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July 2019



**Discussion, Reviews,
Dialogue & Opinion**

P K D

#39

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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

Normally, the editorial to any issue of *PKD Otaku* is written last, after all the other material has arrived and been incorporated. This because I seldom know what I want to say about whatever new issue is at hand. I'm also pretty fatigued by the whole process of zine-building by the time it is ready, though Nick has a much better right to be tired as he does the heavy lifting here. The result of all of this is that most editorials tend to be brief, often simply *pro forma*.

This 39th issue gives me pause. There is a fair bit of old material here – old in the sense that it was written decades ago. The *Speculation* essay, the book reviews, Phil's own texts. It's all good, from one perspective. Raw material otherwise hard to come by, perhaps for a new biography or at least a dissertation or two. And I did have fun assembling it. Bit of a scavenger hunt dressed up as "research." I'm sure every one of you will enjoy it all. But I am concerned that this is a kind of "PKD archeology". While entertaining and useful enough, it doesn't get us very far into why PKD is important today, in 2019.

My own "Two Emails, a Letter and a Mystery" stands in a similar place but for a different reason. I have been thinking about and very much missing Perry Kinmann lately. Perry was guiding force behind PKD Otaku. Contributing material, suggesting topics, encouraging me, cheering me up (and he did a large amount of PKD

archeology, too.) Between issues we stayed in close touch via actual letters and via emails as well as several visits. We would test-drive ideas back and forth that often ended up in this zine, far, far better for having been discussed, reshaped and expanded in collaboration. The more I thought about Perry the more I thought I'd print one of our projects. It's an early draft, not entirely coherent and very probably containing a few errors – minor, I hope! – that some sharp-eyed reader will point out to me. I hadn't looked at it in years but when I finally did the good times of its creations came rushing back.

Even so, "Two Emails, a Letter and a Mystery" is still PKD archeology. So I am both pleased and relieved that Jess Falarity and our own Frank Bertrand have brought this issue back to now, today, July 2019. I think we need more of "now". We can't embed Phil in amber. He either *lives* today or he is just another dusty writer from a bygone era, reduced to a fancy adjective instead of a real name.

"I think we need more of 'now'. We can't embed Phil in amber"

What I am proposing is that each and every reader consider writing something for the next issue under the topic of "PKD in 2020". And what you may wish to contribute can be anything at all: an essay, a story, a limerick, a joke, an illustration or a cartoon, a news article

you've seen that reminds you of Phil, random thoughts, unconnected sentences, a bumper sticker – pages long or laconically brief. It could literally *be* Phil in 2020 or the *state* of PKD in 2020 – or any tangent, segue, off-the-wall ricochet you can imagine. It doesn't matter. It doesn't even need to make sense; Phil would understand that! Send whatever to pkdotaku@gmail.com and we will show it to the world in the next issue.

Meanwhile, while you are thinking all that over, enjoy this latest issue.



Photo courtesy of Anne Dick



**THE 2ND INTERNATIONAL
PHILIP K. DICK
FESTIVAL**

CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED AUTHOR OF
BLADE RUNNER · MINORITY REPORT
A SCANNER DARKLY · THE ADJUSTMENT BUREAU
THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE

**FORT MORGAN, CO
AUGUST 9-11, 2019**

MORGANCOUNTYTOURISM.COM/EVENTS
WIDE-BOOKS.COM/PKD-FESTIVAL-2019.HTML



MorganCountyTourism.com

WIDE BOOKS



The 2nd International Philip K. Dick Festival

Fort Morgan, Colorado, USA
August 9th - 11th 2019

<https://wide-books.com/pkd-festival-2019.html>
<https://www.morgancountytourism.com/event/philip-k-dick-festival-2/>
<https://www.gofundme.com/PKDFestival>
<https://www.pkdickbooks.com/blog/>
<https://www.facebook.com/PreciousArtifacts/>
<https://www.gofundme.com/PKDFestival>

For Philip K. Dick fans this 2nd PKD Festival in Fort Morgan, Colorado in August 2019 is a special occasion. We have great speakers, artists and entertainers to amuse and inform us and I'll talk more of them soon. But for me, I am most happy at the prospect of meeting all the PKD fans, who I've always thought must be the best, brightest and most curious people on Earth. I still wonder what it is about the life and stories of this great writer that brings us together. Perhaps it is that the essence of his humanity pokes through the plots of his stories and helps us regard our shared reality more truthfully. Or he writes from a stance that automatically assumes that whatever this reality is, we are all in it together. I'm sure that out of this shared sense of community we all have our own ideas about Philip K. Dick – and reality.

This PKD festival is the second we're having in Fort Morgan. The last one was in 2017 and it was weird and a lot of fun. Many fans came, some of whom are returning this year. And this year our festival is bigger and better than ever! The support we have from the people of Fort Morgan and Morgan County is encouraging and I would like to thank here these fine folks, in particular the Ft. Morgan Library and Museum and Morgan County Tourism.

Our guest list begins with **Tessa Dick**, who all fans know as the young fifth wife of Philip K. Dick and mother of his son, Christopher. Tessa will talk about her time with Phil and is looking forward to meeting everyone.

From among our fellow fans we have **Frank Hollander** – who's attended every PKD festival since 2010 – who will

present an early PKD show-and-tell, I can't imagine what he will come up with but I'm sure his precious artifacts will be fascinating. Frank has written and published much about PKD and his article "JJ-182: If I Could Publish the Fiction Canon" in PKD OTAKU #38 sets the groundwork for a revised canon of PKD's fiction.

Beaming in via Skype from New York will be **Sean Nye**, Professor of Musicology at USC Thornton School of Music. Dr. Nye will engage us in his musical discoveries in the stories of Philip K. Dick.

Another PKD fan stalwart and host of the 2012 Philip K. Dick Festival in San Francisco is **David Gill** – The Total Dickhead. David has studied the work and life of PKD for the last twenty years, wrote his master's thesis on Dick, and knows all the fans in California. He is a Lecturer in English at SFSU and will talk and discuss the festival novel: *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*.

Many fans will be familiar with our next guest: **Doug Mackey** who we were pleased to see in 2017 and who is coming back again this year. Dr. Mackey is the author of *PHILIP K. DICK* (Twayne Publishers 1988), an overview of the novels of PKD that has stood the test of time. He is now a professional editor and software developer and will talk about Phil's contemporaries and the effect they had on his writing.

And we are really pleased that **Andrew M. Butler** shall be here from England. We, PKD fans, know Andrew as the author of the useful *POCKET ESSENTIAL PHILIP K. DICK* (Pocket Essentials 2000, 2007) but he also has a long career in science fiction fandom, being the former editor of *Vector*, the critical journal of the British Science Fiction Association, and a judge for the Arthur C. Clarke Award, among other illustrious doings. Dr. Butler is the current editor of the academic journal *Extrapolation* and teaches Media and Cultural Studies at Canterbury Christ Church University.

Also coming from England – and I know we're all happy about this – is our very own PKD OTAKU editor **Nick Buchanan!** Nick will give a talk on "Philip K. Dick and the Craft of Writing". Besides helping Patrick Clark publish PKD OTAKU for many years, Nick is known for his graphic designs for books by Tessa Dick and others. He is the author of *WHAT HAPPENS IN SHAKESPEARE'S KING LEAR* and *WHAT HAPPENS IN SHAKESPEARE'S MACBETH* (Lulu



Press 2013 and 2016) with more to come. Welcome to America, Nick!

On the artistic side of things, we are honored to present the art of two fine PKD artists.

For the last four years or so **Christopher Wilkey** in collaboration with Ted Hand has been working on a set of 80 tarot card designs based on the stories of Philip K. Dick. These are now done, and we'll have some decks available at the festival. Chris and Ted will present 'The Fool's Journey of Philip K. Dick' an exhibit of all Chris' drawings and will discuss their work at the Fort Morgan Museum.

And coming up from New Orleans is PKD-influenced artist **Brent Houzenga**. One of his images was on the cover of PKD OTAKU #38 (Dec 2018) and his art has been shown in galleries all over the world. He has also written on art for various publications and is the subject of an independent documentary film *Brent Houzenga: Hybrid Pioneer*. Brent's exhibit will be on display at the CACE gallery near the Library/Museum on Main St., Fort Morgan.

