in 1928, passed in 1982.

*** I know West Dem is a region, not a political affiliation, same with Pac-Peop. I said I was riffing, folks.

Patrick also provides this interesting insight:

Actually, there was a much earlier version of this oppressive government concept. Jack London’s 1908 novel “The Iron Heel”, which Orwell reviewed in July of 1940. In London’s version, it was the rich capitalists and factory owners who ruled the dictatorship instead of Orwell’s politicians (rather like today, wouldn’t you say?). It is quite possible that Orwell’s famous quote “If you want a vision of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face -- forever.” was inspired by London’s title. I have no idea if Phil was familiar with London’s novel but new editions of “The Iron Heel” periodically appear in contemporary times, usually in periods of political turmoil. I vividly remember seeing this one soon after Ronald Reagan was elected:



The last word on the Orwell connection comes from Phil via Frank (who BTW, is finishing up his own book, a collection of his PKD articles and observations from the past 35 years.)

I am aware of two times Phil mentions Orwell and 1984. The first is his 1972 essay “The Android and the Human.” Therein he writes: “The totalitarian society envisioned by George Orwell in 1984 should have arrived by now. The electronic gadgets are here. The government is here, ready to do what Orwell anticipated.” [The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick, p. 192] And the second one is from his 1978 “How to Build a Universe,” where he writes the infamous quote: “The basic tool for the manipulation of reality is the manipulation of words. If you can control the meaning of words, you can control the people who must use the words. George Orwell made this clear in his novel 1984.” [ibid., pg. 265]

Yep, he sure did! Patrick recalls another time Phil mentioned Orwell:

In “Zap Gun” Lars Powdery considers the Big Brother-like surveillance under which the world labors and asks himself, “But who can blame them? Orwell missed the point. They may be right and we may be wrong.”

My friend Scott (D. Scott Apel, author of *PKD: The Dream Connection*, *Science Fiction: An Oral History*, and several other books) spent time with Phil Dick back in the 1970s. Like many others, including Phil himself, he considered TPT a “minor” PKD novel. Scott says:

“The idea of ‘fake news’ in TPT seems to me less predictive than simply a subset of one of PKD’s major themes, namely ‘What is really real?’ Since we, as individuals, clearly can’t be everywhere and witness everything for ourselves, we rely on news sources we trust to provide us with objective facts on which we can base an informed opinion—our reality. The current political environment has called into question not only the idea of objective, reliable sources of factual information, but the very nature of what constitutes a “fact.” It’s abundantly clear, however, that the Trump administration, with its specious, double-speak concept of “alternative facts,” really means that a “fact” is something that agrees with and supports their prejudices—and that any “fact” that portrays Trump (or his minions, or his prejudices, or his uninformed opinions) in a bad light is ‘fake news.’ In this sense, PKD in TPT was in fact prescient.

“The characters in TPT, being restricted to a single newsfeed, have a very simple choice to make regarding any “fact” with which they are presented.

We might call it the “Ripley” choice: They can believe it...or not. But it’s not until a handful of these characters are presented with conflicting data that they even think to question the reliability of their single news source. In other words, they don’t start out skeptical—they have skepticism thrust upon them, and have to deal with the cognitive dissonance of competing “facts.”

Scott continues,

“Oh, what to believe? Who to trust? How can we make an informed decision when our sources of facts contradict one another? What a dilemma!

“Our current predicament in the so-called real world is infinitely more complicated and nuanced. The internet has provided us with fingertip access to multiple sources of facts and “alternative facts.” And social media has simply inundated us with prejudicial opinions masquerading as objective facts.

“Can we give up our preconceived notions when exposed to actual, objective facts—or will we just double down on our cherished prejudices, and dismiss allegedly reputable sources of information as “fake news” because we don’t like what they say? Is a Donald Trump tweet the authoritative equivalent of a well-researched New York Times article? Confronting these questions is a tough yoga, especially given that critical thinking is not highly regarded in our society—except among critical thinkers.

But when it comes to any piece of data with which we are presented as a fact, at heart we still have the same option that the TPT characters had available to them, the decision to either believe it...or not. And we’d better sharpen that ability if we want to counteract the devastating brain virus of uninformed propaganda disguising itself as “facts” that seems to be a defining characteristic of our bizarre new reality.”

Spot on, Scotty! For those who haven’t heard or seen Philip K. Dick, check out Part 7 (of a 9-part documentary entitled... wait for it: [The Penultimate Truth of Philip K. Dick](#)). There are several such documentaries that feature old video clips of Phil. Also, The Gospel According to Philip K. Dick includes clips of Paul Williams, Scott Apel and Robert Anton Wilson****) And, Scott points out the animated scenes with Phil speaking (in the “Gospel” doc) were created with audio clips from his 1977 interview with PKD.

**** Fourth and final “instant footnote”: I was actually in Encinitas visiting Paul when his segment was recorded in 2000. He mentions

TPT in the “Gospel.” It’s available on Amazon streaming video, free for Prime members. Also, for more about Scott Apel and his memories of RAW, here’s a [new interview from April 2017](#).)

Richard Bernstein, a book/media reviewer who wrote for the *New York Times* back in the 1990s, published a “fairly famous” 1991 review called “[The Electric Dreams of Philip K. Dick](#)”. In it, he called TPT “a gritty, technobabblish sort of noir prose, stripped of sentiment, blunt, disabused, a bit reminiscent of William Burroughs and also of Dick’s fellow Californian Raymond Chandler, with passages like this one (below), having to do with “stink of shrink”:

“The microscopic things downfalling to us that some careless ambulatory metal hunk of handmade parts



had failed to ‘cide out of existence before yanking the drop switch, shooting three hundred pounds of contaminated matter to us, something both hot and dirty at the same time . . . hot with radioactivity and dirty with germs. Great combination, he thought.”

My long-time friend Brandy sent her penultimate thoughts (at my request.) In the email she said: “A flapple appeared in my Twitter timeline today and I took it as a sign: Phil’s ghost still hovers over our universe.”

What makes her participation in this piece so special is that many moons ago (around 250, in fact) her husband John was the first to encourage me to read PK Dick (as he referred to him.)

I shared my story of “Finding Phil” in *PKD Otaku #21*, (pg 18.) Not sure if I’ve ever mentioned that TPT was the first PKD novel I actually purchased (but I read *VALIS* first.) I was enthralled with pink beams and break-ins much more than totalitarianism back in the 90s; although, there is talk of gnosis and time-travel in TPT, too.

Philip K. Dick's *The Penultimate Truth* as a Precursor of Trumpworld

By Brandy Turner

These days it's a cliché to compare Trumpworld to a Philip K. Dick novel, but you can't escape that cliché: as with so much of Phil's prescience, fantasy does become reality. Take away the futuristic trappings and we are here. Though *The Penultimate Truth* world exists post-WWIII and we exist pre-WWIII (though now iffy for how long), our circumstances are similar. Trump and his cronies live large in their luxurious towers while the masses struggle under an invisible barrier, a virtual underground.

Stanton Brose, Donald Trump—same blobby, amoral, self-serving difference. You can bet Trump would relish world domination on that scale, surrounded only by family and close friends (Ailes and O'Reilly?) Maybe Trump would even ditch the humans for the right TV—one that soothes his fragile ego, spews forth endless lies and occasionally transforms into an elite assassin. But Trump would probably keep Ivanka around—plastic body and soul to play with, kind of a Perky Pat of PKD's *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* fame.

That's some Phildickian speak there! Brandy just sent an additional dispatch... (from the Alphane Moon) saying she read *The Penultimate Truth* twice, back to back. "The first time, I found it easy to identify the central themes of government oppression, lies and fake videotapes (alas, no sex). But details were hard to follow because PKD breaks lots of writing rules, rules which should only be broken if the results make for a stronger, clearer and more compelling story. You have to understand PKD's worldview intimately to perceive what he doesn't describe very well in this book and to structure an informed framework for the characters and events. So, I decided to read the book again, to take line-by-line notes (85 steno-pad pages!!!) and to deconstruct the text hoping for more clarity.

"Was it worth it?" she wonders. "Maybe, but it still wasn't enough. Will also have to read *The Defenders*," "The Mold of Yancy," "The Unreconstructed M" and *The Simulacra*. And probably should read every other story/novel PKD wrote before TPT,

some of which I've read a long time ago.

"Then why not read/reread everything written after *The Penultimate Truth*, too? Would falling that much under PKD's spell be worth it? I suspect we all know the answer."

Well, the Otaku do! Thanks BT. Most recently my pal has become part of #TheResistance and the Indivisible movement. Brandy is a prolific writer (and future author) whose flapple hovers near Aspen, CO.

Speaking of #TheResistance, meet the young Pop Mythologist (Daniel Jun Kim of Chicago) who urges his social media followers to "[Be a D**ckhead: the Philip K. Dick method of political resistance.](#)" Just a taste of his take:

"In some stories, reality as a whole is an illusion. In other stories, as in *The Penultimate Truth*, physical reality itself is quite real but what people are being told does not accurately reflect the social-political reality. So there are different ways in which the idea of reality being unreal can be interpreted and that Dick himself has explored... Imagine, for a moment, that you're a main character in a Philip K. Dick novel in which you're living under a repressive totalitarian regime (belief in a fake reality is optional). What do you do? How do you resist? It isn't such an imaginative stretch because, first of all, most of his characters tend to be ordinary people faced with the dilemma of how to survive in dystopic worlds. Second, what's presently going on in the U.S. is increasingly becoming a disturbing reflection of many of the things that Dick wrote about."

Evan Lampe, one of our FDO (For Dickheads Only) Facebook members and author of *Philip K. Dick and The World We Live In* (Wide Books, 2013) notes another Trump-era/TPT correlation:

"Dick presents a real estate scam. All of this makes the novel much more relevant to our world." Indeed! Evan also compares TPT with the original 1953 short story that many Phil fans consider a basis for the novel. Lampe continues, "*The Defenders*" is a fun science fiction tale with a clever idea. *The Penultimate Truth* is a mirror to our own world, in particular the growing and perhaps permanent inequality of our cities." Evan's entire piece appears in this issue entitled "Penultimate City."

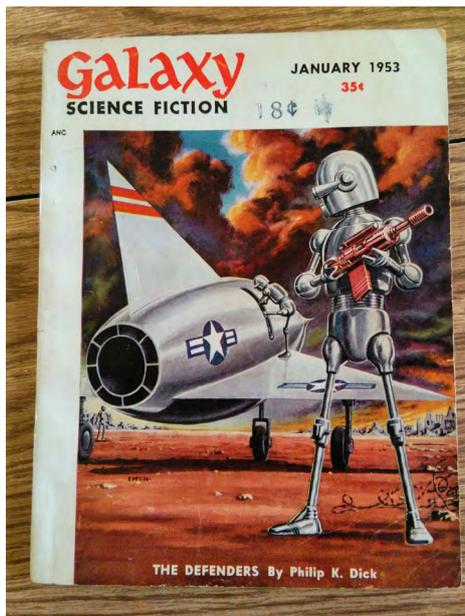


Photo by Jami Morgan (item from her own collection)

So, what does our Otaku Editor Patrick think of TPT these days?

“Phil once said, ‘The basic tool for the manipulation of reality is the manipulation of words. If you can control the meaning of words, you can control the people who must use the words.’ In saying this Phil was following the Orwellian template made famous in the novel *1984* and explained in detail in the appendix to that work “The Principle of Newspeak.” Throughout the 20th century the Orwellian version was the default model. But it seems to me that Phil was not being sufficiently “Phildickian” as he tried to parse our desperate future. While words can certainly describe reality, they don’t show it.

In the 21st Century it is the manipulation of the image that matters. Even in the late 20th Century this was becoming apparent. The American military lost control of the War in Vietnam because it lost control of the image of the war. Network and independent journalists, unfettered for the most part by any official censorship, took the stark reality of the war and shoved that image through every television screen in the world. No one could believe any official pronouncement from government officials because everyone could literally see it wasn’t true. The Pentagon learned its lesson. In future wars, images would be tightly controlled as would be journalists. There would only be “official” images and so only an “official” reality.

Phil’s 1964 dystopian novel *The Penultimate Truth* actually operates on this principle. The surface dwellers who rule the underground population with lies of an ongoing nuclear war don’t bother to manipulate words. They manipulate images; they show the “tankers” a false reality. This is the sole purpose of the Yance-men. Unable to access any alternative images, the “tankers” must accept the reality they are shown. Phil was keenly aware of the persuasive power of advertising. Indeed, I believe he feared the ad men more than even the police because, while the police could only lock him up, the advertisers could superimpose a new reality on to him. And what are the Yance-men and women if not the inhabitants of Madison Avenue?

If *The Penultimate Truth* has a special resonance to the political situation in the United States today, it is because it so clearly shows how reality is manipulated by control of the image. This is where we now exist. The 21st Century increasingly sees reality not as words on a page or even text on a screen but instead as the visual representations on YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, selfies and the barrage of cellphone photos and videos posted on Facebook. Words are increasingly obsolete and so their presence is reduced to the banality of Twitter, hashtags and the barely legible texts that crawl on the bottom of the screen in Fox and CNN broadcasts.

Obviously Phil could not have foreseen this, far-sighted as he was on so many matters. He was a writer, and he lived by words. It would have broken his heart to see a world where they no longer mattered much. But as a writer who was particularly interested in the nature of reality, he could imagine a world totally at the mercy of false imagery manufactured by sinister men to control us. I believe he wrote *The Penultimate Truth* as warning to the 20th Century; one that speaks even more alarming now to our own dangerous times.”

What more can I add? I totally agree, Patrick. My final comment is that I find the conclusions of both *1984* and TPT disturbing and #SAD. We are literally living with a bloated Brose propped up by Yance-men and all I can say, to quote Phil, “It’s a mess Nick; honest to god... a terrible mess and it’ll be a mess for a long time.”

And now back to Sr. Bertrand and his Frank Thoughts on Fog... that’s up next!

By ej “jami” Morgan © 2017 for PKD Otaku #36

PS: I whipped out my trusty 1981 Levack PKD Bibliography (cross checking with Dave Hyde’s updated e-Biblio app that he calls *Precious Artifacts*. BTW, that was one of around 50 titles and PKD terms I slipped into my [AKS novel](#) as so-called “easter eggs.”) Both Frank and I did due diligence with the Sutin bible *Divine Invasions: A Life of PKD* and Paul Williams’ *Only Apparently Real* and the “Rickman set.”

You can find my books, blogs and tweets at ZiaLink.org and much thanks to all of you who have been supportive of my writing.



www.ZiaLink.org

The Penultimate City By Evan Lampe

Not uncommon site in Taipei—the city I live in—is to walk around in the evening, look up at the brand spanking new apartment buildings, and notice that most of the lights are off. Perhaps most people are out for a night on the town, but I think a better explanation is that many of the newest apartments are unoccupied. Older four or five story buildings are torn down and replaced with unaffordable modern apartment buildings which function as gated communities within the city. Prices for moderately sized apartments can easily run \$1,000,000 U.S. dollars in the right neighborhoods. Sometimes much more. Ownership of these units is beyond the means of most, especially in a country where the starting salary for college graduates is around \$12,000 a year. Whenever I think about this situation I am reminded of Philip K. Dick’s novel *The Penultimate Truth*, probably his clearest statement on the city.

Philip K Dick is known for making contrasts between our perceived reality and what is “really real.” This is common enough in his work, but he is much more adept and contrasting two simultaneous truths. The dictator Jones is both unstoppable and doomed. The Mole is both ridiculous and indispensable. The mentally ill inhabitants of the Alphane moon are both totally dysfunctional and capable of creating a fairly well ordered society. In the case of *The Penultimate Truth*, we find three simultaneously existing cities. To use language easily recognizable to contemporary Earthlings, we can call these the slums, the gated communities, and the suburbs.

Philip K. Dick played with the idea of humanity being trapped underground while being told a devastating war is going on in his 1953 story, “The Defenders.” In this story, a man escapes the underground tunnels where all of humanity lives only to find that the war has ended. The surface is occupied by robots that are cleaning up the damage from the war, while keeping humans under the impression that the war is ongoing. They are doing this in

order to prevent future wars. The robots hope to encourage humanity to a path of cultural unification in order to prevent all future wars. They believe that life under the surface will provide the glue for that cultural unification. In the end of the story, the “Americans” join with some “Soviets” to form a new society on the surface, as the robots cannot allow their secret to get out until humanity is ready.



In *The Penultimate Truth* only the core idea of the war becoming scripted television in order to keep the people below the surface working survives. In almost every other way, the story is different. In the novel, the deceivers are a human ruling class who live like feudal lords. The robots exist, but they are not responsible for the lie. They are simply the servants of the few humans on the service, built by the slaves below the surface. Instead of a benevolent goal of world peace and cultural unification, Dick presents a real estate scam. All of this makes the novel much more relevant to our world. “The Defenders” is a fun science fiction tale with a clever idea. *The Penultimate Truth* is a mirror to our own world, in particular the growing and perhaps permanent inequality of our cities.

Geographer David Harvey wrote a book in the aftermath of the Occupy Wall Street Movement called *Rebel Cities*. In this slight book is a rich analysis of our predicament, at least as far as the city is concerned. And let’s be honest. By the end of this century, perhaps 75% of humans will live in cities. We are increasingly an urban civilization and the fate of the city is the fate of us all. Harvey shows that the city is increasingly reflecting the inequalities in the broader economy, as millions find themselves priced out of their communities through “urban development” and gentrification. He suggests that rapid urban investment is not a sign of economic vitality, but rather economic ennui. For new modern apartments is the death throes of capital that has no idea where else to go. It is not productive. Tearing down old apartments and building new high rises for the affluent may create jobs in the short term but it hardly creates new wealth. It is an act of consumption. Harvey shows that this is not the first time this happened.

Harvey shows that this is not the first time this happened.

In the middle of the 19th century, while Britain and the United States were speeding on the road to becoming the world's greatest industrial powers, the wealthy French rebuilt Paris, only to enter the First World War as a second-rate power. Harvey also shows that it is in the cities that the most important political movements of our era must emerge.

But what does any of this have to do with Dick's novel *The Penultimate Truth*? Quite a lot, I think. But to understand this, let's go take a closer look at the three urban cultures presented in the novel. Dick attempts a mapping of the late capitalist city, providing a gated community (the homes of the elite), slums (populated with human kipple engaged in vernacular and construction), and suburbs (filled with people employed in useless work living in standardized housing units). The novel begins in the gated community, made up of "Ozymandiasian" buildings constructed from old highway entrance ramps. These communities are protected by robot guards, which form the productive working class on the surface. They are also a product of a larger working class, being built by the people in the underground bunkers known as "tankers." If we are to contrast this situation with our own, the people in the bunker are akin to factory workers in the global south, sustaining a working class in the industrial world which is largely employed in a service sector. The people in the gated community control the media and the political system. They are thus the creators of the intellectual superstructure of the world. That political system is feudal, but its urban form is closer to the gated community made possible by systems of surveillance, control, and restricted access. Since the entire system rests of the production of a grandiose lie, the "Private Property" sign is more importance than ever. Working people are meant to be productive but not heard or seen too close to those in power. The residents of these gated communities reveal their attitude toward urban spaces when they periodically simulate the entire destruction of cities. Their goal is to turn the entire world (except what

few places they reserve for the ex-workers on the surface) into a park, their private playground. As one character explains: "[Cheyenne] is a hot-spot [still affected by radiation]; there now aren't very many left. The rest is a park. They've made the world into a great park and it's split up into their demesnes, their estates, they, the Yancey-men—they each have entourages of leadies. Like Medieval kings."

The novel's slums exist on the periphery of the political geography. They are made up of ex-tankers, people who due to their knowledge of the reality (that the war ended long ago and that the work done below the surface is useless) are unable to return to the underground bunkers. Keeping the lie alive requires the social isolation of the ex-tankers. A major colony of these people live in Cheyenne, one of the cities that was actually devastated in the war. The ex-tankers, like the tankers, live underground but their dwelling are makeshift and vernacular. They are able to live autonomously but only by inhabiting a space that is entirely unwanted by others due to it still being a "hot-spot" of radiation. The preference of the ruling class is to put these people into prisons-like developments that appear much like Stalin-era public housing, like they do most of the ex-workers, but with the leadies guarding the "great park," there is little to fear by keeping a small population in a degraded and otherwise unless periphery. One thing they have in common with the elite is that the slum-dwellers of Cheyenne use the existing rubble to build their homes, but they create functional living spaces, lacking the resources for the gigantism of the "Ozymandiasian" construction. Their situation seems to have a lot in common with our own slum residents.

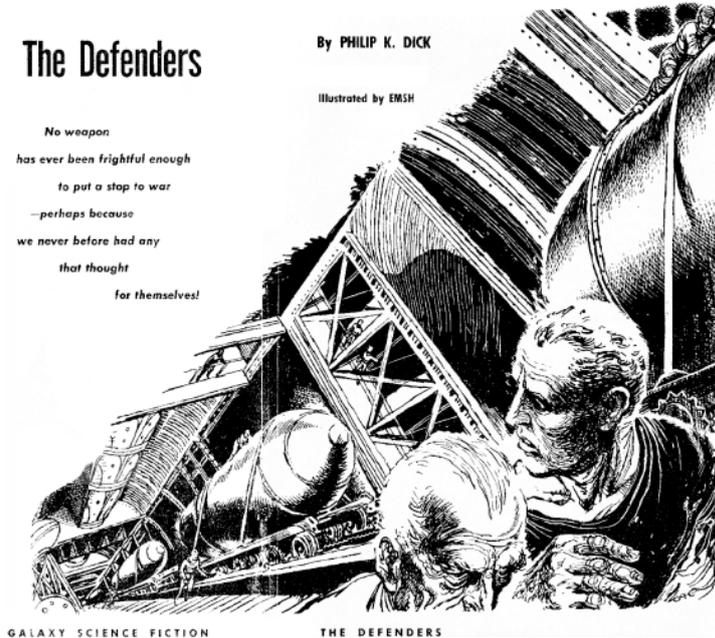
In the novel, the working classes live in giant underground suburbs, divided into different "tanks," each resembling a suburban housing development. Despite the rather horrible conditions in the bunkers, the greatest fear of the residents is being kicked out for not being productive enough.

The Defenders

No weapon
has ever been frightful enough
to put a stop to war
—perhaps because
we never before had any
that thought
for themselves!

By PHILIP K. DICK

Illustrated by ENSH



GALAXY SCIENCE FICTION THE DEFENDERS 5

The threat of downsizing hangs over the lives of everyone. They learn about the outside world only through media. Like the suburbs, the tanks are completely artificial creations. Their exact location is entirely meaningless since it is detached from geography. This is not a perfect description of the early 21st century suburbanite?

The relationship between the new housing development for ex-tankers (what are essentially prisons), the productive labor done in the bunkers, and the maintaining of the power of the ruling class is reinforced in a major subplot, involving a petty bureaucrat trying to move up to becoming a “Yance-man,” one of the elite. In one chapter he is overseeing a construction project. While the machines (all automated, reinforcing the question why any labor is necessary underground except for reasons of social control) dig massive holes in the ground for the foundation, they collect raw materials that can be converted into energy for the industrial machine working below ground. The housing being created, is cramped and artificial. Space is no problem, but the purpose is little more than holding the ex-tankers who have no clear purpose in the system. Construction, although excessive and not strictly necessary, serves its function in sustaining the system. In this massive housing project, twelve automatic ‘dozers are employed. The man overseeing this project is Robert Hig, and he is on the lookout for ancient artifacts (mostly the remains of alien visitors placed there using a time travel device) that might be damaged in the digging. The discovery of such relics will put the developer, Glen Runciter, into a legal bind and face likely jail time. Meanwhile, Runciter has become rich by secretly informing tankers that the war is over to encourage them to come to the surface, in order to sustain a market for his construction projects. Amid these corporate shenanigans is an endless cycle of construction and destruction. The fact that the alien artifacts are indeed there and destroyed in the digging

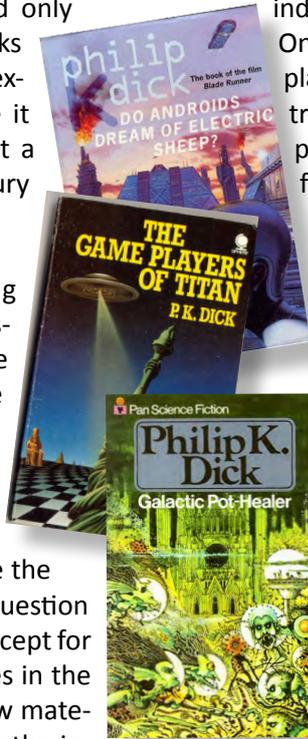
due to the murder of Robert Hig, only strikes home the indifference of urban development to anything old. One by one old communities are destroyed and replaced, taking with them much historical memory, traditions, and social networks. Dick describes this process: “Without hesitation the converter transformed it, with all its intricate wiring and miniaturized components, along with rocks and dirt, into pure energy. And, noisily, the digging continued.”

The construction of housing units for people who are destined to do nothing productive does not seem right, until we realize that much construction in our world is devoted to just this, whether they are prisons, public housing units, or even just empty homes made possible by speculation. The city has become a plaything for the ruling class and the ruling class is incapable of producing for need. What Dick is getting at in *The Penultimate Truth* is the banality of urban planning, which seems tied up with the proliferation of slum life and finding places (and sometimes tasks) for the growing population of surplus people.

So what is the solution? *The Penultimate Truth* does not provide one for us. As with so many of Dick’s novels the brilliance is in the diagnosis, not in the solution. But we get a sense that Dick is desperate for community. The problem with all three urban forms in the novel is that they are false, artificial, and inert. Dick actually explored the inert city in other works such as *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *The Game-players of Titan*. We know from novels such as *Galactic Pot-Healer* that Dick placed a premium on creativity and community and solidarity. The question of how to create a city that cultivates those things

is difficult. Dick lacked the power to image the city of the future as anything but a depressing, dead shell. Maybe the problem is that we look to the future

instead of to the past. As all students of world history realize at some point, there seems to be an association between the origins of complex societies and the inven-



“There seems to be an association between the origins of complex societies and the invention of the city”

tion of the city. Some of our greatest and most enduring ideas and values and institutions had their roots in city. The Greek *polis* created philosophy and democracy. The medieval town preserved knowledge, expanded technology, cultivate trade, and sustained traditions of self-rule in the midst of bickering feudal lords. The ethnic enclaves of New York City had a creative power of their own, providing solidarity for immigrant communities while protecting diverse cultural communities in America. Cities will always have the power to bring people together, but our first step needs to be to agree that cities should be locations of civic life, community, art, and creativity. That should be their first function. They should be workplaces and business places only after their primary function has been completed.

As I walk through the late capitalist city that has become my home, I can still smile from time to time when I imagine that I am walking through the penultimate urban form. We will figure out environmentally and socially sustainable cities that build communities rather than fracture them. We must, if we hope to survive this century.

Evan Lampe is a writer, teacher, and historian residing in Taipei. He is the author of *Philip K. Dick and the World We Live In* (Wide Books) and *Work, Class, and Power in the Borderlands of the Early American Pacific* (Lexington). He is currently podcasting on American writers (<http://hundredpages.wordpress.com>) and finishing a book on the Atlantic context of H. P. Lovecraft's fiction.

Italicized Internal Dialogue in *The Penultimate Truth*

By John Fairchild

There are differences in the different editions of *The Penultimate Truth*. I just happened to catch that the last two lines of the book in the Triad/Panther are italicized, whereas they are not in some other editions. We'll be discussing five editions—the Belmont 1st, 1964, the first British, the Cape 1967, the Triad/Panther 1978 (1984 reprint), the Bluejay 1984, and the Vintage 2004.

Here are the last three paragraphs of the book in the Cape and Triad/Panther:

Nicholas said, 'I know you can, too.' *Except for that one thing*, he said to himself, and he put his arm around his wife to draw her closer.

You're not going to.

Because we will not allow you.

This italics anomaly is only in the Cape and Triad/Panther. On the last page of Chapter 2 in the same two editions, we have the last two lines: *Sooner or later*, Nicholas realized, *despite the law against it, I will have to go up to the surface*. I read both of these passages as internal dialogue. Rather than going through all of the chapters in all of the editions, which would have required a spread-sheet and a lot of work, I compared the Chapter 1's.

Chapter 1 is actually more complicated and probably involves human error. On pg.6 of the Belmont and the

Triad/Panther (and pg. 8 of the Cape) we have "on-tab". On the equivalent pg.2 of the Bluejay and Vintage we have "no-tab". All of these have a previous "on-tab" on the previous page. I'm thinking someone was manually working on the Bluejay, accidentally hit the wrong keys, and then the Vintage followed the Bluejay.

I had previously been told the British *World of Chance* (*Solar Lottery*) had been set from a ms. sent to England by SMLA. If this was the case for *The Penultimate Truth*, that would mean the Cape and the Triad/Panther would be the definitive editions, barring any unintentional quirks. It looks like the Americans were just lazy, as in, hey, this is just a science fiction paperback and it's a drag italicizing all this stuff. This is my working theory and I'm willing to be proven wrong.

Only a manuscript of the book would show a definitive edition. Anything short of that would be commentary.

"Since no one makes us suffer
we have elected to volunteer."
(near the end of Chapter 8)

John Fairchild,
with thanks to Randall Radin



The Truth by Lord RC

Philip K. Dick's 1964 novel *THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH* is one that reveals the domination of humanity by a relative handful of individuals and exposes the truth of a civilization wherein decisions are made and actions taken all with the intent and sole purpose of maintaining this handful in power at the expense of the vast mass of humanity.

Now, Philip K. Dick could've written this story to show how the masses living underground slowly realize the truth of their situation and rise up in rebellion and overthrow their oppressors; and this is so to some extent. But Dick preferred instead to open his novel with one of the elite – the Yance Men in the story – sitting in his lonely demesne on the Pacific coast near San Francisco, worrying about the fog which, in one of the more memorable opening lines of a PKD novel, “can drift in from outside and get you; it can invade.” His name is Joseph Adams and he is a speech writer for the ersatz President, Talbot Yancy, who is merely a simulacrum to be programmed with lies to keep the people crammed into failing underground ‘ant tanks’ pacified.

Adams sits at his ‘rhetorizer’ – a machine that transforms his simple ideas into speech for the presidential simulacrum – and after much hard thought gives the rhetorizer two words to ‘ogpon’: squirrel and smart. The rhetorizer in its tinny voice starts spouting some soothing nonsense about wise little squirrels designed to calm the fears of the tankers below once it is programmed into the Yancy simulacrum.

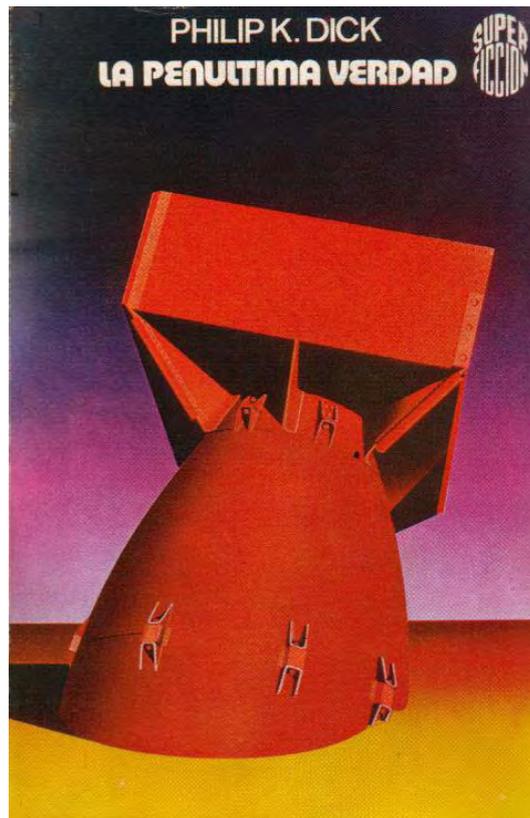
But, listening to this machine – it has pretty much replaced the position of speech writer; no one writes their own speeches anymore – chirp out its banal bullshit, strikes a bad note in the heart of Adams. He's tired of the lies he must create. His visiting girlfriend suggests he write the speech in his own words, before

she flapples back to her own lonely villa. Adams thinks about the squirrel: what can be said about a squirrel that hasn't already been said? They're thrifty... and what else? They're all dead. Killed in the war that began and ended 15 years ago in the story.

So, (as pundits on television always begin their sentences) Joseph Adams is a presidential speech writer. He spins out lies with the help of a sophisticated computer that can turn any message into banality fit for the ears of a Joe Shmoe down in the ant-tanks. After 15 years of practice the worldwide relative handfuls of the rich (together with their counterparts in Peep-East) have the Yancy simulacrum programming down to a technical art. But that is only part of their act.