On Saturday August 10th evening we have an exciting line up of events at The Country Steak Out Restaurant and Bar. Besides an expansive and varied buffet, we have a PKD Quiz composed by **Cameron Mitchell** which we can tackle while we eat – and win some prizes! This followed by a "PKD Mystery Play" presented by Cameron and **Lord RC**. I can't say much about it because it's supposed to be a mystery, but we anticipate much hilarity as the mystery unfolds. But that's not all! To entertain us after the play we have musician **Dan Allen**, ex of Dogbite, The Chuppers and Chappy's Band. Many of us know Dan as he attended the Colorado PKD festivals in 2010 and 2017. I've asked Dan to play the loudest set he can think of! And all this for only \$30 cover charge payable in cash at the door of The Country Steak Out. This is the only fee we have for any of our events, everything else is free.

During the weekend we will have a showing of *TOTAL RECALL*, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sharon Stone, at the Cover 4 Cinema on Main St. near the Library

Museum. This will be an early afternoon showing, about lunch-time, and we can have food delivered to the cinema by Zazzy's Cafe.

The reason we are all gathering in Fort Morgan is because that is where Phil and his twin sister, Jane, are buried in Riverside Cemetery. We shall make an evening visit to their grave-site to share memories, dreams and reflections, take group photos and decorate the spot with mementos of our own.

That's a pretty full schedule but we have lots of time in the evenings to meet and mingle in the town. I recommend the Acapulco Bay Restaurant and Bar, and Cable's Restaurant and Bar on Main Street close to Festival Central which is

the Library/Museum. On the evening of Thursday, August 8th, Fort Morgan holds the last of its 'Thursday Night Live' concert series on the grounds besides the Museum. This year the band is the Juke Joint Cruisers. Rockabilly, blues and American roots music. A fortuitous event for us!

With the attendance of **Patrick Clark**, publisher of PKD OTAKU and *In Orbit Around Planet PKD*, we will have several of the PKD fan publishers all in one place! **Patrick Clark, Nick Buchanan, Henri Wintz, Frank Hollander and Dave Hyde!** What ideas can come from such a meeting of minds!? And for sure I must inform you that **Michael Fisher**, long-time fan and host of the premiere PKD website, philpkdickfans.com, will also be here! It will be our pleasure to welcome Michael to Fort Morgan and meet him at last.

Unfortunately, some fans can't make it due to health reasons. I know that **John Fairchild** wished to be here but just cannot. John has donated some PKD books for prizes on our PKD Quiz. Thanks, John. And **William Sarill**, friend of Phil's, likewise cannot come due to health reasons. We'll miss you William and I'm glad you could make it in 2017 and say farewell to your old friend. I don't know if **Laura Entwisle** will be here or not. I know she wants to, but traveling is difficult for her. I hope she can make it, nothing would please me more than to see Laura again. Thanks for all your support and I hope to make it to Missouri to see you soon. One fan who would certainly be here if he were

"PKD fans...must be the best, brightest and most curious people on Earth"



alive is **Perry Kinman**. To all who knew him, Perry was the gentlest spirit whose devotion to Phil gave us all heart and strength as we push the greatness of Philip K. Dick into the world. Farewell, Perry, we'll be joining you soon.

Other things of note: Wide Books will debut the third volume in their PKD Bibliography series: *PRECIOUS ARTIFACTS 3: Precieuses Reliques, Editions Francaises 1959 – 2018*. **Henri Wintz** and I will be there to sign these books for interested fans. Also available at our Fan Fair we shall have lots of PKD editions for sale as well as books by **Tessa Dick** and art prints from **Christopher Wilkey** and **Brent Houzenga**. Likely other things too.

Ongoing at the Library/Museum (closed Sunday) will be the "Fool's Journey of Philip K. Dick" art exhibit and PKD displays in the building.

As free gifts for attending fans Fort Morgan Tourism and

the folks and businesses of Fort Morgan have prepared some goody bags. Lots of handy items and news of things to do and places to go in Morgan County.

We'll also have some lapel buttons available and as I write this the festival t-shirts are about to go into production.

Marijuana is legal in Colorado and can be bought in all its varieties in Log Lane Village just north of Fort Morgan across I-76. However, you can't just wander around town puffing away as you please, this might get you in trouble with the law. Be circumspect.

No doubt I've forgot to mention someone or something, there's a lot going on and this festival is like a Jell-O, it's going to wobble a bit. Please donate to our GoFundMe campaign at the link above and I'll see you all soon!

- Lord Running Clam, June 2019



PHILIP K DICK FESTIVAL 2019

AUGUST 9-11, FORT MORGAN, CO

PKD

otaku #39

The Commodification of Transcendence: Absurdism and Existentialism in *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*

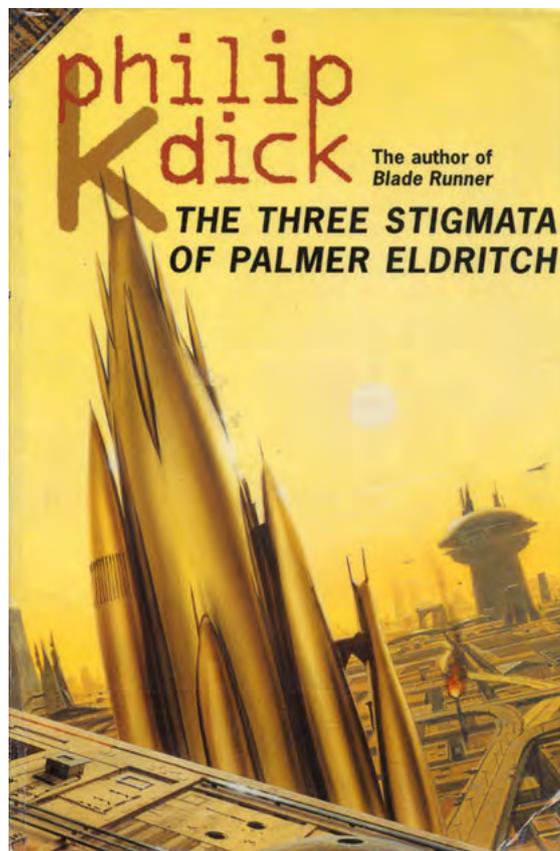
By Jess Flarity

Phil had two main concerns about America's future fifty years ago, which is now our present day. First was the totalitarian state, represented in the 1974 novel *Flow My Tears the Policeman Said*. This is a very important book, especially in our current political climate: I'll come back to this one if we have time. But our focus today will instead be on Phil's other looming concern: the end of capitalism, which results in the commodification of everything. While this theme is prevalent in many of his works, *Ubik* in particular, the most striking example can be seen in the 1965 novel *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*. This is a story about a future Earth ravaged by extreme global warming, in which the first human explorer returns from the Proxima star system pushing a drug said to grant transcendent, god-like powers, but at a hidden cost. I argue that *Stigmata* is a thought-experiment demonstrating how it would be impossible to commodify transcendence, seen in our reality as the warring philosophies of Albert Camus' Absurdism and Soren Kierkegaard's Existentialism, represented in the novel as the drugs "Can-D" and "Chew-Z." What we'll be discussing is on the extreme end of the abstract, so we'll start with a few definitions.

First, commodification, with an "f", is not commitization, with a "z." Commitization is the process of distinguishing goods in terms of their attributes, such as recognizing a product based on its brand. For example: "Choosy Choosers Choose Chew-Z." Chew-Z is superior in every way to the inferior product, Can-D (show stickers for giving away later). Commoditization of Chew-Z would result in it going from being a proprietary product to something generic, a movement from what economists call *monopolistic com-*

petition to *perfect* competition. So, if you started seeing knock-off Chew-Z in your drug stores, Kroger brand Krew-Z, or Safeway Select Screw-Z, then you'll know the process of commitization has taken place.

Commodification, however, is much different. It's a Marxist term indicating the assignment of economic value onto something that did not previously possess it, then producing and presenting that now-product for sale rather than having it available for personal use only. In essence, it's about making something that's not supposedly saleable into a consumable, such as our personal data in this digital age. Another very clear example of this phenomenon, in



American or first-world culture, is the commodification of love or romance through dating websites and applications. "Match.com is #1 in dates, relationships, and marriages." The users of a dating website, like Match.com, turn themselves into a product, a kind of romantic, idealized version of who they really are. Make sure that selfie has your best smile. Make sure you say that you like hiking so that you appear athletic and outgoing, and make sure you include a picture of yourself holding a baby animal to show your vulnerability (that's a *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* reference, by the way).