With the fake President Yancy and his convincing voice we have one part of the composition of a Big Lie in place. But we also need the visual. Down in the ant-tanks the tankers have a ‘coax’ connection with the Estes Park government up above, which is still

supposedly directing the War. In other words, they have one-way television. On these televisions the tankers not only get to mandatorily watch President Yancy they also get to see scenes of supposed war destruction on the earth above in massive cinematic productions, produced by Lanferman Associates of California: basically a gigantic Hollywood devoted to making spectacular movies of the real war up above. For the tankers what they see and what they hear is the truth. They're concerned mostly with meeting their monthly quota of ‘leadies’ – robots – for the war effort above, and staying in political line under the watchful eye of the tank's ‘pol-com’ – political commissioner – who can legally arrest any dissenters from the Yancy political line. In other words, support the war or else.



Hence they see the awful destruction of Detroit. This is not only bad news because another city has been destroyed by the Russians but, also, it means their quota of leadies will be upped.

In the ant-tank in the novel, named the Tom Mix, and despite the wise-squirrel lies from above, morale is low. The maintenance man is ill with pancreatitis: he needs a new pancreas or will die. In fact, he does die and is immediately deep-frozen, and the tankers decide they must send a man to the surface to find a replacement pancreas. Rumour has reached them that there are spare organs in Military hospitals up there. Little do they know that up above the world leaders are a bunch of ugly old men, out-living their normal lifespans by sequestering such organs as pancreases and hearts for their own use. There is no way the tankers will get a spare pancreas. And without their maintenance man the tank will not meet its quota – with dire results for the tankers as rumours of other failed tanks are rife: tanks which just sort of disappeared. Add to all this more rumours of the ‘Bag plague’ and the ‘Stink of shrink’ – weird diseases the first of which will cause your head to expand to maximum size before popping like a paper bag, and the other of which will make your head shrink, features intact, to the size of a marble.

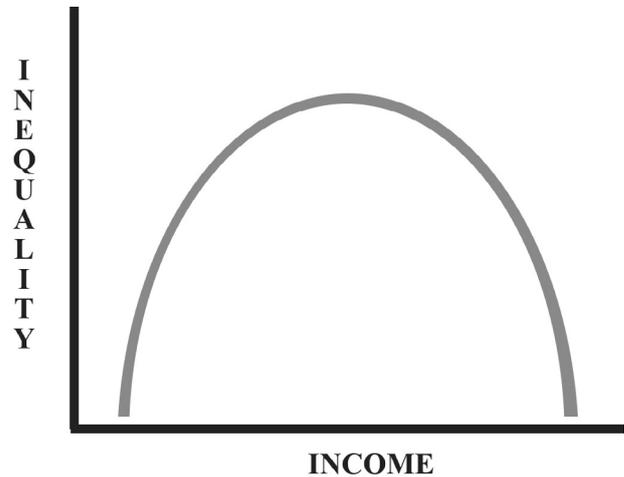
And so the methods of repression are revealed by Dick. War, fear, lies, propaganda and threats.

So, how do the Yance Men live with themselves? Maybe they don’t care or maybe they justify themselves in some fashion. In THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH the elite do this by saying they are preparing for that time when the tankers can return to the surface to a world ready for them. Of course, this is about as specious as you can get. But let’s turn to our world.

In our world things work similarly. In our world Donald Trump, our President, went to college at Fordham University, an Ivy League university in New Jersey up there with Harvard and Yale, and then he went on to the University of Pennsylvania’s Wharton School of Business where he took a Bachelor of Science degree in Economics. Fordham and the Wharton Business School typify the universities and elite institutions attended by political theorists and practitioners of every political party. Graduates of these places are the politicians, businessmen, lawyers and their ilk who tell the rest of us how to live.

I wonder what their syllabus contained there at Wharton and who were his professors? What classes did he take? Perhaps something on Games Theory (which I will get into below)? Or did he absorb the teachings of Nobel Laureate in Economics Professor Simon Kuznets who spent some years at Wharton? Such theories as schematized in the

Kuznets Curve which graphs rising economic inequality against rising income? The Kuznets Curve is a simple sort of thing that any undergraduate can grasp – but one which can lead to dangerous conclusions: like the ‘trickle down’ notion. Here’s how it works in the minds of those who have adapted it to their own ends:



In words, Kuznets hypothesis says that as incomes rise (their incomes), inequality also rises (fair enough), until a certain point is reached (not there yet in their minds) when inequality starts to fall. This has been interpreted to mean that as the rich get richer there will be a trickle down on the poor. And the richer the rich get the more will trickle down – as can be seen from this graph.

This distortion of the original Kuznets theory was all the rage back in the days of Ronald Raygun. Unfortunately, time has shown this cynical interpretation to be a fraud. The truth has turned out to be more linear: as income rises for one segment – the already rich – inequality rises for all other segments – the poor. The two lines follow each other exactly together. There is no curve. But, and I repeat, but, political strategists use the Kuznets Curve to justify their taking as much income as they can from the commonweal because, eventually, when they have accumulated even more wealth, it will start to trickle down. Thus, they say they’re doing a good thing by being so greedy! In the future – when they have all the money there will be no more inequality! Until that far-off future time, of course, it will be necessary to repress and keep down those who – unfairly in the view of the rich (because the poor refuse to see their visionary future) – are complaining about inequality now.

Thus is ‘richness’ justified.

There is plenty more of political truth revealed in THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH, it is a great novel, currently undergoing much reassessment by the literati. However, and even though I could go on and on, I want to comment now on the article I wrote for the last issue of PKD OTAKU (#35) "Telepathy and Murder." Which is about SOLAR LOTTERY, Dick's first published novel.

In re-reading SOLAR LOTTERY while trying to think of something to say about this issue's focus novel THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH, it occurred to me that SOLAR LOTTERY shares something (I'm not sure what) with THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH. What struck me was how the theory of Minimax, as put forth by Herb Moore, the psychotic genius behind the political takeover in SOLAR LOTTERY, applies to the actions of President Trump. In my essay I quote Herb Moore:

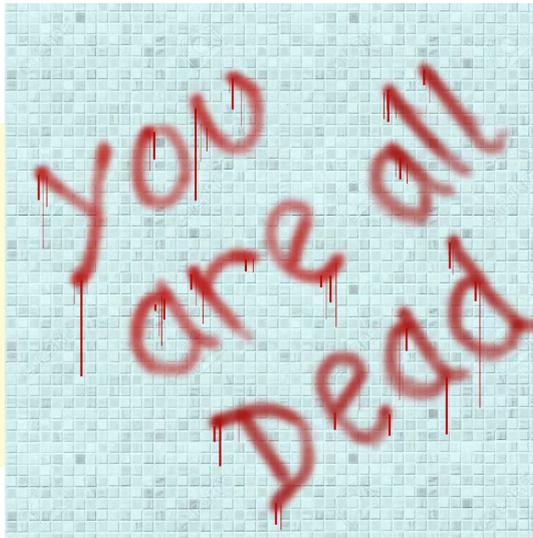
"The random factor is a function of an overall ra-tional pattern. In the face of random twitches, no one can have a strategy. It forces everybody to adopt a randomized method: best analy-sis of the statistical possibilities of certain events plus the pessimistic assumption that any plans will be found out in advance. As-suming you are found out in advance frees you of the danger of being discovered. If you act randomly your opponent can find out nothing about you because even you don't know what you're going to do." (SL Ch.5)

Now, doesn't this read like an operation statement underlying the seemingly impulsive actions of President Trump? To repeat: In the face of random twitches (or tweets), no one can have a strategy. And even though he rails against political leaks, Trump doesn't seem to care that much. Perhaps he knows that being found out in advance frees you of the danger of being discovered. He transforms political strategy into a chance game, where the regular statistical methods of the exact sciences function.(to quote Herb Moore again)

Perhaps President Trump knows little about regular statistical methods – the exact sciences, although, as I've noted, he has a Bsc in Economics – and is merely an instinctive games theorist applying Minimax as an ingrained

method to achieve his business goals. This is an avenue open for research by any interested journalist looking for a new angle on Trump. Games Theory may explain a lot of our new President's actions. Or it may not. Instead of a master political strategist Donald Trump may merely be an egotistical narcissist bouncing along on the seat of his pants, like an old-time aviator, barely avoiding the cow flops he's about to plop into in the political fields he's flying over.

It's all lies. Big lies. All that I wrote above about the Kuznets Curve is bullshit. I typed in Trump, Wharton and Games Theory on Wikipedia and spun out my little tale of how the rich justify their existence such as it is. But it's all true, too, anything can be easily justified, any science distorted to support one's own ends, any lies told in soothing words to assuage a disgruntled populace. In the end its always the iron fist, in a velvet glove, at first, but eventually that is torn away and its the iron fist.



But we know, we fans of Philip K. Dick, that the real truth is even worse than this! Need I mention

the name of Palmer Eldritch? Or the planet Newcolonizedland? Or the writing on the bathroom wall in UBIK?

It's been often said that Philip K. Dick somehow knew what questions to ask but that he could never find a good answer to the meaning of Reality. Well, I think that, at last, through desperation seemingly, the world is turning more to the writings of Philip K. Dick for answers that, forty years ago, had no questions until Dick came along. Now, we realize the facile nature of Truth, the bankruptcy of the System, and how it is being done. The questions have been asked, the answers must now come. In reading the stories of Philip K. Dick we find analogies of political reality: the plight of the characters in his stories is often a grim one. But there are resolutions too. After all, these are stories and stories have to end. It's time to look at the answers to be found in Phil's stories. And remember:

He who controls the meaning of words controls the meaning of reality – Philip K. Dick

Comments on *The Penultimate Truth* by Bruce Gillespie

[NOTE: from “Mad, Mad Worlds: Seven Novels by Philip K. Dick,” in *Philip K. Dick: Electric Shepherd*, ed. by Bruce Gillespie, Melbourne, Australia: Nostrilia Press, 1975, pg. 20. First published in *SF Commentary* 1, January 1969. Written November 1967. This may or may not remain the opinion of the author, who has not re-read this novel since the early 1970s. Reprinted here with the permission of Bruce Gillespie]

At the beginning of *The Penultimate Truth* we are dismayed by the woe-ful prose. The rest of the novel has a striking dearth of those “ideas” which seem inexhaustible in other Dick books. Ideas and events scurry around in disorder and never get anywhere, characters appear at random and disappear quickly, and the total effect is vague and easily forgotten.

The first part of the novel concerns the actions and viewpoints of two characters. Joseph Adams is one of the elite who rule the green parks of an Earth left empty of people after the Last War. Nicholas St. James emerges from one of the highly populated underground tanks, and expects to find a world still engaged in atomic warfare.

However, after the novel’s halfway mark, these characters become decreasingly important, and the story drags itself along in a listless way towards an inconclusive and unsatisfactory ending. We find a few forays into suspense, all of which disappear into the dark jungle which passes as a “plot”. We find a nicely described assassination-by-robot attempt, an exciting search through film files to find the sources of forgery in the currently accepted history, etc. Each event is interesting enough on its own, but hardly original and, as I’ve said, quite forgettable.

The political structure of this elite/slave culture is as shaky as the politics in any of Dick’s other “worlds”. Unfortunately, the author chooses to centre his novel on a power struggle between the two main businessmen on Earth.

One of the novel’s characters asks about one of the two businessmen, “How really does an eighty-two-year-old semi-senile but still cunning colossal abnormality, weighing god knows how many pounds, manage to keep his power?” How indeed? Dick does not, or cannot, tell us.

The most objectionable feature of the novel is the way that Dick wastes potentially the best thing in it – David Lantano, the mysterious Cherokee time-traveler, who has powers of such godlike omniscience that he seems set to take over the world. However, Lantano represents nothing, ultimately achieves nothing, and we receive no answer to the question that dominates the shape of the novel, “Who is David Lantano?”

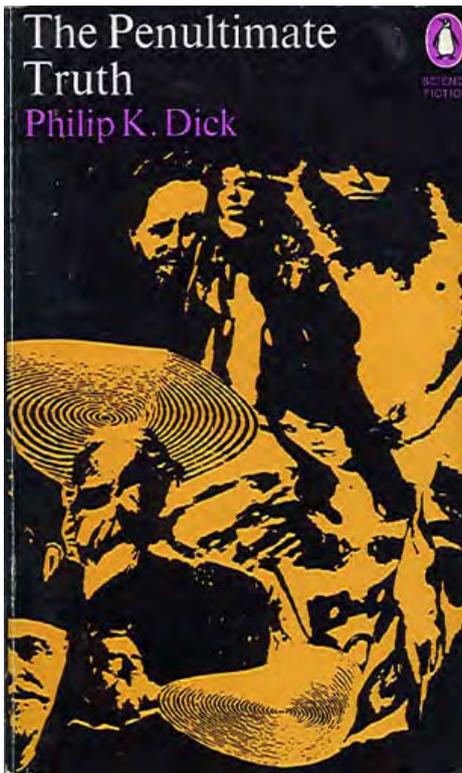
Also I don’t like the moralising that breaks into the second part of the book. Dick’s worlds, including this one, are too tough and too unusual for characters to indulge in the luxury of moralizing. By any current standards, the morality of the whole civilisation precludes qualms about the morality of private actions. We find little discussion about the crime of keeping most of the world’s surviving population locked in tanks below ground. The world of this novel, like that in

The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch, precludes any modern God (and most ancient ones). *The Penultimate Truth* (whatever the truth is) fails because of a failure in Dick’s usual powers of originality and perceptive common sense. Only the author could tell us whether this has been caused by rushed writing or bad luck. [© Bruce Gillespie 2017]

Bruce Gillespie is a prominent Australian science fiction fan best known for his long-running sf fanzine *SF Commentary*. Along with Carey Handfield and Rob Gerrard, he was a founding editor of *Norstrilia Press*, which published Greg Egan’s first novel.

He was fan guest of honour at Aussiecon 3, the 57th World Science Fiction Convention held in Melbourne, Australia in 1999.

He has won and been nominated for many Ditmar Awards since his first nomination in 1970, and in 2007 he was awarded the Chandler Award for his services to science fiction fandom.



Late Night Thoughts About Fog While Rereading The Penultimate Truth and Listening To Foghat's 1975 Hit "Fool For The City"

by Frank C. Bertrand

"War is the realm of uncertainty; three quarters of the factors on which action in war is based are wrapped in a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty. A sensitive and discriminating judgment is called for; a skilled intelligence to scent out the truth."

[Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, originally published 1832, Book 1, chapter 3]

When the absurdities of life become too intrusive for me, such as a year in Vietnam or a really bad seven-year marriage to which I sued for divorce or the current fiasco in American politics that could well ruin what democracy we have left, I usually do one of three things. I'll start re-reading a favorite book, such as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, or listen to some favorite music by Pink Floyd or Tangerine Dream or Modest Mussorgsky, or watch yet again the classic Monty Python biblical epic *Life of Brian*. Satirical humor, music and/or reading have more than once brought me back from the "dark side" and helped me to cope with reality, albeit a reality of (or, possibly: a "reality" of) American politics, a dysfunctional educational system or increasingly the academic anachronisms being spewed out from the denizens of dilapidated ivory towers about Philip K. Dick. These are, however, almost always cloaked in dense PoMoese obfuscation and require an adept translator to make sense of.

Sort of like trying to grasp, examine and define fog.

In fact, this is something Philip K. Dick attempts in his 1964 novel *The Penultimate Truth*. The word *fog* occurs eight (8) times in the first chapter, five of which are in the opening paragraph alone. The last two sentences of this paragraph are: "And because this was evening and the world was darkening, this fog scared him as much as that other fog, the one inside which did not invade but stretched and stirred and filled the empty portions of the body. Usually the latter fog is called loneliness." [*The Penultimate Truth*, Bluejay Books, Inc., 1984, pg. 1. All parenthetical citations are to this edition which has a very incisive "Afterword" by Thomas Dish.] In addition to the initial chapter, the word fog is also found in chapters 5, 6, 8, 13, 27, and 29 for a total of 21 times in the novel.