A much more terrifying prospect than the formulaic romance of dating websites is the commodification of transcendence. The word transcendence comes from the Latin prefix *trans-*, meaning "beyond" and the word *scandare*, meaning "to climb." So, to achieve transcendence simply means to go beyond ordinary, reality-based limitations, but that definition is kind of vague. What does it mean to "go beyond"? Transcendence is usually used with a kind of spiritual or religious interpretation, though it could be argued that scientists, philosophers, or even business owners also achieve a kind of transcendence if they're on the cutting edge of their particular field, their theory, or even if predicting the next big change in the global marketplace. Because transcendence itself goes "beyond" the needs of reality, it is arguably the most difficult concept to commodify.

In contrast, late-stage capitalism has seen the commodification of many other concepts. Rebellion is now available through “over the counter culture” shops like Hot Topic, and the street artist Banksy points out this phenomenon in the art world with the self-satirizing documentary, *Exit Through the Gift Shop*. Commodification of spirituality is obvious in yoga classes promising fulfillment as they sell designer pants, in shamanistic retreats involving anything from drinking ayahuasca to smoking toad venom (see: *Hamilton’s Pharmacopeia* for related psychonaut activities), and of course, the oldest form of enlightenment-as-a-product is still alive and well after thousands of years—religions based on miracles and holy texts, each one claiming they are the direct pipeline to the divine. Even conspiracy theories arguing against capitalism, whether through podcasts, streaming services, or Youtube channels all are platforms for the individual to promote their “brand” and thereby turn themselves into a commodity, blending the person and their ideas into a single, saleable entity (Alex Jones, anyone,? Yeesh!). A character in the 2012 Thomas Pynchon novel *Bleeding Edge* states, “...late capitalism in a pyramid racket on a global scale...getting the suckers to believe it’s all gonna go on forever.”

Often in our digital world, this personalized commodification manifests itself through the filter of the internet, as many members of our American or first-world society live a large percentage of each day online. Value can be measured through followers, karma, friends, and even more terrifying for those of us who are writers—through the number of stars by our book reviews (be kind to us GoodReads).

Equally disturbing is the fact that Amazon.com is becoming a real-life “Autofac”, in reference to Phil’s 1955 short story where humans living in a post-apocalyptic world have to steal supplies from automated robots that keep mindlessly delivering products to cities which no longer exist. We now have similar, near-instantaneous delivery of various “necessities,” slicing the internet/reality sandwich, as it were, ever more thin. Here’s a real-life example: my friend lives in Bellevue, Washington, Google’s number-two headquarters for software development outside of California, and he’s gone so far as to order Jack Daniels, Coca-Cola, and ice from three different online delivery services. Within two hours he was able to mix his Jack-and-Coke without having to leave his front porch.

The speed at which we’re able to receive real-world items

from the pseudo-reality of the internet demonstrates how “real” the internet has become, at least in the most developed parts of the world. Information and data are now as exploitable as fresh water, electricity, or fossil fuels. However, the blending of the online world with the “meatspace” of the real-world is a double-edged sword. Workers (at least at Google and Amazon) are now expected to respond to emails within the hour—even on weekends within the tech-related fields (indicating the hidden cost of my friend’s two hour delivery time), and an online presence is required for jobs, socializing, dating, and even locating basic, necessary information.

“...and thereby turn themselves into a commodity”

All of this internet activity results in an accumulation of data, quantifying and commodifying our very existence. We, in essence, according to some server somewhere, are our Amazon purchases, our Google and Youtube search histories, as well as a nexus point in our variety of social networks. I’ll never forget the time I accepted a Facebook friend request from my friend’s wife—Sarah—and hours later, I got a telemarketing call on my personal phone from someone asking for Sarah, even though I didn’t list my phone number on my Facebook page. Somebody—or something—out there is reading the invisible threads connecting us all together and selling that information.

This concept becomes very interesting from a philosophical perspective, as our data can be seen as a representation of “digital soul.” For me, this “existence-as-information” becomes the most real whenever I go to the grocery store because I’ve been using my dead grandma’s Club Card for the past five years. When that little prompt comes up and says, “Thank You Constance Bradley,” I know grandma still lives on, somewhere, on some server in cyberspace—she’s a series of ones-and-zeros who won’t be forgotten as long purchases continue being made, keeping her frozen in half-life, *Ubik*- style, a kind of immortality through commerce.

But before the internet, or even media, the best way a person could preserve themselves—to keep that same, soul-as-data construct similar to the “digital soul”—was, and arguably still is, through the act of writing. This is most apparent in the field of philosophy. While memoirists and nonfiction writers offer us glimpses of their lives, whether it be through journals or autobiographical epics, the philosopher, I would argue, most clearly preserves themselves as *pure information*—they exist totally outside of reality, having transformed their thoughts purely

into connections between concepts. For those of you who have read Descartes' *Meditations*, you probably understand what it means for the writer to really "be there with you" in the room, as Descartes discusses, stream-of-consciousness style, his thoughts on philosophy and life while as if he were talking to you, there, as he sits by the fire, even though he's been dead for hundreds of years.

Philip K. Dick's legacy, in a similar vein, I would argue is not only that of a science fiction writer, but that of a prophet and philosopher—or a creator of concepts. As Phil himself notes in his *Exegesis*, the series of journal entries, personal correspondences, and essays he wrote during the 1970's:

"I am a fictionalizing philosopher, not a novelist; my novel & story-writing ability is employed as a means to formulate my perception. The core of my writing is not art but truth."

I'm not alone in arguing that Phil is a philosopher, as professor Simon Critchley also notes in the *Exegesis*:

"Dick is evidently not an academic or professional philosopher but an amateur—a "garage philosopher"—but I find Dick compelling because, whatever he lacks in scholarly rigor, he more than makes up for in powers of imagination and in rich lateral and cumulative associations. Indeed, if one defines a philosopher as someone who creates concepts, then Dick is a philosopher."

Using this lens on Phil's work, we can see a book like *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* not as a bargain-bin novel by a sci-fi hack, but as a philosophical essay as powerful as one by Descartes, Kierkegaard, or Camus. *Stigmata* is, at its core, about the commodification of transcendence, but the story becomes very warped and spirals into itself for a valid reason: when Phil tried to write about the commodification of transcendence and sell that idea, he's commodifying "the commodification of transcendence" and building this inescapable, recursive loop.

While other PKD scholars might argue that *Ubik* or *Do Androids Dream* are Phil's most important novels, I'm here to defend *Stigmata* as his masterpiece. Phil was also a great admirer of *Finnegans Wake*, and this novel is his *Wake*, even though some of you might say *VALIS* is more suited to that comparison. Evidence for Phil's own support of *Stigmata*, lives in the *Exegesis*, as he writes:

"I think if anything I write is to be retained within

the cultural flow than *Three Stigmata* stands a very good chance. Either it will eventually be consigned to oblivion as a bizarre exercise in madness, or it will be considered a breakthrough book."

With this in mind, let's do a quick survey? Can we see a show of hands as to who here has actually read this book? Okay, now, keep your hands raised if you confident you are able to understand what's happening in this book? (ah, I see some of you took your Chew-Z this morning).

It's completely acceptable to be confused by *Stigmata*. In fact, Phil was confused by the book, and he was the one who wrote it. It's important to note that he finished this novel in 1964—a very amphetamine-fueled year if he ever had one, and *Stigmata* was the last of seven novels he wrote that

year—which doesn't leave a lot of time for editing. As he said in a later interview with *Rolling Stone*:

"The interesting one is the *Three Stigmata* ...I have read that and had the distinct impression that is an extraordinary book—in fact, so extraordinary that it may have no peer. It may be a unique book in the history of writing..."

You can see Phil being humble there-- this is *a unique book in the history of writing*. But then he also undercuts himself and goes on to write:

"It was also completely crazy. It was an insane book. It was not about insanity, it was insanity."

This quote reminds me of the surrealist Salvador Dali, who once said, "I don't do drugs—I *am* drugs." So, according to Phil, this book isn't about insanity, it *is* insanity.

You can see now, that *Stigmata*, as commodified transcendence, is also commodified insanity. One of the conclusions of this book is that transcendence may be equivalent to insanity—and in fact, that if divinity were offered to you as a consumable product—as something like Chew-Z, for example, than you probably shouldn't take it. Ingesting it might be identical to losing your mind.

For the characters in *Stigmata*, because the Chew-Z was given to them by the sinister Palmer Eldritch character, he becomes a mad god they can't escape even when they also become transcendent, all-powerful beings. You can see this idea echoed in Dick's 1977 essay, "The Android and the Human" where he writes:

"Reality, to me, is not so much something you perceive, but something you can make. You create it

more rapidly than it creates you. A human being is the reality the Creator built out of dust; the Creator is the reality a human being builds continually out of their own passions, their own determination.”

What Phil means here, is that after an individual becomes awakened to this Chew-Z or post-commodified state, they would be in total, perfect control over their existence, but that’s problematic because it would make them, to use Phil’s term “isomorphic” with their Creator or the Universe. Isomorphic is a geological or mathematical term that means “having the same state” like the cells of a crystal. If one being that has perfect control encounters another being with perfect control, the two would come into conflict, but it might be impossible to tell if the conflict originated from the other Creator, or if it comes from within the Self. This is also one of the major themes in *Stigmata* —the “war of concepts” that is analogous to our reality. As the critic Godersky writes of Phil’s work:

“Dick’s third major theme is his fascination with war and his fear and hatred of it. One hardly sees critical mention of it, yet it is as integral to his body of work as oxygen is to water.”

Stigmata is primarily centered on this war—the personal armageddon the individual has with their Creator or with their Self, which takes place at the same moment we are able to commodify transcendence. This theme isn’t new in science fiction—one needs to look no further than *Starmaker* by Olaf Stapledon or *Childhood’s End* by Arthur C. Clarke to see a similar themes—but I argue Dick’s version goes beyond storytelling and enters the realm of pure philosophy. Two different paths are offered in *Stigmata* in the form of drugs: the first, Can-D, is identical to Albert Camus’ absurdism, while the second, Chew-Z, is equivalent to Soren Kierkegaard’s existentialism. *Stigmata*’s storyline is about the battle between two supremely powerful drug dealers: a man named Leo Bule-ro and a post-human named Palmer Eldritch, but these two characters are stand-ins for their drugs, which in turn are only representations of the two warring branches of philosophy.

Both fictional drugs are also hallucinogens, but this makes sense because reality is what Phil considers as “the most pervasive hallucination in existence.”

In *Stigmata* , when the drug Can-D is ingested, the user is transported or “translated” to an idyllic, illusory reality, but one that it is indiscernible from actual reality. As it says in *Stigmata* :

“The Can-D addict was a believer, they affirmed the miracle of translation—the near sacred moment in which the miniature artifacts of the layout no longer represented Earth, but *became* Earth.” (there’s a Platonic forms thing going on here)

For a Can-D user under the drug’s influence, nothing exists outside of the shared hallucination. This concept is identical as to what Camus states in the *Myth of Sisyphus*, as he writes:

“There can be no absurd outside the human mind. Thus, like everything else, the Absurd ends with death,” as well as “I don’t know whether this world has a meaning that transcends it. But I know that I do not know that meaning and that it is impossible for me to know it”.

For both the Absurdist and the Can-D addict, nothing exists outside the “hallucination” of reality, they have *faith* in their “not-knowing.”

In contrast, their enemy is personified as the Absurd. In Camus’ *The Fall* (which I unfortunately can’t go into here because I’m out of time) the Absurd remains an abstract concept, but in *Stigmata* , the Absurd is Palmer Eldritch. With Chew-Z, Eldritch can invade the user’s reality and manifest his presence through the “three stigmata” vari-

ous body—represented by a robotic hand, metal teeth, and horizontally-irised, mechanical eyes. People under the influence of Chew-Z begin seeing these manifestations of Eldritch on everyone. Kierkegaard, having faith as a Christian, notes this identical observation about God in *Concluding Scientific Postscript*. He writes:

“Nature, the totality of Creation, is God’s work, and yet God is not there, but within the individual human being there is a possibility that an in-inwardness is awakened to a God-relationship, and then it is possible to see God everywhere” (214).

Kierkegaard and Dick show through Eldritch how this idea might be terrifying for an atheist or absurdist—being invaded by a deity against their will—and Camus is vehemently opposed to Kierkegaard’s thinking, even writing directly to him in *Sisyphus*:



Chew-Z Graphic by Nick Buchanan (see PaliGap on www.redbubble.com)

"...this darkness is my light...Kierkegaard may shout in warning: If a person has no eternal consciousness, if at the bottom of everything, there were merely a wild, seething force producing everything, both large and trifling, in the storm of dark passions, if the bottomless void that nothing can fill underlays all things, what would life be but despair?" (41).

Because Kierkegaard was dead almost a hundred years when Camus wrote this, I will defend him here. He writes in *Sickness unto Death*:

"...[a person] cannot consume [themselves], cannot get rid of [themselves], cannot reduce [themselves] to nothing. This is the formula for despair raised to a higher power" (355).

But Kierkegaard finds this idea liberating, as he then says: "Despair is the first element of faith" (362).

What does this mean? All of us as individuals must one day face the cliff of the Absurd, Camus goes to the cliff's edge, looks over, and stops. Kierkegaard looks over and shouts back to him as he jumps, "You must take the leap of faith," and meanwhile I imagine Phil running toward the cliff and leaping, only at the last second to turn back, and cling to the cliff, through this oscillation, of under-

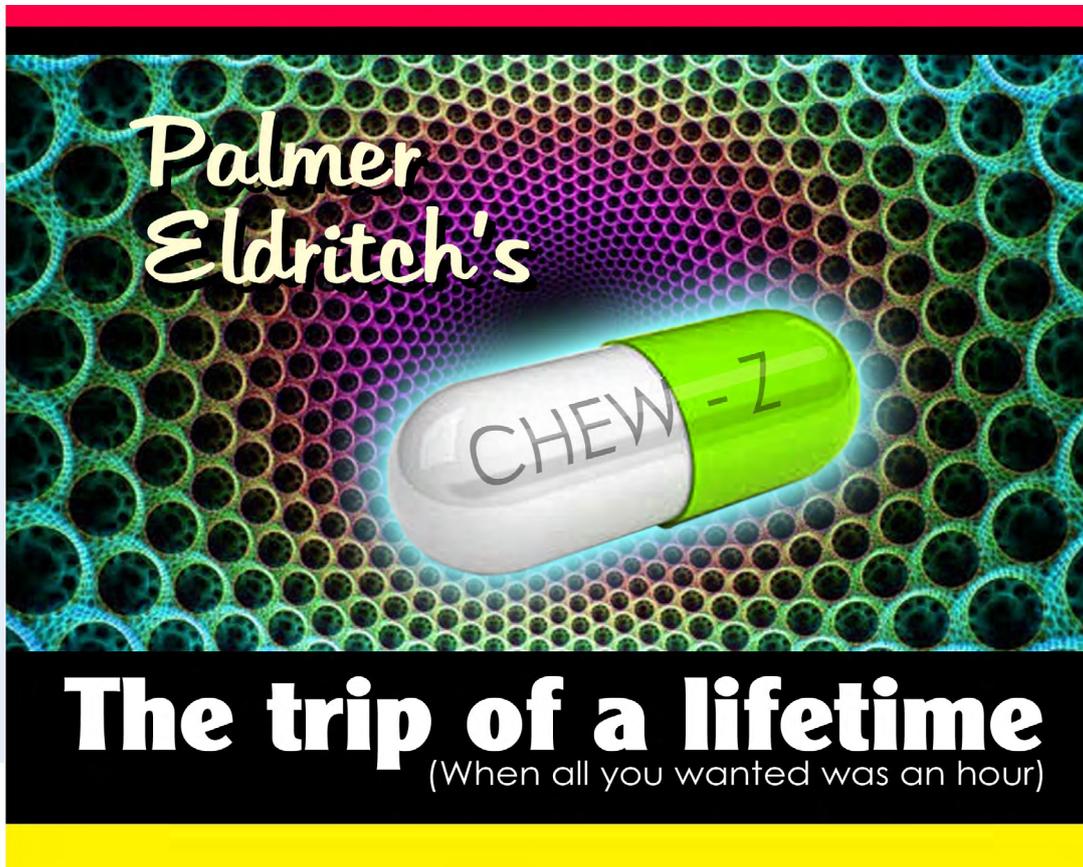
standing the mindset of both philosophers, there, clinging between the edge of reason and the abyss of the Eternal or the Absurd, he writes in one of his final essays, "Cosmogony and Cosmology," what I find is his most profound statement:

"It is not a human being who is estranged from the Creator, the Creator is estranged from itself."