Should one consider this at all unusual for the beginning of a Philip K. Dick novel? Not when one of his favorite

quotes, from Gilbert and Sullivan, is "Things are not what they seem / Skim milk masquerades as cream." Or, as Paul Williams incisively states it: "As in a Philip K. Dick novel, things are not what they seem, and they also may not be what we determine they are after we've looked a little closer." (*Only Apparently Real*, 1986, pg. 95) More importantly, in a 9-13-70 letter to fellow author Roger Zelazny, Phil writes about "A German translation of my novel THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH, not a very good novel, but with a quite good opening paragraph." [*Selected Letters*, Vol. 1, pg. 290] And in the Philip K. Dick Manuscript Collection at Cal State Fullerton Library, in Box 7 Folder 8, is a poem titled "Fog." Or, doing a cursory check of his short stories and other novels one finds: "...the layer of drifting fog that hung over the bay..." (*Voices From The Street*), "...could not fathom for the life of him if Luba Luft's semantic fog had purpose..." (*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*), and "...a massive bread truck loomed up from the fog..." ("The Minority Report").

In *The Penultimate Truth* instance, however, the "fog" is both outer and inner, the latter being equated with loneliness. It is experienced by Joseph Adams, a speech writer who is using a "rhetorizer" he paid "fifteen thousand Wes-Dem dollars" for to help him with his speech writing job. He's apparently having some difficulty with his writing motivation, imagination, and creativity. A visitor, Colleen Hackett (maiden name of Phil's fourth wife, Nancy Hackett, whom he first met in early 1964) tells him, "Joe, try it, the entire speech, without the assist [rhetorizer]; write it in your own words." (pg. 3) Kim Stanley Robinson, who wrote his 1982 Ph.D. dissertation at Cal State - San Diego on Philip K. Dick (one member of his dissertation committee was Fredric Jameson), thinks Joseph Adams is "...another of Dick's bitter self-portraits...that Dick felt he was just part of an entertainment industry, helping to create the happy consciousness of the population." (Robinson, *The Novels of Philip K. Dick*, pg. 125)

In support of this one could note that Phil did actually write at least three speeches, two of which were delivered in public. The first, and perhaps most infamous, was "The Android and the Human" which was given on Thursday, February 17, 1972 in the Hebb Theater at the University of British Columbia, Canada. It was a modified version of the speech he gave two days later, Saturday evening, February 19, 1972 at the Biltmore Motel to the Vancouver Second Annual Science Fiction Convention. In a letter dated 10-31-72 Phil writes: "I worked I think four months on it, trying to sum up an entire lifetime of developing thought." A second speech, "If You Find This World Bad, You Should See Some of the Others," was given at the 2nd Festival International de la Science-Fiction de Metz, France, September 1977 where he was a Guest of Honor. About this he writes in a 10-2-77 letter: "Marcel Thacon was there and

he did the translation of my speech; I'd read a paragraph in English and then he, seated beside me, read his French translation." The third speech, "How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later," was never given in public but did get published in the 1985 collection *Hope I Shall Arrive Soon*.

Robinson's characterization is also plausible in that one can glean from Sutin's PKD biography, Anne Dick's memoir, and Paul Williams's invaluable *Only Apparently Real* that the Scott Meredith Literary Agency (SMLA) received the manuscript for *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and an outline for *The Penultimate Truth* on the same date: 3-18-64! The completed manuscript for *The Penultimate Truth* was received by SMLA on 5-12-64 and published by Belmont Books in September 1964. We can infer from this information that Phil wrote *The Penultimate Truth* sometime during 3-18-64 to 5-12-64. During this time frame he also wrote *The Zap Gun* and the novelette *The Unteleported Man* (Sutin, *Divine Invasions*, pgs. 128-129).

As for Phil's personal life adversely impacting his writing of *The Penultimate Truth*, in March 1964 Phil separated from Anne Dick, filing for divorce on March 9, 1964. She writes: "Phil was writing, partly in Berkeley, partly in Point Reyes Station....He produced a great deal of work that spring. Another novel, *The Penultimate Truth* probably revised from a 1950s story, was written at about this same time. (*Search for Philip K. Dick*, pg. 94) Also pertinent to the timeframe during which *The Penultimate Truth* was written is what Phil's best biographer, Lawrence Sutin, recounts Phil saying about that time in his life:

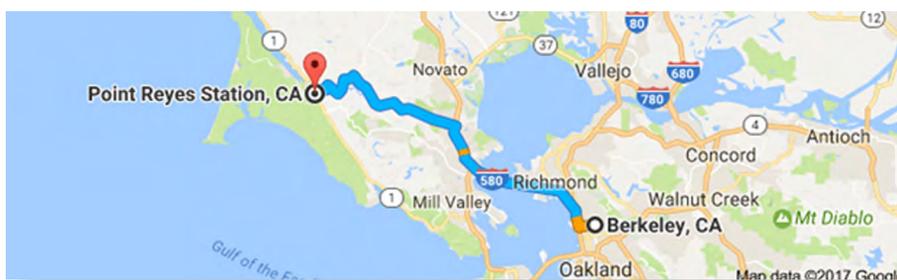
"There I went, one day, walking down the country road to my shack, looking forward to eight hours of writing in total isolation from all other humans.... I realize now (and I think I dimly realized at the time) what caused me to see it [face up in sky]: the months of isolation, of deprivation of human contact, in fact sensory deprivation as such..."
 (*Divine Invasions*, 1989, pg. 127)

But isolation and deprivation are **not** what characterize Joseph Adams in *The Penultimate Truth*. It's an *outer* and *inner* fog, the latter being equated with loneliness. The opening two sentences of the novel quite pointedly set an ominous physical and psychological scene: "A fog can drift in from outside and get you; it can invade. At the long

high window of his library – an Ozymandiasian structure built from concrete chunks that had once in another age formed an entrance ramp to the Bayshore Freeway – Joseph Adams pondered, watched the fog, that of the Pacific." (*The Penultimate Truth*, pg. 1)

The outside, physical fog off of the Pacific ocean, it turns out, can be of two kinds:

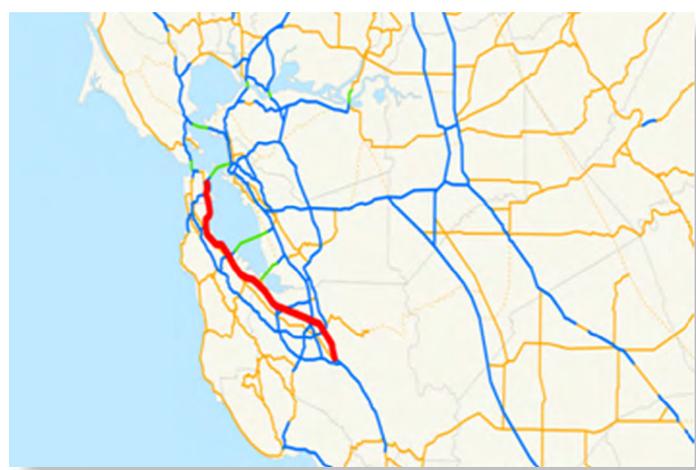
Two main types of fog call San Francisco home, though their arrival and departure are very difficult to forecast, because it doesn't take much to change



fog. Advection fog comes out in the summer and pours over the chaparral hills of Marin and through the ruddy cables of the Golden Gate Bridge. This fog is reminiscent of the poet Carl Sandberg's famous lines: "The fog comes in on little cat's feet. It sits looking over harbor and city on silent haunches and then moves on."

Convection fog, also called tule fog, comes out in the winter, is low-lying, reduces visibility and produces drizzle. Columnist Caen described the effect: "When the city is all covered with fog, it's like living inside a great gray pearl." [*San Francisco's Famous Fog*, by Julian Guthrie, www.sfgate.com 7/6/2009]

We know it's San Francisco, California because of the *Bayshore Freeway* allusion (red line on the map below with



San Francisco at the northern end of the red line and part of U.S. Route 101 in San Francisco Bay area connecting San Jose with San Francisco.) The other important allusion

is Joseph Adams's library being described as "an Ozymandiasian structure." This refers to the sonnet "Ozymandias" written by Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822) and first published in the 1-11-1818 issue of *The Examiner*, London, England. It refers to a large, broken Egyptian statue, about which Shelley writes, in part: "...Two vast and trunkless legs of stone / Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand, / Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown, / And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command, / ...Nothing beside remains. Round the decay / Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare / The lone and level sands stretch far away." [Shelley's *Poetry and Prose*, 1977] One could argue whether this is about what was used to build Joseph Adams's library or Joseph Adams himself and the environment he lives in. That is, the concrete chunks from the freeway entrance used to build his library give us the hint that some kind of disaster has happened, perhaps earthquake/tsunami, meteor strike or war.

What lingers, however, in spite of all this is the word *loneliness*. And the fog!

About 2½ pages into chapter one we find: "Outside, the fog had managed a complete success; he saw, with one brief sideways glance, that it inhabited the world right up to the window of his library." [*The Penultimate Truth*, pg. 3] It would seem that Phil has almost personified this fog. But, is he getting at the fog of war? The fog of unknowing? The fog of depression? Or, indeed, the fog of loneliness? Advection fog, as described above, looks like this in the San Francisco area:



As for loneliness, there is no DSM-V category number for it. Subjective social isolation, which is what psychologists who study it term loneliness, is not synonymous with being alone nor necessarily with seclusion, remoteness, and solitude. This is in part why loneliness is considered a subjective psychological experience and makes it difficult to define and sometimes be confused with self-esteem, depression, and alienation. For Joseph Adams, the strug-

gling speech writer, his inner fog/loneliness is an emotional state in which he might feel alienated and/or disconnected from other people, or perhaps a strong feeling of emptiness. And he does so in spite of having a job, human visitors, and a group of "leadies" (robots) taking care of his demesne and manor.

To support this one could cite what Philip K. Dick (some-time speech writer) said in a June/July 1977 interview with D. Scott Apel and Kevin Briggs:

"It takes a lot of personal fortitude to continue in the face of loneliness and low income; to know that day after day you were going to be alone at your typewriter with just your thoughts." ["An Interview with Philip K. Dick, part two," *The Philip K. Dick Society Newsletter*, pkds 6, April, 1985, pg. 14]

But there is another concept of loneliness that, I think, is more relevant to what Joseph Adams experiences in the first paragraph and what we learn about him and his environment from the rest of *The Penultimate Truth*, all 191 pages of it. In his 1972 speech, "The Android and the Human," Phil says: "The totalitarian society envisioned by George Orwell in 1984 should have arrived by now. The electronic gadgets are here. The government is here, ready to do what Orwell anticipated." [*The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick*, pg. 192] Then, in an early 2-10-58 letter to fellow writer James Blish, Phil writes about "...the nature of totalitarianism, this facing toward the center. The hub. You see, I wanted to show [in *The Man Who Japed*] that as dreadful as commercial bourgeoisie US culture could be, there are things that pose a greater danger, go further, in destroying the integrity of the individual." [*The Selected Letters of Philip K. Dick*, 1938-1971, pg. 41]

Philip K. Dick was also familiar with Hannah Arendt's (1906-1975) influential study *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). He mentions it more than once in several letters and essays. In her 1953 essay, "Ideology and Terror," Arendt makes this very incisive characterization of totalitarianism: "...totalitarian domination as a form of government is new in that it is not content with this isolation and destroys private life as well. It bases itself on loneliness, on the experience of not belonging to the world at all, which is among the most radical and desperate experiences of man."

This seems a very apt late night thought to describe Joseph Adams's situation, condition, and inner fog/loneliness in *The Penultimate Truth*. [FCB, © May 2017]

Are we there yet? Issues raised in The Penultimate Truth

By Nick Buchanan © 2017

One thing frightened Phil perhaps more than anything else - and he wrote about it and spoke about it in interviews again and again - *fascism and the rise of the police state*.

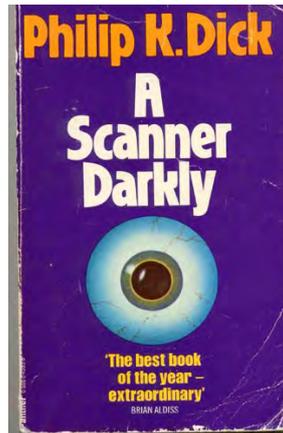
For example, most folks would say that **A Scanner Darkly** is about drugs and drug culture, but I think that's a mistake. To me it's largely about *how the state responds to drugs and drug takers*. It rounds them up and imprisons them - as it did Jews and Gypsies in Nazi Germany. The book's real subject is totalitarianism and the fascist state; the subjugation of the individual to the authorities. This concern of Dick's runs throughout many of his stories and is echoed repeatedly in his interviews: It is about the state versus the individual.

In the U.S. and here in the UK we are closer than most folks realize to totalitarianism. In the U.S. people are being arrested for collecting rainwater, growing their own vegetables, pets are shot routinely, heads are cracked whenever people protest against gross pollution of the environment. Corporate interests are protected whilst the planet and the people suffer. The UK is now *the most heavily monitored nation on earth* with CCTV cameras directed on the public 24/7. Think about that for a moment - I'm not talking about North Korea, I'm talking about the land of Shakespeare, The Beatles and Brunel. My homeland.

I have long been a fan of Dick's **The Penultimate Truth** and think it a shame that it has largely been overlooked. In discussing the many real issues raised by the book, I may lose folks along the way. You need a strong stomach if you are going to put your flag down and pick up a mirror instead. I will say without hyperbole or any hint of arrogance that this article will probably cause cognitive dissonance in many. Western society is complicated and knee-jerk, gung-ho attitudes are a poor response to the complexities which surround us. We need a higher level of understanding and an ability to sift the truth from the media distortions, the

party political games and adversarial posturing. I don't claim to have arrived at such a level, but I am sincerely in pursuit of a greater understanding.

In **The Penultimate Truth** the population live underground manufacturing robot soldiers (*leadies*). They believe that a war is raging on the surface and they get updates as to its progress by faked footage from simulacrum President Yancy. They are convinced that it's best to stay below ground. When one of the engineers requires a pancreas, Nick St. James (the worker's President) is forced to go to the surface, where he discovers that they have all been lied to - *the war had ended thirteen years ago!*



This is a very fitting metaphor for western 'civilization' today; the masses are kept in the dark, whilst perpetual *threats* of war and terrorism rage. The mass media serve the few and control the reactions and opinions of the many. Every day, lies are offered as truth. Foreign

countries are invaded and bombed - and the populace are told this is to help them - to liberate them from their oppressors - to bring *freedom* to them. Meanwhile the very few at the top (*above ground*) enjoy a very high standard of living. The populace are convinced (by news-casts) that their enemies are very close, and they willingly give up their freedom for more security. But as Benjamin Franklin once said: "If you give up your freedom for security, you will end up with neither."

ANTI TERRORISM

In the UK, vast police resources go towards the anti-terrorism squad. High-visibility campaigns remind the populace daily to be alert and aware. The news tells us about people being 'radicalized' - literally *turned into terrorists*.

We are told to be on the lookout.

In 2016, as a teacher in the UK, I had to attend a seminar given by the police about 'radicalization' and the (ever near) terrorist threat. If I refused to attend then I would not be allowed to teach.

The governing body for standards in education - OFSTED - would now be checking that teachers have been active in stamping out radicalization. All Teachers would have to provide paperwork which proves their commitment to the anti-terrorist cause.

"If you give up your freedom for security, you will end up with neither."

The Police Sergeant delivering the presentation told us what to look out for... *"anyone who opposes Fracking, or who fights for animal welfare, anyone with an alternative lifestyle, anyone who doesn't fit in... such people should be treated as 'potential Terrorists' (pre-crime perhaps?).* I asked him where he got that list from and he said that MI5 had instructed him that these types of people form the groups where terrorists will most likely come from. He spoke chillingly without irony or understanding. He was simply part of a terrible process - an unwitting pawn in their game.

Unbeknown to him, his message was that *anyone who challenges the destruction of the environment, cares for animals or who believes we could live better lives is to be regarded with suspicion and fear - and reported to the authorities.* Of course what this means in fact is that we should regard with suspicion anyone who opposes the government or corporate greed. After the Sergeant's talk we had to watch a short film about terrorism - it told the story of a fictitious muslim (*you couldn't make this up*) who became 'radicalized' and ended up bombing people. The narration was provided by (*get ready...*) Tony Blair (who lied about weapons of mass destruction and caused the deaths of thousands). On the way out we were offered supermarket trolley tally's as keyrings and other paraphernalia - they all contained slogans about reporting others - and all had an Anti-Terrorist Hotline phone number we could call. Make no mistake, these are dark days.

For the record, you have more chance of dying from a bee sting than from a terrorist strike. Think about that for a moment... yet how many times a week are you encouraged to fear the potential 'Terrorist Threat?'