This is clearly seen in *Stigmata* when the character Barney Mayerson, who is really a stand-in for Phil, goes on to think:

"Maybe that's the source of the Creator's knowledge, not experience, but unending, solitary brooding."

To conclude, you wouldn't want to take transcendence if it were offered to you as a product. It might be like a *really bad acid trip* for an unlimited amount of time, until you finally forgot who you were. According to Phil and the *Stigmata*, this kind of insane loneliness might also be the same mental state of our potential Creator, inferring that enlightenment is something you can take as a product, it's something you have to attain for yourself.



Palmer Eldritch Graphic by Nick Buchanan - available as a T Shirt, a poster, a sticker etc. (see PaliGap on www.redbubble.com)

Fugitive PKD material

Collected by Patrick Clark

Some odds and ends that don't seem to have been collected elsewhere. We are overdue for a full collection of Phil's non-fiction.

UNIQUE SINISTER TYPE NOTIFICATION

The East Gakville Freedom of Erotica Activity Circle, consisting of J.G. Newkom and Philip K Dick, having been so happily successful in their own private lives (sorry, no additional members wanted or admitted) announce their Phase One Goal: to destroy the institution of marriage wherever it can be unEarthed. In pursuit of this initial goal (to be followed later by various unnamed but highly busy additional stages along the same lines) the E. G. F. E. A. C. will attempt -- against organized opposition or more archaic individual reactionary efforts -- to invade the tight, high, inner circles of Bay Area Fandom and will spread the doctrine by words, deeds and WHATEVER ELSE APPEARS NECESSARY in order to achieve such greatly bountiful and useful and attractive reconstructions of present-day degenerate society. Ed Mesky is to be the medium of communication by which the progress of this new and powerful agency

makes known, from time to time, to fandom at large its successes and -- were they alas to occur -- failures. In hoc signes, et al. Salve! (Salve especially to your little helpmate, fella. And lots of luck.)

Signed.

Philip K Dick

Jack Newkom

It is agreed by the above signed not to sue Ed Mesky for any mention in his influential journal of the activities or intentions of the E. G. F. E. A. C. Und Gott mit uns! (Und mit dir auch!)

Niekas 10 (Dec. 1964) p. 49.

(Unpublished) Foreword to The Preserving Machine

The difference between a short story and a novel comes to this: a short story may deal with a murder; a novel deals with the murderer, and his actions stem from a psyche which, if the writer knows his craft, he has previously presented. The difference, therefore, between a novel and a short story is not length; for example, William Styron's *The Long March* is now published as a "short novel" whereas originally in *Discovery* it

was published as a "long story." This means that if you read it in *Discovery* you are reading a story, but if you



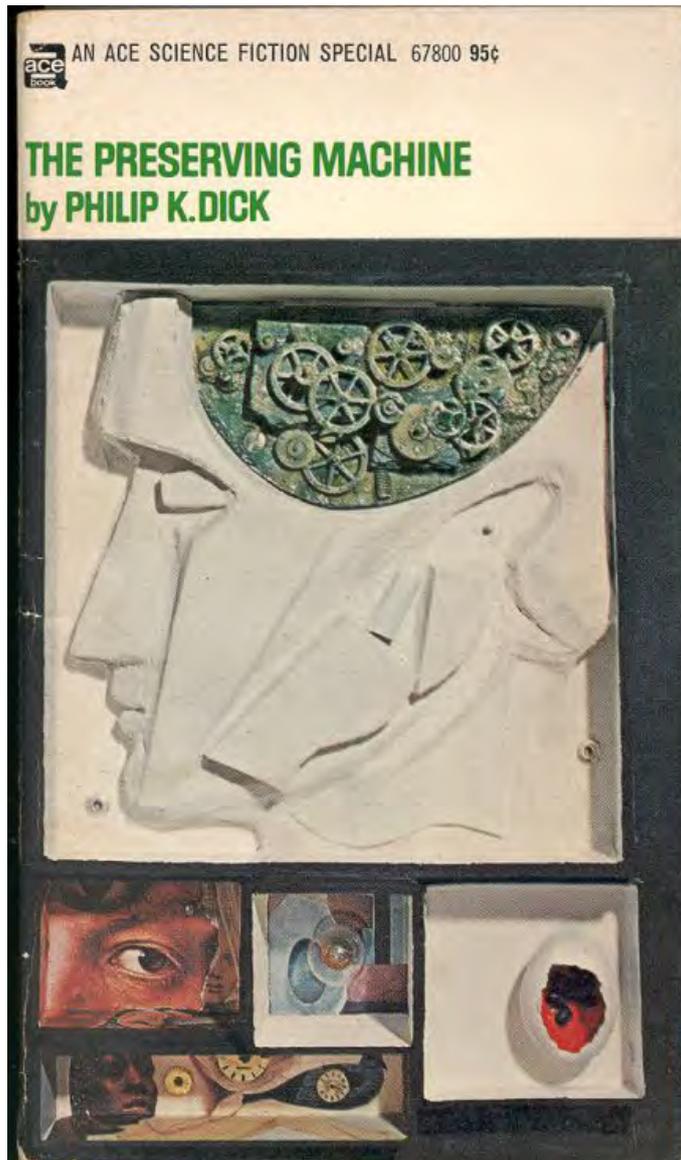
pick up the paperback version you are reading a novel. So much for that.

There is one restriction in a novel not found in short stories: the requirement that the protagonist be liked enough or familiar enough to the reader so that, whatever the protagonist does, the readers would also do, under the same circumstances...or, in the case of escapist fiction, would like to do. In a story it is not necessary to create such a reader identification character because (one) there is not enough room for such background material in a short story and (two) since the emphasis is on the deed, not the doer, it really does not matter-within reasonable limits, of course—who in a story commits the murder. In a story, you learn about the characters from what they do; in a novel it is the other way around: you have your characters and then they do something idiosyncratic, emanation from their unique natures. So it can be said that events in a novel are unique-not found in other writings; but the same events occur over and over again in stories, until, at last, a sort of code language is built up between the reader and the author. I am-not sure that this is bad by any means.

Further, a novel-in particular the SF novel-creates an entire world, with countless petty details-petty, perhaps, to the characters in the novel, but vital for the reader to know, since out of these manifold details his comprehension of the entire fictional world is obtained. In a story, on the other hand, you are in a future world when soap operas come at you from every wall in the room...as Ray Bradbury once described. That one fact alone catapulted the story out of mainstream

fiction and into SF.

What a SF story really requires is the initial premise which cuts it off entirely from our present world. This break must be made in the reading of, and the writing of, all good fiction...a made-up world must be presented. But there is much more pressure on an SF writer, for the break is far greater than in, say, "Paul's Case" or "Big Blonde"—two varieties of mainstream fiction which will always be with us.



It is in SF stories that SF action occurs; it is in SF novels that worlds occur. The stories in this collection are a series of events. Crisis is the key to story-writing, a sort of brinkmanship in which the author mires his characters in happenings so sticky as to seem impossible of solution. And then he gets them out... usually. He can get them out; that's what matters. But in a novel the actions are so deeply rooted in the personality of the main character that to extricate him the author would have to go back and rewrite his character. This need not happen in a story, especially a short one (such long, long stories as Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* are, like the Styron piece, really short novels). The implication of all this makes clear why some SF writers can write stories but not novels, or novels but not stories. It is because anything can happen in a story; the author merely tailors his character to the

event. So, in terms of actions and events, the story is far less restrictive to the author than is a novel. As a writer builds up a novel-length piece it slowly begins to imprison him, to take away his freedom; his own characters are taking over and doing what they want to do-not what he

First edition Ace 1969 (Ed. Terry Carr)

would like them to do. This is on one hand the strength of the novel and on the other, its weakness.