So who does this disproportionate media coverage serve? It is not hard to see that Corporations will be free to ravage the environment for profit, populations will almost beg for the police to be militarized (to protect us) and ordinary decent folk will support vicious overseas invasions and land-grabs (believing them to be something to do with democracy - and protecting 'our way of life'). A

frightened populace is very compliant.

At the beginning of Luis Bunuel's masterpiece *'The Phantom of Liberty,'* a group of chained Spanish rebels (about to be shot by firing squad) chant *'Long Live Chains!'* I think this too is a very apt metaphor. The real tragedy is that, for the most part, society has become its own jailer and people have taken to *locking themselves up.* They are shown how, every day by the mainstream media. They learn their lines and repeat them, feeling informed and aware. They pass on the fear-virus and infect others.



TELECASTS & THE MEDIA

In **The Penultimate Truth**, the general population are compelled to watch political broadcasts - they have a duty to be up to date with the above-ground conflicts and they have to fulfil their quotas to assist the war effort. The public are lied to and *the masses are easily controlled.* Today in the west, the situation is very similar. I am sure the far east has its equivalents, but being a 'westerner' I speak about what I know and experience.

If I say that the BBC, CNN, SKY TV, The New York Times, - indeed most of our news outlets *deliberately* lie to us *every day* about very serious issues, then some folks will marginalize me as some kind of conspiracy

nut. The media have trained the populace to attack anyone who questions the official narrative. Most folks are conditioned to sneer and jeer at those who simply want

"...attack anyone who questions the official narrative"

the truth. If you wish to think critically and want to simply check the evidence, then you will be called a 'Tin-foil hat wearer.' or similar. The incarcerated always resent an escapee. So be it.

I will give examples mainly from the BBC because

they are whom I am most familiar with, but I could easily have chosen CNN, Fox News or The New York Times. They operate in collusion and from the same script - sometimes literally.

INVASION OF LIBYA

When the UK public were a little queasy about us invading Libya (with the US) in 2011, the BBC broadcast a 'live feed'

from Tripoli. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R_-lzI810_0 It showed Libyans in 'Green Square,' celebrating the west's military intervention. They were smiling and waving their national flag...except the flags weren't Libyan flags, they were the flags of India. It wasn't a *live feed* from Tripoli (as the BBC had told us) it was older footage *from India*. It was in fact film of Indians celebrating Independence day. Those who know about broadcasting will understand that old footage of Indians *could never* be mistaken for a 'live feed' from Tripoli. The public were being *deliberately* misled on a massive scale. Many American and British citizens are so duped by these stage-managed events that they actually believe that military interventions are *welcomed* by the countries they invade. As Orwell predicted, War is being sold as Peace and Slavery as Freedom.

The Penultimate Truth is not just about totalitarianism, it is about *how totalitarianism is manged and maintained*. The role of the Media is central. When the contollers of the Media are few and they work closely with the powerful, wealthy minority of this world, then Fascism and its brutal values flourish easily. The individual is the enemy of the state and Collectivism is sold as a utopia instead of the dystopian mincing machine it actually is.

SYRIAN HOSPITAL

In August 2013 the BBC 'just happened' to be filming in a Syrian hospital when 'victims' from an incediery bomb attack on a playground started pouring in. The reporter (wearing a hospital facemask) said "*There's absolute carnage here...it must be some kind of Napalm...*" This faked event with very poor actors was designed to soften opposition to the west attacking Syria. It didn't work. Many people saw it for what it was. The following month, the BBC used the *exact same footage and script*, but where the reporter (with the facemask) said 'napalm' they now overdubbed the words '*chemical weapons*.' Obviously they thought that chemical weapons would prove more emotive and gain the reaction they sought - support for unjust invasions. They also thought no one would notice - but thousands did. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p54hHhLjRk>

BUILDING 7 AND THE BBC

Imagine if on 9/11, I reported a WTC building collapsing *over 20 minutes before it actually did collapse* - a building which was not hit by any planes, *and which did not look likely to collapse*. Do you think the authorities might like to speak with me? Of course they would. My foreknowledge could imply complicity, collusion or direct responsibility. On 9/11 the BBC reported the collapse of building 7 (the Salomon Brothers Building) *over 20 minutes before it actually collapsed*. If you watch the footage, the reporter live in New York (after reporting the building's collapse) is

standing with the building intact behind her (unbeknown to her). As the clock ticks and the building's actual collapse becomes imminent, the BBC (realizing its error) had a 'technical fault' and lost the live feed.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=677i43QfYpQ>

THE WAR ON TERROR

In **The Penultimate Truth**, the populace below ground are shown footage of buildings being destroyed... libraries, churches, schools etc. They are told the surface is uninhabitable due to strange virus strains (The Bag Plague, Stink of Shrink and Raw Claw Paw). The telecast screen became their only source of information:

"This was their window - their sole window - on the above world, and they took rather seriously what was received on its giant surface." (p.20)

When there is a perpetual threat of war, it is much easier to control the population. This is why we have the false *War on Terror*. It is not meant to be won. It never was. It's a device for social manipulation. The threat is a fiction designed to give license to land-grabs and invasions. It is designed to induce fear and nurture compliance. Nowhere was this more evident than on 9/11.

9/11

The Mainstream Media is now so powerful that it can persuade otherwise scientific people to believe that when a 737 hits a 147 steel-girdered building, the building simply turns to dust and most of the girders and structure evaporate - into the tiniest of particles. Oddly enough this too was prefigured by Phil in **The Penultimate Truth**:

"It showed somewhat slowed down, the solidity of the structure as it demolecularized. Objects have been carried back to their dust origin." (p.21)

Most people also accept *without question* that an aluminium plane will, on impact, slice through a building, cut through steel and leave a plane-shaped hole.



Wings are very flimsy. I have stood on the wing of a Boeing Stearman to help refuel it. I had to stand very close

to the fuselage or I would have been in danger of breaking / bending the wing. Think about how thin and delicate those aluminium wing *tips* are - yet somehow they can cut through 4" steel girders?! They can only do this when the Broadcasts tell you they can - *and you believe it* - otherwise normal physics applies.



People often say that we live in a Philip K. Dick world but at the moment I think it more accurate to say we live in a Philip K. Dick's **Penultimate Truth** world. The vast majority of the populace are conditioned and respond accordingly.

DONALD TRUMP

Did you feel really angry when Trump was elected? Have you felt dejected since about the whole situation? Did you feel for a while as if life were not worth living? Did you feel like protesting about him and his policies? If so, I would suggest that that's *exactly how you have been told to feel*. Since he was elected, the Media Machine has gone into overdrive stirring up fear, anxiety and Trump hatred. The masses are left feeling helpless and afraid. Which is exactly what they want.

I'm not pro Trump. He's an appalling example of a human being - unfit to govern or lead. What bothers me is that otherwise decent sections of the population have become unwitting collaborators in the spread of fear. Trump is the new bogey-man and we should all feel awful. The media plays Simon Says 'Everyone feel angry' and good people comply.

Now concerning those who want to protest and feel angry about Trump - what were their feelings about Obama, George Dubya, Clinton, George Bush Senior, or Reagan?

Were their feelings about these as strong? Why ever not?

'But Obama was good,' you cry. Seriously? He was much better educated and certainly very articulate. An altogether classier proposition. But not what I would call a wise man, nor a good man. He was just another pawn in their game. He kept Guantanamo (the USA's off-shore Torture House) running - after promising he'd close it. He bombed seven countries, killed American Citizens without due process, legalized mass surveillance and racked up nearly \$10 Trillion in debt. He sanctioned the use of drones and the invasion of Syria. He approved more arms sales *than any US administration since World War II*. He has prosecuted more whistleblowers than all past administrations combined. And deported more immigrants - 2.5 million - than any other president. He authorised the creation of a vast drone programme (which renowned scholar and commentator Noam Chomsky described as "the most extreme terrorist campaign of modern times").

I know that's not the Media's view of Obama. After all, they TV told you he was the next Martin Luther King Jr. Would Martin have behaved this way - or excused such 'behaviour?' Do people really think Obama's like MLK? If they do, then I think their idealism is blind.

If you were told that North Korea was routinely running an off-shore Torture House *you would probably think that might prove reasonable grounds to invade their country*. If you compromise your ethics by trying to legitimize appalling atrocities (just because they're on your own soil) you bring your soul into darkness.

This is not about party politics - it's about *wake up and smell the coffee*. It is not about my candidate button versus yours - it's about *the whole game* of buttons.

EMPIRE

And what of George Dubya who was President not long ago? Do you really think that an imbecile such as he would have been left running the most powerful country in the world? Of course not. *So who is running the show?* The answer is, the folks who have always run the show - *the Empire*. The hidden hand; the shadow controllers who rig elections and make decisions behind closed doors about the World's future and its resources.

They operate through groups like the Bilderberg Group. They are as anti-democracy as the Freemasons. Their lineage dates back centuries. They have always been in control. They keep the masses busy waving a blue flag, then a red. If they can, they will get us to fight one another,

**“unwitting collaborators
in the spread of fear”**

setting young against old, indiginous against immigrant, left against right. It's all good for them. They create wars, fund both sides and profit from the deaths and misery of thousands. As Phil said many times:

“Millions of compliant people thinking and feeling exactly what the mainstream media tells them to think and feel”

“The Empire never ended.”

So, I don't think the world is a more dangerous place with Trump. I know that will really jar with some folks because they have been told *relentlessly* by the Mass Media that they should be full of fear about Trump - as if Obama was just fine - as if we were safer with George Dubya, etc. Most people's feelings are being played like a fiddle. What makes the world a much more dangerous place is not Trump, *it's millions of compliant people thinking and feeling exactly what the mainstream media tells them to think and feel.* Simon says.

We live in complex times. There is much to sift.

I am not arguing the merits of different candidates here (I happen to think that the last five Presidents *including Trump* have been dreadful human beings). *I am arguing for the public to wake up and notice how much their responses, reactions and feelings are being orchestrated.* One of the things that makes this hard to communicate is that (without seeing the bigger picture) folks can simply cling to the rightness of their cause - Trump is vile. And if they think no further, they can be right but their perceptions will remain partial and small.

Four of Trump's predecessors invaded middle-eastern countries under false pretenses and Obama and Dubya kept Guantanamo open and busy. And if you think Hilary would have been a good choice then God help us all!

This is not about candidates, it is about the Media agenda. If your outrage is only for media-suggested targets which are pushed, then you will become a participant in thier game. In truth *they are all unfit to lead anyone or manage*

anything. They are deeply under-developed self-serving individuals who all display varying degrees of Narcissim and Psychopathy.

If you are willing to accept that a hidden hand controls the actual politics, then why would you be *suddenly* and disproportionately distressed at Trump's election? They told you to fear (and gave you a daily dose). Did they succeed?

GUN CONTROL

Earlier, I mentioned Martin Luther King Jnr. He was a man who could make a real difference (why do you think they shot him?) He was a man of peace who had the strength to love those who hated – the cruel, the unjust, the mean, the nasty. He did it with non-violence. To me he remains a beacon of hope. A shining example.

So, it will come as a shock to you to learn that *at the moment*, I am pro gun as far as the U.S. is concerned. *What? Am I stupid? Some kind of nut? Have I lost my hippie ideals?* Not at all. Listen to my reasons.

The U.S. is now so close to a police state that I believe that *one of the few things which prevents it from becoming so, is (ironically) an armed populace.* If ordinary folks are armed, then the final move towards a fascist state is

problematic for any centralized power. They need first to take your guns away. Of course, this is why there have been so many bad gun stories in the mainstream media – massacres, school shootings, etc. The response invoked in the general populace is predictable *“I just saw the news. Jeez we gotta push for stronger gun laws. We gotta ban guns altogether. Did you see the photos of those little*

children? The children! The poor little children! They're all dead now. Dead!” ...All dead? Spare a thought for Noah Pozner he died in the Sandy Hook Massacre in 2012, *and then had the gross misfortune to die again* in a school Massacre in 2014 Peshwar, Pakistan. His death was widely reported by global news media at both events. His picture featured prominently - *twice!*



There is no doubt that *many* of these alleged shootings are *media events* and nothing more than that. If you research them, you will find actors (like Robbie Parker) who were used as eyewitnesses *at more than one of these events*; you will see alleged parents of ‘deceased’ victims laughing and smiling before giving sombre, bereaved statements for the cameras. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1EArjNnrpbk>

The *same guy* was used at the real tragedy of 911 as a ‘passerby eyewitness’ - he said (tearfully) ‘...it’s gotta be a terrorist attack, I can’t tell you any more than that... I saw the plane hit the building.’ Of course, this level of editorializing ensures that News watchers are safely shepherded to the desired conclusion. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QixDjrLlzHU>

Then this same actor (Robbie Parker) moved to Oregon and by sheer coincidence there were more school shootings there. It is an old process once identified by the philosopher Hegel – *Problem/ Reaction / Solution* which has three stages:

1. **Create a problem** (or amplify an existing one)
2. **Manage the public’s reaction** (often using emotive images or language)
3. **Provide the solution** you wished to implement all along (e.g. invasion / legislation / security)

Opposition is now controlled by the Mass Media – they terrorize the public and tell them where to direct their energies. Obama drone-bombed Syria and kept Guantanamo torturing people but no one marched (mass media were silent). Trump threatened to ban Muslims from entering the country and the media stimulated thousands to march – they marched. When protest is orchestrated by the Mass Media (which is owned by Empire) we are in serious trouble.

‘NORMALITY’

Empire is about the virtual enslavement of the masses. It is about everyone thinking the same so that no one thinks very much. It is about the creation and maintenance of the non-human human-being. Empire achieves this large-

ly through the education system and through the TV. As the great Philosopher, Neil Kramer once said *“Normality is the religion of Empire.”* The individual is the enemy of the state.



Noah Pozner

It is no longer about left-wing liberalism or right-wing conservatism, the real divide is between the processed human-being and the authentic human-being.

Processed human-beings have been conditioned to become copies. Their tastes and opinions are not their own. Oscar Wilde said *“Everyone is born an original, but most die a copy.”* This is the plight of the processed human-being - and the processing starts very early. Conformity and obedience are rewarded and individuality and creative expression are smothered.

The processed human-being believes that life is about getting good exam grades, gaining a good place at a respected university, getting a good job, finding the right partner (who has also been processed) settling down and buying a good home, following the news, taking out the right insurance policies, and then having their own children who will also strive to get good grades.... etc.



The non-processed human-being regards all this morbid good sense with increasing suspicion, knowing that life is much more than this. It’s about the laughter of children, the

squeak of fresh fallen snow underfoot, poppadom-crisp leaves in autumn, sunlight underwater, etc. It’s about the beauty of nature and the wonder of consciousness - it’s about loving one another and the sheer delight of being alive.

If we are not careful, we will live in News-Narratives set up by the Mainstream Media. We will subscribe to an inner world view which has been planned, plotted and prescribed by Empire. As Philip K. Dick once described it:

“An approved Idios Kosmos manufactured synthetically by the state.” (PKD to Malcolm Edwards 1975).

Processed Human-beings are now in the majority and

they are also the most susceptible to Mainstream Media's influence. They are dangerously compliant, often highly educated, but stupid.

You will recall that in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, those who take Chew-Z find that even when they think their 'trip' is over - they are in fact just stuck in another trip - *another reality constructed by Eldritch*. These are like the nested realities that the TV broadcasts present. People who recognize Trump as despicable believe they are free from Chew-Z's influence - only to find in fact that their hatred of Trump and their high levels of anxiety are simply another reality *constructed for them* by Empire / Eldritch.

BREXIT

You will have heard about the vote that was taken last year in the UK regarding whether we should leave or remain in the European Union. You will no doubt be aware of the disaster that followed, will have heard that right wing nationalists got their way and that the UK are currently in the process of leaving the EU. You will know (from the media) that this exit from the Union of Europe will be hugely detrimental for the UK and marks a new, cold climate of brutal politics...

All of this is simply nonsense. It isn't true. Once again it is the Mass Media *telling you what to feel* when it should simply be *giving you the facts*. I voted to leave the EU. Staunch left wing politicians like Dennis Skinner and Arthur Scargill voted to leave. One of my favourite politicians - Tony Benn, campaigned all his life for us to leave the EU, believing it to be (as I do) deeply undemocratic. Sadly he died before this referendum. Please research these politicians - they have long fought for humanitarian causes and issues of fairness and equality.

The EU, working with the IMF and the World Bank, brought Greece to its knees by calling in debts (which could be called in on any member state) and condemned Greece to the harshest austerity measures of any civilized society. Their subsequent poverty is appalling. The EU is a quango - with the power to overturn decisions which have been arrived at by democratic process. The function of the EU is not dissimilar to that of the Bilderberg Group, and just as sinister. Their interventions and overruling of the people of Italy also caused me concern.

I also have issues also with the idea of the homogenization of member states. Globalist Collectivism treats differences as inequalities, but to me the UK, France, Germa-

ny etc. should all be different and *express and celebrate those differences*.



The media created a huge frenzied anxiety about how awful leaving the EU would be. The TV here on a daily basis ran scare-mongering stories back to back. You could visibly see the populace getting more anxious and depressed. At bus stops and in cafe's people talked only of Brexit. Nearly all looked devastated and helpless. It reached such a pitch that some extended family members told me that *I personally had destroyed their child's*

future by voting to leave - they said this in front of their eight year old - who now looked at me as if I was some kind of monster.

I mention this because it illustrates the *extent* of media control. *Otherwise sane people can be made to behave very badly* when their thoughts and feelings are controlled by Mass Media. Few have the stomach to think and behave counter to the massive groundswell of opinion as presented by the TV and the Press. It is far easier to simply go along with their narrative. Most will do as Simon Says. But our future might depend on us not accepting those populist media narratives.

THE ANTIDOTE

I am aware that this piece could leave folks in a depressed state of mind. That is not my intent. Indeed I believe that if I can encourage *even one person* to stop allowing their anxiety levels to be revved-up by the Mass Media regarding Trump, Brexit, and whatever else comes along, it will be worth it.

I invite folks to reflect on these issues. I would rather bring the plaster than rub the sore.

I do know that Empire and Empire values can be defeated. It starts with how we each feel inside - and as long as we are kept afraid, we cannot experience or give love. I know that science proves (by repeatable experiment) that our *consciousness* and particularly our *intent* affects things around us - not just living things, but non-living things. If that sounds hippy or new agey, I can assure you it isn't, it is hard science (research the work of Dean Radin, Anthony Peake, Tom Campbell, Lynne McTaggart or read *The Secret Life of Plants* by Cleve Backster). I could suggest much more, but space does not allow. Your thoughts and feelings are far too influential to allow them to be hijacked by the state. You don't end where your skin ends, and as Phil says:

Eldritch's TV by Nick Buchanan

and: “Matter is plastic in the face of mind.” (VALIS, p.39),

“The merest presence of life, even the smallest possible quantity of volition, desire and intent was enough to reverse the process by which the eternal landscape of hell made itself known.” (Lies Inc.)

Here are some strategies which directly oppose Empire, which counteract the relentless fear-mongering, and which actually help to undermine Empire:

- Refuse to fear. Being immobilized with fear makes you good for nothing. There is nothing constructive you can do in a state of high anxiety. Relax and breathe.
- Drop the idea that being afraid shows how much you truly understand the gravitas of the situation.
- Stop watching TV News. Unless you want to be duped and lied to. If you need to be informed, you won't get it from TV.
- Find alternative (reliable) sources of information (and still regard these critically).
- Be kind to someone today - get someone's groceries, give someone a lift, thank someone, help someone. It *always* makes a difference.
- Create something - write, paint, draw, build, make, design something. Express your humanity.
- Think Global but act local. You can't solve the whole world's problems - and you certainly can't solve them at once - but you can help those you meet each day.
- Be the change you wish to see (Gandhi)
- Question everything you see and hear - especially from Mainstream (Empire) sources.
- Dignify every interaction with a little humanity - be helpful and understanding. Whatever you do, do it courteously, with honour and excellence.
- If you are exposed to TV News or Newspaper Headline - ask yourself *what is it that I am being told to feel?* Then choose **not** to feel that.
- Make a big effort to stop spreading the fear-virus and playing 'ain't it awful' - instead share what you like about this world, others, your life, nature, your passions etc. I don't mean this in an annoying Pollyanna type of way. There are serious issues which need facing, but the revved-up fear-ridden newscasts can cause people to forget this other good stuff - human stuff. I'm not inviting you to put icing on a turd, I'm just suggesting we all eat some nutritious food now and then.

“The movement of the cosmos and of all living material turns out not to arise from what comes from outside the cosmos but from what is within, which moves outward: from the soul, from the breath of life or from another incorporeal being. For a body does not move a body that has no soul, nor in general any body even if it has no soul.”

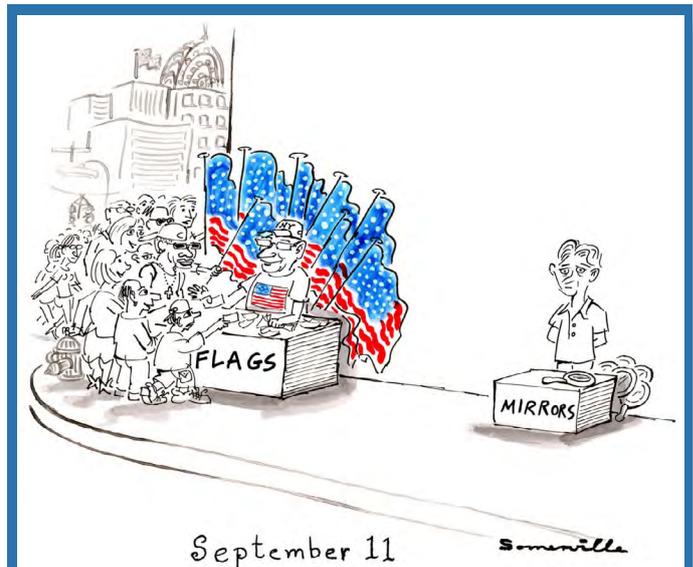
- *The Way of Hermes: Corpus Hermeticum: Book 2. 8.*

Throughout his life, Phil had the courage to question the official version of things. I admire that. I shall leave the final words to him:

“When a tyrannical state so manages the news and so manipulates the ideas and thoughts of its citizens, shutting out facts from their purview entirely, that together they collectively share a sort of ersatz *koinos kosmos* which is nothing more than the *Approved Idios Kosmos* manufactured synthetically by the state. It could fail to incorporate into it certain vital elements, without which however many people share it and ratify it, it still fails to partake of reality— in the sense that an authentic *koinos kosmos* should. Multiple incorrectness, however frequently ratified, does not create accuracy, does it not?”
 - Philip K. Dick, Letter to Malcolm Edwards, January 29, 1975

Note: This essay is a companion piece to my essay “The Man Who Japed: Humour, Empathy and Subversion.” (PKD Otaku #27)

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Phil Somerville's current fortnightly topical/political cartoons can be received via a direct-to-you online posting under the title, "Line of Thought", available only as a paid private Subscription and not published in any other media. If you wish to enjoy Line of Thought regularly please enquire re details of past cartoons, Subscription rates and payment methods by email to:
phil.somerville@somervillecartoons.com

A Poem in memory of Perry Kinman by Andre Welling

I really like this tender-stoic-sober-wise poem which I read today (the writer died 2006). I translated it into English in remembrance of Perry:

 "Das war mein Tag" by Christian Saalberg

Bin aufgestanden habe gegurgelt
 habe mich rasiert
 Habe im Fenster gesehen wie ein Geschoss vorüberflog
 Das war die Sonne
 Das war mein Leben

Das ich noch einmal sehen kann
 bevor morgen ein Stein
 meinen Namen trägt

"That was my day"
 Got up did gargle
 Shaved myself
 Saw a bullet pass by in the window
 That was the sun
 That was my life
 Which I can see one last time
 before tomorrow a stone
 bears my name



Perry Memories

Lord RC Remembers Perry Kinman

I remember Perry telling me he was born and part-way raised in Death Valley, California. I couldn't imagine living in a place called Death Valley, specially not when he told me it got to 130 F in the summertime! I imagined stark white cow's skulls littering a desert sandscape with vultures circling overhead. No wonder, I thought, he moved to Japan.

We corresponded infrequently by mail in the 90s; he sent me photos of his family and some fantastic Japanese editions of Philip K. Dick, and I sent him copies of FDO. Then the internet came along and before you knew it years of letters and emails had flown by and the occasion arose that Perry and I would meet, along with many other fans, at the 2010 Philip K. Dick Festival in Nederland/Black Hawk, Colorado.

Patti and I went to Denver Airport to pick him up and take him, first, to our home nearby and then up to the mountains for the PKD festival.

Meeting him at the airport was my first adventure with Perry. See, I'm pissed off at airports and the TSA and sometimes its all I can do to keep a scowl off my face (and avoid the hassles). So I'm standing there at the airplane disgorgement point for his flight with a tight smile plastered on my face and waving a sign with large PKD letters on it so Perry would recognize me when he got off the plane. I knew what he looked like, of course, from his photos but for all I knew he expected to encounter a large yellowish-green globule of slime pulsating on the cheap carpet of the DIA esplanade. But I needn't have worried. From the tunnel came a clump of passengers and in the middle of them was Perry: very tall and made even taller with curly brown hair. His glasses looked like they were about to slide off his nose and he wore a lopsided grin. I gave him the wigwag with my sign and a smile and once he'd extricated himself from the other passengers we shook hands and I told him. "Welcome to America, you can't do anything here."

And there, lurking in the background listening was someone I didn't immediately recognize, a short man, somehow familiar looking like I'd seen him on TV, and he said, querulously, "You've got Freedom." I looked at him and scowled, "Yeah, Freedom. Right" and tugged Perry on out of there. It wasn't until later that the nagging memory of who the man was popped into my brain. I was Ray Kelly, the New York City Police Commissioner at the time. I'm glad he got the message of how much I despised his TSA bullshit.

Anyway, we got to our little house in Lafayette and Perry showed me some drawings he'd done. One I remember was of an electric sheep eating something although I forget what, something electrical, I think. It was getting late afternoon when we finally loaded all our gear into our Jeep Cherokee and started for Black Hawk and Roy's 'Last Shot' bar where we were to meet some fans for a drink. It was a two-hour drive, at least, and darkness was coming on.

For some reason, instead of going up to the Last Shot via Nederland we decided to take the short cut through the small mountain town of Wondervu. This town isn't called Wondervu for nothing. In the daytime the view of mountain peaks is spectacular. But at night, of course,

none of this was visible. So we puttered ever higher into the mountains towards Wondervu, but, our Jeep was starting to make strange gurgling noises and the temperature gauge was edging up. When it peaked and steam started pouring from the hood we pulled over, shut off the engine, and popped the hood. It would be

***"To be comfortable
anywhere and
everywhere with anyone,
this is something
Perry had."***

some minutes before the water had cooled enough for me to pour more in from the two plastic milk jugs in the back. So... it was a nice warm night, this being August, and after our eyes had adjusted we could see from our roadside perch circa 9000 feet the stars in all their glory. The Milky Way from horizon to horizon. Perry just sort of took it all in. It was like he expected things around him to be in some fashion weird. Few things happened to him ordinarily. He wasn't perturbed that we were broken down on the side of a scarcely-used mountain highway and running late to meet our friends at the bar. And, in fact, it wasn't a big deal. The car cooled down some, I poured the water in

and we pattered onward. From our map I knew we were close to Wondervu and thought we could get more water there. Which is what happened. The Wondervu Cafe was still open and the girl there lent us a couple of beer pitchers and showed us the sink. It took, I think, eight pitchers, to fill the radiator up. We thanked the girl at the Wondervu Cafe (a good place for a mountain meal) and Patti once more piloted us towards Roy's Last Shot.

At Roy's the place was closed. It was after 11 pm. The PKD fans had gone to their hotels in Black Hawk and Netherland. Our hotel was the Sundance close to Ned and so we drove there and called it a night.

That was my second adventure with Perry. The third one was in San Francisco for the 2012 Philip K. Dick Festival hosted by David Gill at SFSU. This was a busy event, lots going on, all these big Dickheads hanging out. I found myself at one of the speeches sitting next to Perry and listening to Dr. Rickels deliver the strangest speech of the event. Perry nudged me and slid me a piece of paper on which he'd written 'Dr. Strangelove' with an arrow pointing towards Dr. Rickels. Naturally I didn't burst out laughing; decorum must be maintained at these universities, after all. But it prompted me, in turn, to write 'Gregory Gloch', a character in Dick's novel THE UNTELEPORTED MAN, and we sat there giggling.

A little later at another of the talks I was sitting by Greg Lee, publisher of RADIO FREE PKD, and I noticed Perry a few rows ahead of us sitting next to Rudy Rucker. Now, normally, Rudy Rucker is someone you would probably most definitely want to leave alone. You wouldn't just go plonk your ass down next to him like you were good ol-time buddies. I mean, here's this great writer, winner of multiple Philip K. Dick Awards, OG Cyberpunk up there with William Gibson, founder of Transrealism, brainiac scientist and a writer who, like Philip K. Dick, has changed the world. And he's from Kentucky! Just like Hunter S. Thompson! Imagine just sitting down next to Hunter S. Thompson, you might get dosed with some strange back-handed drug delivered by syringe directly to your eyeball! So, you know, sitting next to Rudy Rucker might entail similar dangers although, Rudy, of course, doesn't need any drugs to fry your brain he can do that with just a few words. Imagine! Having your brain fried directly by Rudy Rucker while you're sitting there next to him! I carefully avoided him the whole conference except for the time when, like a true fan, I slobbered all over him and asked for his autograph. But not Perry. He just plonked his ass down and, no doubt, started chatting about the weather. I can only sigh. To be comfortable anywhere and everywhere with anyone, this is something Perry had. He was always at ease, or, if not that, he was always able to put himself out there so that others felt at ease.

He certainly aided me in our next adventure, this time at the 2016 Philip K. Dick Conference in Fullerton, California, hosted by David Sandner at Cal State Fullerton University. When Henri Wintz, Patti and I walked in the main door to register it was like old home week for me, all my friends were there: Laura Entwisle, Ted Hand, David Gill, Frank Hollander and, of course, Perry Kinman. He'd arrived just before us and was dripping with sweat from the heat. He rooted around in his knapsack and pulled out a package which he handed to me. It was a sheet of Japanese stamps depicting birds for my collection. I was much pleased at this and went to give him a thankful hug, forgetting that he was soaking wet. So I got wet too but that's okay, Ganymedean slime molds need all the moisture they can get.

But it was here that my last adventure with Perry occurred. As I entered one of the classrooms to listen to a panel I spotted Perry sitting near the back and joined him there. As the panel neared its close I noticed Jonathan Lethem sitting off to the side, making notes. He was due up next to give his talk about Philip K. Dick fandom. I remembered how I'd wanted to get a photograph of Jonathan's famous UBIK tattoo at the San Francisco festival but had spaced it out. And there he was in the flesh, so to speak (though you never can be sure with these writers, they live at least two lives at the same time: the life of 'reality' and the life of peoples preconceptions). But of course, I wasn't going to approach Jonathan Lethem while he was actually writing, even if only notes. Like I said, its best to leave these great writers alone. God forbid you should interrupt them lest, like the man from Porlock, you cause them to lose their thread and a budding masterpiece collapses. But I wanted to get that photo. I looked at Perry. "Hey, Perry, I whispered, let's go talk to Jonathan Lethem and you ask him if we can get a photo of his UBIK tattoo." I wagged my camera. He grinned okay and off we went to interrupt Jonathan as he composed his next masterpiece. I hovered in the background as Perry made the request. Jonathan looked at him then at me and said, "What, right now?" and started rolling up his sleeve. I shakily focused my camera and had the wit to snap two pix, good thing as only one of them came out which we put online after the conference.