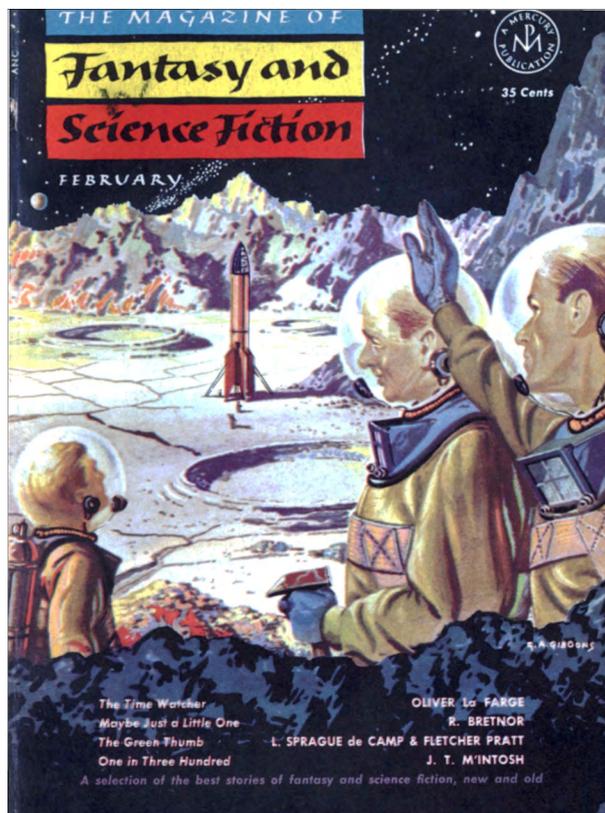
When I look over this collection of my stories, I can see what has been lost to me in the several years of strictly novel writing. These stories range in time and space; situations bubble up to the surface; characters struggle, and then the struggle is resolved and a new story begins. Relationships are made, broken. Persons appear, speak their piece, and then go away. The momentum of writing fades out briefly and then a new cast of people, and a new crisis, materializes.

In choosing these particular stories, Terry Carr has done a superb job. To start with he read the stories which I supplied as my idea of what a collection of Philip K. Dick stories ought to be like. Terry, however, went to incalculable trouble in getting together all my published stories; it took four years of work for him to finalize on the stories here contained. It includes, for example, the first story I ever sold: "Roog," to Torny Boucher's *F & SF*. It contains my first published story, "Beyond Lies the Wub." Then there are middle period stories such as "Pay for the Printer," "War Veteran," "Upon the Dull Earth." And, at last, recent stories, such as "If There Were no Benny Cemoli," "What the Dead Men Say," or "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale."

It would not be politic for me to say that I think this is a "superb collection by a master craftsman of the field," as the blurbs say about one author after another. What I do think – and want to say – is this. No better collection of my stories could be made. Terry Carr missed nothing. I myself I couldn't have done as well. It contains stories from every period of my writing, which covers a period of seventeen years. It is, to be blunt, definitive. (An English collection which appeared a number of years ago was decidedly not.) A brilliant editor can do so much to help an author, more than the reader realizes. "I must have read three

hundred thousand words by you," Terry told me when the collection was half finished. I wonder how many it finally come to.

One more thing: I would like to list my favorite two or three stories in the book. To me, "Beyond Lies the Wub" is pleasing; then "If There Were no Benny Cemoli," and finally "The Preserving Machine," which, like "Roog," was a very early story (1952) that I sold to Tony Boucher. Tony Boucher-what is the field going to do without him? It was his encouragement that got me to try submitting my stories; I had never imagined that they might sell. Consider this collection as dedicated to Tony and everything he represented. We shall never see another of his like. *Te amo, Tony. Forever.*



Science Fiction Studies Vol. 2, No. 1, (Mar., 1975), pp. 22-23.

Introduction to "Roog"

The first thing you do when you sell your first story is phone up your best friend and tell him. Whereupon he hangs up on you, which puzzles you until you realize that he is trying to sell stories, too, and hasn't managed to do it. That sobers you, that reaction. But then when your wife comes home you tell her, and she doesn't hang up on you; she is very pleased and excited. At the time I sold "Roog" to Anthony Boucher at *Fantasy and Science-Fiction* I was managing a record

store part time and writing part time. If anyone asked me what I did I always said "I'm a writer." This was in Berkeley, in 1951. Everybody was a writer. No one had ever sold anything. In fact most of the people I knew believed it to be crass and undignified to submit a story to a magazine; you wrote it, read it aloud to your friends, and finally it was forgot ten. That was Berkeley in those days.

Another problem for me in getting everyone to be awed was that my story was not a literary story in a little maga-

Cover Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction February 1953 (containing 'Roog')

zine, but an s-f story. S-f was not read by people in Berkeley in those days (except for a small group of fans who were very strange; they looked like animated vegetables). "But what about your serious writing?" people said to me. I was under the impression that "Roog" was a quite serious story. It tells of fear; it tells of loyalty; it tells of obscure menace and a good creature who cannot convey knowledge of that menace to those he loves. What could be more serious a theme than this? What people really meant by "serious" was "important." S-f was, by definition, not important. I cringed over the weeks following my sale of "Roog" as I realized the serious Codes of Behavior I had broken by selling my story, and an s-f story at that. To make matters worse, I now had begun to nurse the delusion that I might be able to make a living as a writer. The fantasy in my head was that I could quit my job at the record store, buy a better typewriter, and write all the time, and still make the payments on my house. As soon as you start thinking that they come for you and haul you away. It's for your own good. When you are discharged later on as cured you no longer have that fantasy. You go back to work at the record store (or the supermarket or polishing shoes). See, the thing is, being a writer is — well, it's like the time I asked a friend of mine what field he was going into when he got out of college and he said, "I'm going to be a pirate." He was dead serious.

The fact the "Roog" sold was due to Tony Boucher outlining to me how the original version should be changed.

Without his help I'd still be in the record business. I mean that very seriously. At that time Tony ran a little writing class, working out of the living room of his home in Berkeley. He'd read our stories aloud and we'd see — not just that they were awful — but how they could be cured. Tony saw no point in simply making it clear that what you

had written was no good; he assisted you in transmuting the thing into art. Tony knew what made up good writing. He charged you (get this) one dollar a week for this. One dollar! If ever there was a good man in this world it was Anthony Boucher. We really loved him. We used to get together once a week and play poker. Poker, opera and writing were all equally important to Tony. I miss him very much. Back in 1974 I dreamed one night that I had passed across into the next world, and it was Tony who was waiting for me to show up there. Tears fill my eyes when I think of that dream. There he was, but transformed into Tony the Tiger, like in that breakfast cereal ad. In the dream he was filled with delight and so was I. But it was a dream;

Tony Boucher is gone. But I am still a writer, because of him. Whenever I sit down to start a novel or story a bit of the memory of that man returns to me. I guess he taught me to write out of love, not out of ambition. It's a good lesson for all activities in this world.

This little story, "Roog," is about an actual dog — like Tony, gone now. The dog's actual name was Snooper and he believed as much in his work as I did in mine. His work (apparently) was to see that no one stole the food from

A cat walking across a room swerves suddenly and walks carefully around something we can't see. We sbrug, smile, and remark that cats are always doing that. Our hitherto amiable dog suddenly develops the irritating habit of barking and growling violently at certain innocent passersby. We still sbrug, wonder what's got into the mutt, and pass it off. Mr. Dick argues with frightening urgency that if we are wise, we will immediately investigate these oddities of animal behavior.

Roog

by PHILIP K. DICK

"ROOG!" THE DOG SAID. He rested his paws on the top of the fence and looked around him.

The Roog came running into the yard. It was early morning, and the sun had not really come up yet. The air was cold and gray, and the walls of the house were damp with moisture. The dog opened his jaws a little as he watched, his big black paws clutching the wood of the fence.

The Roog stood by the open gate, looking into the yard. He was a small Roog, thin and white, on wobbly legs. The Roog blinked at the dog, and the dog showed his teeth.

"Roog!" he said again. The sound echoed into the silent half darkness. Nothing moved nor stirred. The dog dropped down and walked back across the yard to the porch steps. He sat down on the bottom step and watched the Roog. The Roog glanced at him. Then he stretched his neck up to the window of the house, just above him. He sniffed at the window.