I bumped into Perry a few more times over the weekend, he assured me he would come to our PKD Festival in Fort Morgan, Colorado in March 2017 and we said our farewells. I would not see Perry again although we did email back and forth some after the Fullerton conference. He had his reservations all set for our March festival and I was looking forward to seeing him again. Then in late January I got an early morning email from Patrick Clark: Perry had a heart attack. He was gone. I sensed a shudder go through our fan community. This was a blow that brought us to our knees. Perry was one of our own. I thought of Miyuki

and the boys, of his family in California. What can we do? How can we help? But there's little we can do in the end. We can only honor Perry as one of us: a fan of Philip K. Dick. We held a moment of silence for Perry at Phil and Jane's gravesite in Fort Morgan, our heads bowed while our pink flashlights shone beams of light towards Sirius; a gesture of hope and defiance, of love and loss. Philip K. Dick is gone, Perry Kinman is gone. Soon we, too, will be gone. But we will also remain. The fans of Philip K. Dick will continue on. Farewell, my friend, man of mischievous smiles. Rest in peace. Lord Running Clam

Here's some pix of Perry in happier times:

At the 2010 Philip K. Dick Festival – Nederland, Colorado



With German fan Tommi Brem (courtesy of T. Brem)



Dancing with children in Japan, 2014



Perry's drawing of a scene from EYE IN THE SKY used as the cover of For Dickheads Only #6. 1994

Perry Kinman: a memoir

By Patrick Clark

The first time I heard from Perry Kinman was a handwritten note dated July 24, 1995. I had been referred to him by Dave Hyde about a cyberpunk zine I used to put out called "Interference on the Brain Screen". Perry wanted a copy and had sent me a check for \$10. I was very pleased to get this note primarily because it had come all the way from Japan. I wasn't accustomed to getting requests from the other side of the Pacific. I wrote back to Perry On August 3rd sending a copy of the zine. And I wrote in a note of my own, "Insofar as it was Dave Hyde that recommended my zine, I'm guessing that at least one of your prime interests might be Philip K. Dick. Hoping that is so, I'm including some out-of-the-way PKD stuff." Photocopies of uncollected letters and interviews, I think.

Perry replied on August 28th with a kind letter in which he wrote: "PKD is my prime direction and everything else finds peripheral lodging." From there on we became semi-regular correspondents. In a file of letters and emails I keep from 1995 until 2005, I've been re-visiting my old friend whose death in January of this year devastated me.

Our letters (his typically handwritten; mine typed) touched on a lot of different topics. We both bought homes in this time period and there is some frustrating talk about sewer lines and furnace replacements and property taxes and electrical outages. We both seemed to have a lot of health issues at one time or another. We worried about our respective national economies and, in America, one stupid war after another. Perry talked a good deal about life in Japan and how surreal it could be. He wrote once, "The train shimmers and glows and appears in the station. I push on with the waiting crowd thinking about the man back in the bookstore, sitting in a dark corner holding an English book upside down talking aloud in Japanese."

Mostly, though, we talked about Philip K. Dick. Perry was a tremendous enthusiast of all things philidickian. Of course I wanted to know why and he replied,

Yes, Phil is.... I don't know. Something draws me. I thrive on his intensity to know. From writing stories to every moment and action around him. Including every aspect of existence to formulate the answers that keep changing. A life lived at 150%. 250, 350, ... 7959%. I respect the person who tried.

And so our correspondence ranged far and wide over the novels and short stories and interviews and letters and collections that in the 90s and early 2000s became a deluge. I sent Perry copies of everything I came across and he supplied me with a seemingly inexhaustible collection of rarities. He sent me a photocopy of "Time Pawn" for instance. And I scoured used bookstores for copies of ancient pulp magazines wherein some PKS story first appeared. He was a fanatical collector. He had a copy of "The Kneeling Legless Man", the early draft of *Deus Irae*, and we pondered that book's evolution. We tried and tried to make sense of how "The Name of the Game is Death" became *A Maze of Death* -- if indeed it actually did. Why were some of the letters in *The Selected Letters of Philip K. Dick* different from the actual letters which Perry possessed? Why were Philip K. Dick-inspired movies so terrible?

Perry's knowledge of Phil's texts was phenomenal. He was my go-to guy of proper citations and he always, always knew. And he had a deep empathy for Phil and his scattered and sometimes shattered life. He wrote the following

1967-68 was a bad time for Phil. Paul Williams thinks that the two outlines ["The Name of the Game" and "Joe Protagoras"] may represent Phil's total output for 1967. The fact that he seems (to me) to be recycling scraps of ideas from as early as 1963 into his outlines indicates the writer's block is well in-place. And, of course, he's still a hot commodity after HIGH CASTLE so Doubleday keeps nagging him for manuscripts and Meredith is pitching all these deals at him.

Yes, '62 starts the stampede. Success with CASTLE is the catalyst that gets Phil burning, churning out all those stories and no doubt really gets him hooked on amphetamines as he does. After BUILD, MARTIAN, DR.B, TITAN, SIMULACRA, WAIT, and CLANS he starts to crack with CRACK and turns to writing outlines to help himself. Or outlines to buy time.

Fortunately he slips STIGMATA in under the wire. I'm wondering now if STIGMATA isn't Phil's own personal living nightmare. Closer to reality than we know. Outlines include ZAP, TRUTH, DEUS, and I'll throw in UNTELEPORTED for being written in two drawn out parts. And also GANYMEDE as collaboration is another word for 'Help Me!' in Phil's case this time. DEUS evolves into collaboration too.

"Perry's knowledge of Phil's texts was phenomenal"

Phil catches a little of his wind in '66 with output of COUN-
 TERCLOCK (ok, late '65), ANDROIDS, NICK, and UBIK.
 Lucky for us as well as him. I suppose the new marriage and home
 helped. But sadly, not for long. Thus began the long drawn out
 saga of MAZE and FROLIX. Phil enters more deeply the maze of
 drugs. POT-HEALER is a recycled NICK with psychedelic modifica-
 tion. '67, '68, '69 and finally '70. It's amazing he came out with
 FLOW in all this. His wife flees him. All work on DEUS which has
 returned to him is just pilfering of his older stories. The drugs, the
 break-in. Finally it's Phil himself who flees to Vancouver, never to
 return. Man, what a segment of a life!

In addition to PKF scholarship, Perry would send me little bits of
 PKD-inspired fiction.

THE 50-MINUTE HOUR NEWS RE-
 PORT

"-- Jim, Jack, Joe, whatever." The infamous newsc clown giggled un-
 controllably. Even his own jokes set him off sometimes. "An so I
 say's 'When else would the Blue Cephalopod Man sporificate.
 Not back on Titan. No way!' An the vague blur just stood there,
 scratching his --" A loud bell clanged suddenly. Lights flashed.
 The newsc clown jumped sending his famous flaming fur flying. His
 eyes wide. He grabbed the 'pape that had just shot out of a slot
 and unrolled it. "Uh-oh! News!" He adjusted his wig on halfway.
 "This just in. There was a massive 80,000 flapple piledown on the
 LA-Luna route. Debris flying in all directions. A sales robot got into
 a guidebeam router and shorted it out. In the 8 seconds it took to
 get a new one online, mayhem ruled." The newsc clown stopped
 reading and scowled. A few seconds began to divide like
 cells. The newsc clown looked up. "How many times do I
 have to say this? Robots need to be encoded with eth-

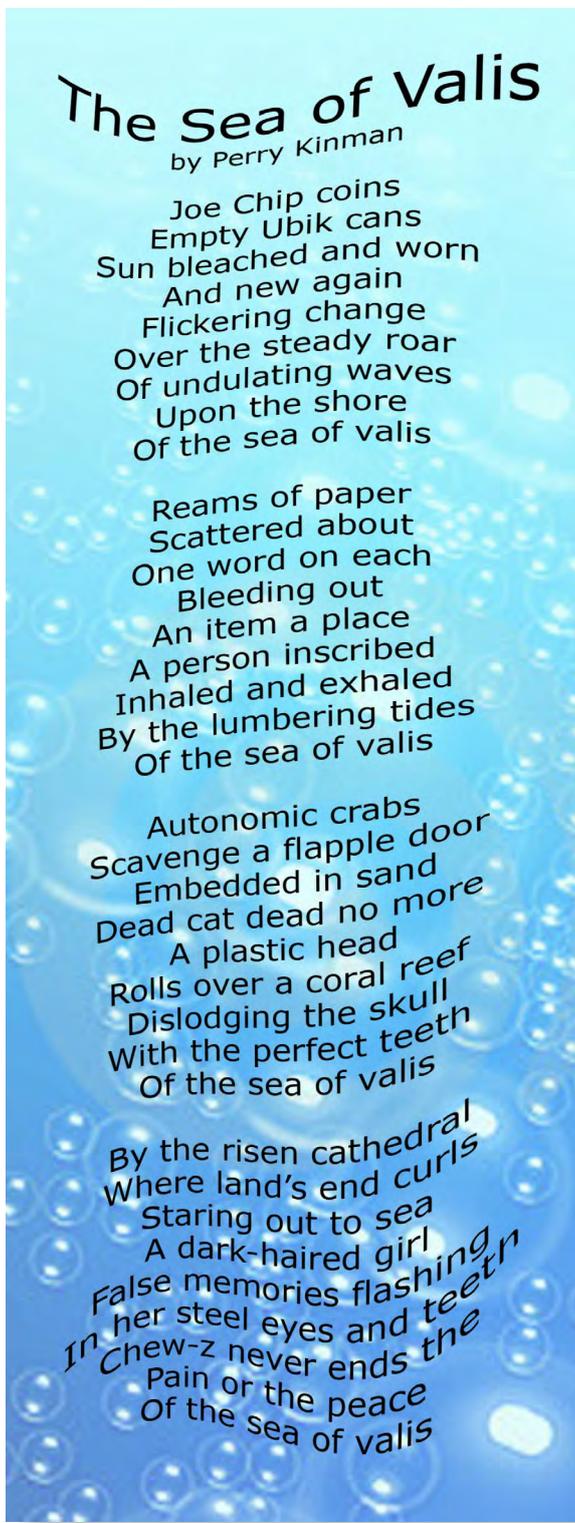
ics. They can change their own fuzzy logic to suit their
 aims anytime. Circumvent laws at the drop of a skin."
 The mood. The air. The newsc clown had changed himself.

From Mr. Smiley into Mr. Serious. The newsc clown rattled the 'pape
 menacingly at the camera. "Look at this," he spat out. "This is what
 happens! How many Sim's and Androids and Nexus' and Nanny's
 and constructs have to die before we do something about it?
 Huh?!" The newsc clown stared hard into the camera eye. Un-
 blinking. "Oh, yeah. Humans too. Even them, too."

And once, unexpectedly, some poetry (*see centre*).

My file of Perry Kinman correspondence ends in 2005 for
 some reason. I think by then we mostly communicated by email
 and I didn't save hard copies. We certainly continued to write
 to each other, much as we had done before. Then, in 2010, we
 finally met. It was the first Philip K. Dick Conference in Nederland,
 Colorado, hosted by, of course, our mutual friend Dave Hyde. I
 pulled into town in my rental car and found a group of folks sitting
 at a picnic table and among them was this very tall, gangly guy: Perry
 Kinman. I had no idea what he looked like even after five years
 of writing and emailing back and forth. He turned out to be what
 I expected: just a wonderful person, full of enthusiasm and inter-
 ested in everything. You could tell he was thrilled to be with his
 fellow PKD people at last. We had the best time.

I saw Perry again in 2012, this time in Japan. My wife Esther
 and I flew there to visit her old high school friend who was now
 living in Tottori. We flew into Osaka and Perry arranged to meet us
 there and show us the city. There he was, walking into the hotel,
 taller by a foot than anyone else. And show us the city, he did.
 Instead of museums and tourist destina-



tion, he took us down alleys and backways to see a serene Buddha covered with bright green moss in a tiny park, a Shinto shrine in the basement of a hotel, the Umeda Sky Building right out of Blade Runner, the neon-soaked riot of the Shinsaibashi-suji arcade. We hopped a light rail and circled the city, hopping off to explore markets and side streets. Perry loved Osaka. He said it was his city and that he intended to be buried there someday....

This is my favorite picture of Perry.

That pancake-looking thing cooking on the grill is oko-

nomiyaki, an Osaka specialty. You can find it all over Japan but, of course, only in Osaka could you find the best. To find this particular place, Perry got into a conversation with our white-gloved taxi driver. They spoke for a long time in Japanese and then the taxi took us to a sort of run-down part of the city, with a narrow street and not much neon at all. The driver di-



rected us to a small two-story place and we went up a set of wooden stairs to a tiny restaurant with grills built into the tables. An elderly Japanese woman came over to seat us and she and Perry began an animated conversation. Of course I have no idea what they were saying to each other but the woman laughed and laughed, brought over bowls of batter and vegetables and meats and glasses of Sapporo and Kirin beer for us and we cooked the okonomiyaki ourselves, talking and drinking and laughing. I noticed that everywhere we went, whenever Perry spoke with any Japanese they inevitably smiled and laughed; he spread delight wherever he went.

On our last day in Japan, we went to Kyoto. Perry took the day off again. He especially wanted to show us the Kinkaku-ji, the Golden Pavilion. It was his favorite. It was

impressive, made more so, perhaps, because the tail-end of a typhoon was lashing Kyoto about then and we walks through sheets of rain. But nothing could dampen Perry's enthusiasm. The rain eventually stopped. We had dinner in a restaurant high up over the streets of modern Kyoto before returning to the train station where we said goodbye. The last I saw of Perry was as he drove away on his motor scooter. And it was the last time, though I didn't know that. But we never do, do we.

We continued to correspond and more and more of Perry's research appeared in the pages of PKD Otaku. I

missed the California conference that he attended but he was coming to Fort Morgan in March and I so looked forward to seeing him there. Instead, as you know, he died unexpectedly on January 26th. There was a defect in his great heart that silenced him forever. When I heard the news, it was as if a part of my own life had been wrench ed away, too.

How could he be gone? But I am comforted a bit by something in a letter he sent to me in 2004. He wrote:

"I was thinking as I rested for 6 hours this afternoon: if, when we die our cells decompose, mix, and become the source of life again, then why not our souls decompose, rearrange, and compose into another soul. We will survive, just not the way we think."

Goodbye, Perry. I hope that someday I meet that new soul.

Dickheads in the Boneyard: The 2017 Philip K. Dick Festival in Fort Morgan, CO

By: Charles C. Mitchell

Thirty five years after the death of Philip K. Dick, I found myself stumbling through the cold darkness of Riverside Cemetery, shining a flashlight beam upon a sea of grey lumps, searching for the one covered tiny trinkets and coins. In the distance, another light flickered about, seeking the same grave, occasionally revealing the silhouette of a tall woman. Hope dwindled from our search as the harshness of the elements cut through us and the couple of trees standing guard. Shivering and defeated, my partner Savannah and I made our way back to the car. We had arrived in Fort Morgan, Colorado only a few hours before and had already dropped by the festival's art exhibit to check out the contestants' diverse pieces. We then made our way across the street to the Cables Bar where we had a drink and conversed with the charming Bill Vernon of New Orleans. It was there that we decided to visit Phil's grave before turning in for the night; half expecting to run into the lot of Dickheads parading around town. Somehow we missed them. Alas, we found ourselves tired and frustrated; ready to spend the next couple of hours staring at the backs of our eyelids. As our vehicle purred to life, twin beams of light sprang from its front end, pushing through the darkness to reveal a peculiar kipple covered stone. Rejuvenated and ecstatic, we rose from our bucket seats to pay our respects to one of the greatest philosophical minds of our time. We had found the final resting place of Philip K. Dick.

The small predominantly agricultural town of Fort Morgan eerily mirrors some of the towns Dick wrote about. Its slow pulse seemed to quicken as an influx of out-of-towners trickled in to take part in the festivities. The local library held the Philip K. Dick inspired art entries. Here fans could vote for their favorite pieces, RSVP to Saturday night's dinner, and pick up a goodie bag, with the real prize inside being the pink flashlights with the words, "Phillip K. Dick Festival. Fort Morgan, CO," printed on the side. The high school auditorium was the setting for the bulk of the first day where our host, Lord Running Clam, kicked

everything off with a warm welcome and a lecture that introduced several of the attendees and covered why Dick was buried in the town. From there, we entered a discussion panel with David Hyde, Patrick Clark, William Sarill, Tessa Dick, and Michael Garfield, with John Simon as the moderator. John then went on to conduct a Q and A with Tessa Dick. The topics were stimulating; covering everything from current affairs and technology, to the often asked, "What does it mean to be human?" and, "What is reality?"

On the other side of the auditorium doors, dozens of rare books lined the tables in wait, while the generous and genuine Patti Anderson displayed her steampunk-esque stash boxes and tiny slime mold knick-knacks. The buzz



of the networking Dickheads among the treasure trove of science fiction objects pulsed on as I ogled two similar looking copies of **VALIS**. Of all people, Henri Wintz informed me of the differences in the two novels, pointing out that one was a first edition. The man knew his stuff considering that he was half responsible for compiling **The Precious Artifacts** Bibliographies on Dick's work; a must have index for any avid Philip K. Dick collector. The other responsible party, the slime mold from

Ganymede, was busy hosting the festival; glowing from the buzz and putting it back out tenfold.

Saturday rolled around and the fans made their way through the stench of the nearby beet processing plant to the library, many still sipping their morning coffees. Here William Sarill gave a lecture on his time spent with his good friend Philip K. Dick and how the novel, **A Maze of Death**, came into existence. A few rooms away, the art contest awaited the last of the votes to determine which contestants got the fabulous prizes. The late Perry Kinman donated a beautiful first edition copy of **The Man in the High Castle**, which was used as the first place winnings. In the gallery, a memorial banner hung in Perry's honor, inviting friends and fans alike to sign it. The traditional Philip K. Dick festival banner was also present for everyone to sign, as Frank Hollander pointed out his multiple signatures from over the years, each in a different color ink. "A festival for the living and the dead," I thought, "how very suiting."

The time had come for the free showing of **Radio Free Albemuth**, so the group ventured a few blocks down the

road to the Cover Theatre. As the crowd grew and the show got setup, I purchased a large bag of popcorn from the concession area and chattered way with Dan Allen of Denver and Cliff Jones of Dallas. I had seen Radio Free Albemuth when it was released, yet I was thrilled to gain a new perspective on this Dick adaption. The films director, John Simon, and producer, Elizabeth Karr, were there to present the movie and to answer any questions the audience had. Tessa Dick commented that the actor that played the Phil character was quite handsome. She then asked why they decided to kill the cat character early on, rather than staying true to the book. In short, John said that the cat scenes proved to be too lengthy, so instead its death was used as foreshadowing. Its not everyday you get to watch a movie and then ask the creators why they took a certain direction. The most interesting bits of information to enter my ears was that a **VALIS** television show is in the works and that **Flow My Tears the Policeman Said** is being made into a movie. Lets hope things pan out smoothly in Hollywood and these adaptations capture the true essence of Dick's novels.

Philip K. Dick was buried in Fort Morgan to be next to his twin sister, who died in infancy. They now share a headstone that can accurately be described as a kaleidoscope of kipple. Savannah and I went to Phil and Jane's grave several times during our stay. Our second visit to Riverside Cemetery was done in the daylight and this time a pair of smiley face balloons with, "Land-O-Smiles," written on them marked the twins resting place. Upon closer inspection, everything around the grave had changed from the night before. Half a clock had been there. Now there was no clock. A tattered copy of **Counter-Clock World** remained. A tiny metal sheep had appeared. Coins, rocks, and crystals seemed to have multiplied and rearranged themselves. I added the three coins that I use to consult the I Ching. The Wide-Books publishing company business card had vanished. Had the wind taken it? Or had some aspiring writer?

Saturdays twilight graveside visit proved to be a moving one. It was Tessa Dick's first trip to her ex-husbands cemetery plot. Her and William Sarill's fond words on the man they both knew brought tears to many peoples eyes. Though he was clearly missed, they weren't tears of sadness. It was an immense respect that welled up within us. The festival host, Lord Running Clam, pointed the beam from his pink flashlight toward Sirius and instructed the crowd to do the same; a symbolic gesture to honor Philip K. Dick. The kipple had shifted again and more was piled on. Savannah carefully added a bouquet of pink cherry blossoms, which Tessa thanked her for. Patrick Clark joked that the weathered copy of Counter-Clock World would eventually revert back into a tree and spring from the grave. Later on, Cliff Jones pointed out to me that the

book on the grave was actually a copy of **The Galactic Pot-Healer**. Perplexed, I suggested a glitch in the matrix.

The dinner at The Country Steak Out Restaurant provided the perfect come down from the rush of the festival. As we ate, the humorous Floyd Jones entertained us with a magic act. By the time I was making my gluttonous return to the buffet-style setup, it was Michael Garfield's turn to take the spotlight. With the fractal animation, "Electric Sheep," displayed onto wall, Michael played a few songs for us. He was a one man band of eccentric sounds, looped together on the spot to produce complex melodic music. Michael also had a colorful mixture of oil and acrylic paintings on display.

Savannah and I returned to Philip K. Dick's grave for a final goodbye. It was here that I stopped to pondered the journey that had gotten us here, referring to more than just our long drive from our home in Mississippi. When I met Savannah, we bonded over our interest in Phil and now here we were loitering around his headstone. We wouldn't have been able to make the trip, had it not been for the hospitality of Laura Entwisle and David Hyde. It was truly the living that made this festival extraordinary. A lot of love and work went into ensuring its success and it showed. During our stay, I managed to feel everything from embarrassment to joy and I couldn't have asked for anything more real. I had never felt more alive in a cemetery.

A Thank You from Lord Running Clam

It has been two months already since the Philip K. Dick Festival in Fort Morgan, Colorado, and I wish to thank those fans who attended. It was fun for me; I always feel I'm with friends in any Philip K. Dick gathering. And thanks, also, to the folks in Fort Morgan and Morgan County for their support. The people there were very pleased with the turnout and all our activities and, guess what? We're going to do it again next year! Mark your calendars for March 2nd - 4th 2018. Lots to be done yet but I look forward to seeing you all again next year. - Lord Running Clam





Letters to the Editor

Doug set my Teeth on Edge

Whilst it is customary to write letters concerning articles in previous issues of PKD Otaku, this one concerns *this very issue*. Being the Graphic Designer who assembles PKD Otaku I cannot help but preview the material (which is always a privilege - I don't have to Wait For Last Year).

I was really interested to read Doug Mackey's take on *The Man Whose Teeth Were All Exactly Alike* (see this issue p.7-8). His intelligent reading of the book - especially in relation to Dick's science Fiction, with its fake realities - is far richer than my book review of the same in PKD Otaku #35.

Doug has found much more that is worthy in *Teeth* than I did, and I am grateful to him for his insight. I was very disappointed with *Teeth* when I read it recently but I am now persuaded that I missed much that was worthwhile. I am evolving. Thank you Doug for sharing your insights. Us Dickhead's always did like multiple viewpoints.

Nick Buchanan

Letter to Dave Hyde (who organized the Fort Morgan PKD Festival) from Patrick Clark (PKD Otaku Editor)...

Dave,
Hope you are well and especially that Kirsten is doing better. It was a trip seeing you and Patti and the Laura and the rest of the gang in Fort Morgan. I had a great time there myself and it looked as though everyone else did, too. A bit worried about you; you looked tired, as well you might be, of course, since so much of the festival rested on your shoulders. You did a splendid job and I strongly suggest that you rest on your laurels a bit long.

I liked the entire weekend. Everyone involved was super dedicated. The panel – my sole contribution – was a lot more free-ranging than the title implied. So many divergent and fascinating takes on Phil's work, especially Michael's who did bring into the conversation a sort of cosmic point of view so dear to Phil and a good reminded for the rest of us rationalists. That was the first time I saw

Tessa in person and I was very impressed with her views of personal history with Phil. I look forward to her book of conversations. But, she looked tired; her life must be exceedingly hard lately, so I worried about her, too, as well as you. She and Will Sarill are living links to our man, Phil. Will's talk on Saturday morning was my favorite. Possibly we will be able to publish a transcript in Otaku. Will said he'd try to transfer his recorded speech into text somehow. I sure hope he can do it. By the way, Doug McKay already sent me an essay, and it's a great one concerning Phil's mainstream novels.

You know, I had no idea what to expect with the RFA movie. The success rate for PKD-inspired film has not been high and, truly, RFA is a difficult book to begin with. But I was very pleased when I saw it. It was so well done and so professionally written, filmed and acted. It was a pleasure to meet John and Elizabeth. John brought a lot of professionalism to the festival. The rest of us, you know, we're fans but otherwise ordinary folks. John and Elizabeth are on a different level entirely and yet, they are fans like us. I have high hopes for their "Flow My Tears" film.

Frank Hollinger – God love him, it was good to see him again. And Laura – it has been years since we were together but such a delight. Another person who has had to struggle with health issues, plus her mom, and yet as cheerful and positive an individual as attended Fort Morgan. I'm sorry jami couldn't make it; she would have had a good time I know and even curmudgeonly Frank Bertrand would have enjoyed himself as there wasn't a post-modernist within sight. Of course I am extremely sorry Perry couldn't make it. There was a big Perry-shaped void at the festival. I thought about him a lot during the weekend. Still can't make sense of his passing. And there were new people attending which always cheers me up. We need this new generation of otaku.

So many, many thanks to you, Dave Hyde, and to Patti for making it all possible. I especially thank you for pestering me out of my shell and getting me to actually joining the human race again – or at least the PKD Otaku race. Phil, wherever he is, thanks you, too.

Patrick



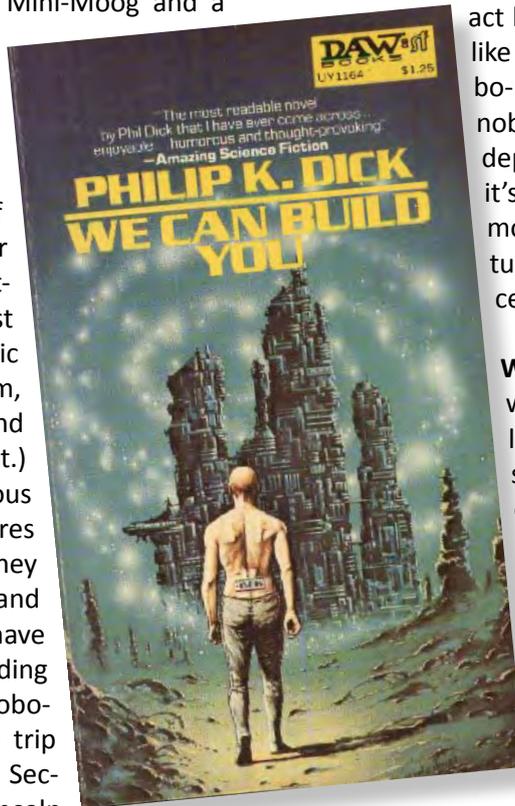
“Books that should be made into movies, but never ever will” by John Ohno

We Can Build You by Philip K. Dick

Summary: A company that makes electronic instruments (something like a cross between a Mini-Moog and a Melotron, based on the description) decides to branch out into animatronics, and for an anniversary of the civil war, decides to produce autonomous androids designed to look and act like Lincoln and his secretary of state. Our protagonist, a salesman for this company, falls in love with the artist hired to build the faces; the artist starts off being represented as a manic pixie dream girl. (She sleeps with him, decides she doesn't like him much, and disappears; he doesn't get the hint.) Since these androids are autonomous and trained on the writings of the figures (along with records of their habits), they have no idea that they are robots, and they proceed to act as though they have been transported through time, leading to a plot where the salesman and robo-Lincoln go on a cross-country road trip looking for the robot version of the Secretary of State, during which robo-Lincoln tries and fails to give romantic advice. In the last scene, our protagonist is drunk in a bar with robo-Lincoln, coming to terms with the fact that he was dumped, while robo-Lincoln sinks into a deep depression and becomes essentially catatonic.

Why it should be made: This would make an excellent counterpoint to modern rom-com fare like *Scott Pilgrim*, in that it does a good job of subverting the manic pixie dream girl progression: an artistic and damaged woman ends up rejecting the protagonist who is obsessed with her, and that result sticks. By having animatronics with just enough AI to be unpredictable, this ties in thematically with the *Westworld* franchise, which of course has recently been rebooted to some acclaim. Lincoln biopics had a sudden popularity a few years ago, as well. But, the

most interesting part about this story is that it doesn't do what pretty much every other story about AI does: it never bothers to touch upon the idea of whether or not these machines are “really conscious”. The machines are clearly machines, because our protagonist's friends built them, and the story doesn't make them out to be particularly advanced or clever; at the same time, they act like people and are therefore treated like people by our protagonists. When robo-Lincoln goes into a deep depression, nobody questions whether or not the depression is “real”, because of course it's real: he's so sad that he can barely move. It's a book that substitutes the turing test for the eliza effect, and succeeds.



Why it will never get made: Hollywood is really fixated on removing the lumps from PKD adaptations. Outside of the original *Total Recall* & a couple scenes from *Minority Report*, PKD adaptations basically reach for a streamlined hollywood ideal of what twelve year olds in 1995 would consider a mind-blowing sci-fi movie. This ignores the kind of fuzzy weirdness PKD embraced in his writing, and which characterized much of the draw of *We Can Build You*. If

you took this and removed the lumps, you'd get a really uninteresting result. For proof of this, compare *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (the book written immediately before *We Can Build You*, and one that is in many ways inferior) to its loose adaptation *Blade Runner* (which, while iconic for its cinematography and sound design, has removed so many lumps that it's pretty much the closest thing to a science fiction cliché since Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*).

*

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 be-

come 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 except by authors using the literary equivalent of these simulatory techniques? In *Time Out of Joint*, the machinery of realism becomes, then, re-described as a set of special effects.

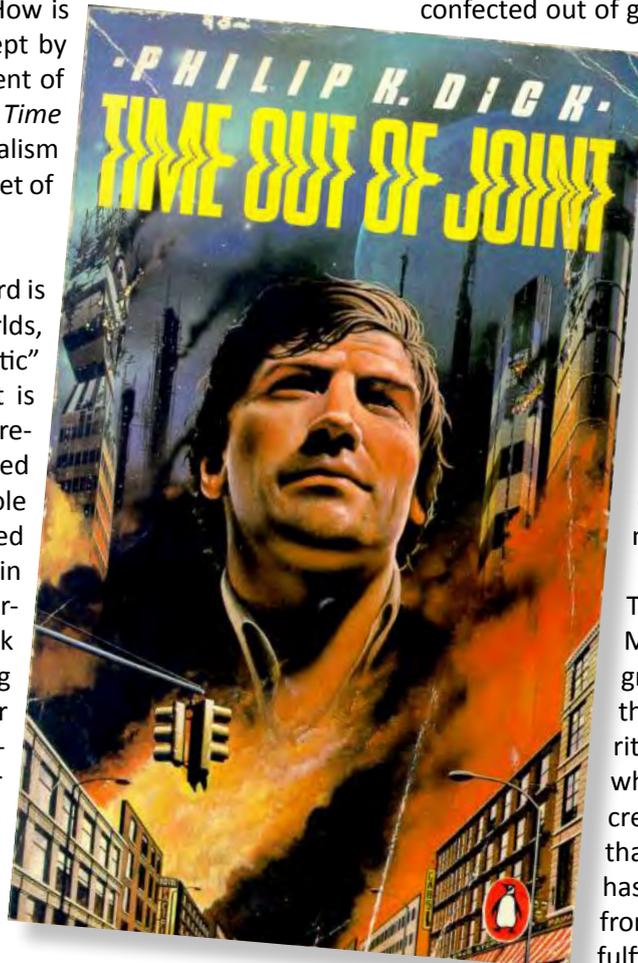
In the novel, the feeling of the weird is not generated by a collision of worlds, but by the passage out of a "realistic" world into an "unworld". After it is downgraded to a simulation, the realistic world is not so much invaded as erased. In the novel, - the whole small town scenario is constructed as a ruse, a comfortable setting in which the protagonist can undertake high pressure military work for the government while thinking that he is doing a trivial newspaper contest. Yet it is clear that the science fictional elements were for Dick the pretext that allowed him to write successfully in a naturalistic way about Fifties America. They were the enframing devices that enabled *Time Out of Joint* to succeed where Dick's purely realist fiction failed.

In *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Jameson captures the peculiar ache of nostalgia that *Time Out of Joint* engenders, a nostalgia for the present, which Dick achieves by constellating stereotypical images of the decade he was writing at the end of:

President Eisenhower's stroke; Main Street, U.S.A.; Marilyn Monroe; a world of neighbours and PTAs; small retail stores (the produce trucked in from outside); favourite television programmes; mild flirtations with the housewife next door; game shows

and contests; sputniks directly revolving overhead, mere blinking lights in the firmament, hard to distinguish from airliners or flying saucers.

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 theme park: an anticipated reconstruction. Dick's simulated small town is not en-kitsched as Disney's memories of his early twentieth century were, but precisely given what Jameson calls the "cabbage stink" of naturalism:



The misery of happiness, [...] of Marcuse's false happiness, the gratifications of the new car, the TV dinner and your favourite programme on the sofa — which are now themselves secretly a misery, an unhappiness that doesn't know its name, that has no way of telling itself apart from genuine satisfaction and fulfilment since it has presumably never encountered this last.

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.

From Mark Fisher, *The Weird and the Eerie*