The dog came flashing across the yard. He hit the fence, and the gate shuddered and groaned. The Roog was walking quickly up the path, hurrying with funny little steps, mincing along. The dog lay down against the slats of the gate, breathing heavily, his red tongue hanging. He watched the Roog disappear.

The dog lay silently, his eyes bright and black. The day was beginning to come. The sky turned a little whiter, and from all around the sounds of people getting up echoed through the morning air. Lights popped on behind shades. In the chilly dawn a window was opened.

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his owner's garbage can. Snooper was laboring under the delusion that his owners considered the garbage valuable. Every day they'd carry out paper sacks of delicious food and carefully deposit them in a strong metal container, placing the lid down firmly. At the end of the week the

garbage can was full — where-upon the worst assortment of evil entities in the Sol System drove up in a huge truck and stole the food. Snooper knew which day of the week this happened on; it was

always on Friday. So about five a.m. on Friday, Snooper would emit his first bark. My wife and I figured that was about the time the garbagemen's alarm clocks were going off. Snooper knew when they left their houses. He could hear them. He was the only one who knew; everybody else ignored what was afoot. Snooper must have thought he inhabited a planet of lunatics. His owners, and everyone else in Berkeley, could hear the garbagemen coming, but no one did anything. His barking drove me out of my mind every week, but I was more fascinated by Snooper's logic than I was annoyed by his frantic efforts to rouse us. I asked myself, What must the world look like to that dog? Obviously he doesn't see as we see. He has developed a complete system of beliefs, a Worldview totally different from ours, but logical given the evidence he is basing it on.

So here, in a primitive form, is the basis of much of my twenty-seven years of professional writing: the attempt to get into another person's head, or another creature's head, and see out from his eyes or its eyes, and the more different that person is from the rest of us the better. You start with the sentient entity and work outward, inferring its world. Obviously, you can't ever really know what its world is like, but, I think, you can make some pretty good guesses. I began to develop the idea that each creature lives in a world somewhat different from all the other creatures and their worlds. I still think this is true. To Snooper, garbagemen were sinister and horrible. I think he literally saw them differently than we humans did.

This notion about each creature viewing the world differently from all other creatures — not everyone would

agree with me. Tony Boucher was very anxious to have a particular major anthologizer (whom we will call J.M.) read "Roog" to see if she might use it. Her reaction astounded me. "Garbagemen do not look like that," she wrote me. "They do not have pencil-thin necks and heads that wobble. They do not

eat people." I think she listed something like twelve errors in the story all having to do with how I represented the garbagemen. I wrote back, explaining that, yes, she was right, but to

a dog — well, all right, the dog was wrong. Admittedly. The dog was a little bit crazy on the subject. We're not just dealing with a dog and a dog's view of garbagemen, but a crazy dog — who has been driven crazy by these weekly raids on the garbage can. The dog has reached a point of desperation. I wanted to convey that. In fact that was the whole point of the story; the dog had run out of options and was demented by this weekly event. And the Roogs knew it. They enjoyed it. They taunted the dog. They pandered to his lunacy.

Ms. J.M. rejected the story from her anthology, but Tony printed it, and it's still in print; in fact it's in a high school text book, now. I spoke to a high school class who had been assigned the story, and all of the kids understood it. Interestingly, it was a blind student who seemed to grasp the story best. He knew from the beginning what the word Roog meant. He felt the dog's despair, the dog's frustrated fury and the bitter sense of defeat over and over again. Maybe somewhere between 1951 and 1971 we all grew up to dangers and transformations of the ordinary which we had never recognized before. I don't know. But anyhow, "Roog," my first sale, is biographical; I watched the dog suffer, and I understood a little (not much, maybe, but a little) of what was destroying him, and I wanted to speak for him. That's the whole of it right there. Snooper couldn't talk. I could. In fact I could write it down, and someone could publish it and many people could read it. Writing fiction has to do with this: becoming the voice for those without voices, if you see what I mean. It's not your own voice, you the author; it is all those other voices which normally go unheard.

The dog Snooper is dead, but the dog in the story, Boris, is alive. Tony Boucher is dead, and one day I will be, and, alas, so will you. But when I was with that high school class and we were discussing “Roog,” in 1971, exactly twenty years after I sold the story originally — Snooper’s barking and his anguish, his noble efforts, were still alive, which he deserved. My story is my gift to an animal, to a creature who neither sees nor hears, now, who no longer barks. But goddam it, he was doing the right thing. Even if Ms. J.M. didn’t understand.

Unearth no. 8 (Winter 1979) pp 106-09.

Memoir by Philip K. Dick

At the beginning of my writing career in the early fifties, *Galaxy* was my economic mainstay. Horace Gold at *Galaxy* liked my writing whereas John W. Campbell, Jr., at *Analog* considered my writing not only worthless but, as he put it, “Nuts.” By and large I liked reading *Galaxy* because it had the broadest range of ideas, venturing into the soft sciences such as sociology and psychology, at a time when Campbell (as he once wrote me!) considered psionics a necessary premise for science fiction. Also, Campbell said, the psionic character in the story had to be in charge of what was going on. So *Galaxy* provided a latitude that *Analog* did not. However, I was to get into an awful quarrel with Horace Gold, who had the habit of changing your stories without telling you: adding scenes, adding characters, removing downbeat endings in favor of upbeat endings. Many writers resented this. I did more than resent this; despite the fact that *Galaxy* was my main source of income I told Gold

that I would not sell to him unless he stopped altering my stories—after which he bought nothing from me at all.

“both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. were getting more and more like the Nazis”

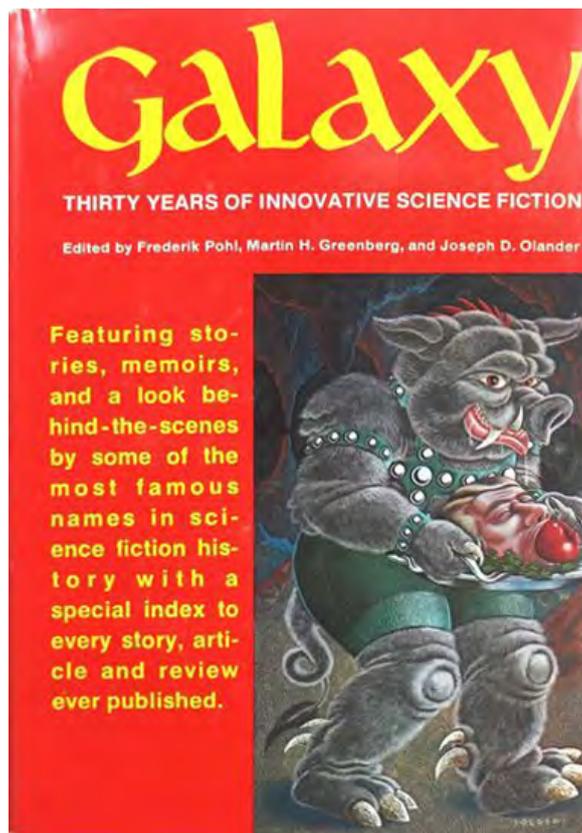
the Viet Nam War but war in general; in particular, how a war forces you to become like your enemy. Hitler had once said that the true victory of the Nazis would be to force its enemies, the United States in particular, to become like the Third Reich—i.e.,

It was not, then, until Fred Pohl became editor of *Galaxy* that I began to appear there again. “Oh, to Be a Blobel!” is a story which Fred Pohl bought. In this story my enormous antiwar bias is evident, a bias which had, ironically, pleased Gold. I wasn’t thinking of

a totalitarian society—in order to win. Hitler, then, expected to win even in defeat. As I watched the American military/industrial complex grow after World War II, I kept remembering Hitler’s analysis, and I kept thinking how right the son of a bitch was. We had beaten Germany, but both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. were getting more and more like the Nazis with their huge police systems every day. Well, it seemed to me there was a little wry humor in this (but not much). Maybe I could write about it without getting too deep into polemics. But the issue presented in this story is real. Look what we had to become in Viet Nam just to lose, let alone to win; can you imagine what we’d have had to become to win? Hitler would have gotten a lot of laughs out of it, and the laughs would have been on us ...

and to a very great extent in fact were. And they were hollow and grim laughs, without humor of any kind.

Frederick Pohl, ed., *Galaxy: Thirty Years of Innovative Science Fiction*, 1980 pp. 231-32.



The Antagonists of Philip K. Dick

by David Hyde

In many of Philip K. Dick's science fiction stories we remember the names of the heroes, the protagonists, the viewpoint characters. Joe Chip and Glen Runciter from *UBIK* pop easily to mind, but one has to think a moment to come up with their antagonist, Jory. And in my favorite novel, *THE UNTELEPORTED MAN*, Rachmael ben Applebaum (such an odd name I always thought) is easily recalled. But even with total recall his opponents: Theodoric Ferry and Sepp von Einem, are harder to arrive. Sometimes the antagonist is at the same time the protagonist, like in *A SCANNER DARKLY* or sometimes it's a computer as in *A MAZE OF DEATH*, "Vulcan's Hammer" and "Frozen Journey", and sometimes it's a ruddy great alien pig as in "Beyond Lies The Wub." But, generally, from the point of view of the protagonists, it is the antagonist that defines reality in Dick's stories.

This is plain in *EYE IN THE SKY* wherein the main character, Jack Hamilton, is faced with a series of realities which are exaggerations of the personal realities of other characters in the novel. For me, *EYE IN THE SKY* is a sort of touchstone story against which the myriad realities Dick creates can be compared. It is a straightforward story, simple and profound. But others of his tales are more complicated.

In *CLANS OF THE ALPHANE MOON*, to pick a novel at random, the 'enemy' is Mary Rittersdorf. As the ex-wife of protagonist Chuck Rittersdorf, she vindictively controls his miserable personal world. But, to the psychotic inhabitants of the moon Alpha III M2, she represents the authority of Earth. The impending appearance of the TERPLAN war ship from Earth is catastrophic to the clan's wobbly society. On the instant the knowledge of the ship is known reality changes for them. Dick here demonstrates how fragile is any consensus reality, or even, considering Chuck, any personal reality. An act of God, a natural catastrophe, foreign invasion, a random

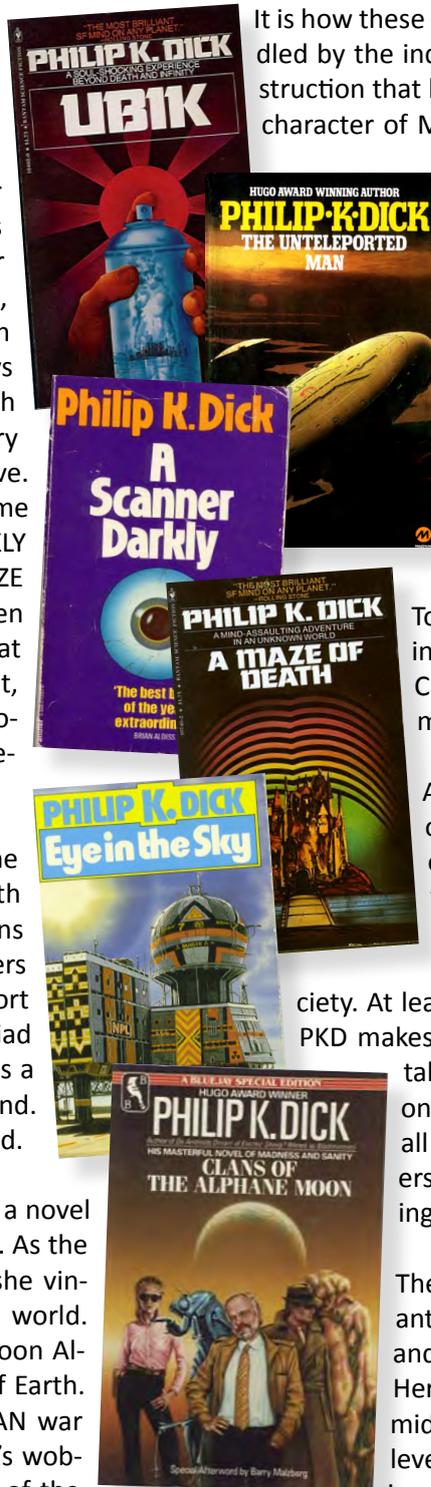
occurrence of anything at all can instantly destroy everything personal and societal; it's just a matter of scale. It is how these catastrophes, large and small, are handled by the individuals and societies undergoing destruction that brings life and hope to the stories. The character of Mary Rittersdorf, then, is bifold: in her personal life, such as in her dealings with Chuck, she is contemptuous of him, she wants and had expected him to do better. Here's Chuck in a moment of despondency:

"Listen," he said futilely. "Are you my mother or just my wife? I mean, is it your job to keep goading me on? Do I have to keep rising? Is it becoming TERPLAN President, is that what you want?"

To this PKD gives Mary no reply, but in the next scene there she is visiting Chuck in his low-rent, disgusting apartment and demanding all his money.

And on the larger scale she presents the official attitude of the do-gooder government only wanting to do the best for the neglected psychiatric patients on the Alphane moon, unconcerned with the viability of their unstable society. At least, this is Terra's surface motive. Here PKD makes the anti-psychiatric jab of reflection: take a look in the mirror before picking on anyone else. For, to make the point, all societies are unstable. And all observers are biased. One conclusion from reading this novel is that reality is fragile.

There is another PKD novel where the antagonists are only minorly personified and this is *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*. Here we have the valiant Mr. Tagomi, a mid-level bureaucrat, battling other mid-level bureaucrats – supposedly. For this is all official business, everything comes from the top and in *HIGH CASTLE* the top is mostly only alluded to. For the Nazi and Japanese societies now ruling the world, there is only one thing left: total domination. All resistance has been crushed. For the



Japanese, Americans are now yanks and utterly despised by the Japanese whose disposition is so fundamental that it is a mark of progressiveness for them to patronize the no-class yanks. But this patronage, this good will, shows a positive aspect to the Japanese society in this post-war, alternate world USA.

Unlike the Nazis. For the Nazis are planning Operation Dandelion. The destruction of the Japanese Home Islands. And they're colonizing Mars and turning Africa into one giant farm.

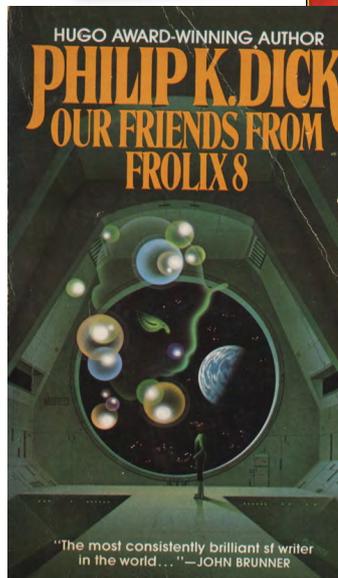
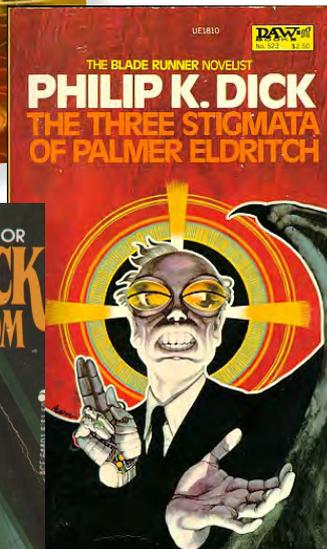
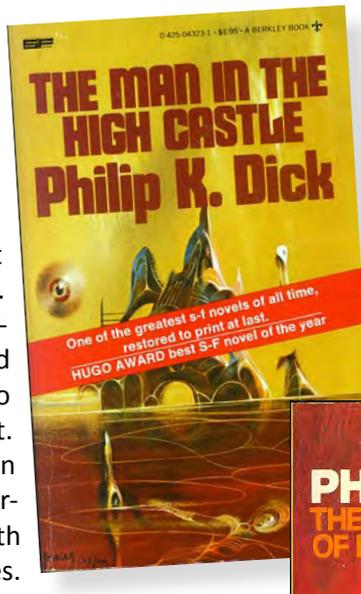
The contestants, then, become Japan and Germany, two different societies with different traditions. Japan: ancient, steeped in a self-respect based on class, a stratified island of fishermen stretched into the world by military conquest. But really just wanting to maintain the simple life. Compared to Germany: new, fast-moving and with respect for no one but themselves. Ruthless in achieving their goals. Held together by giant self-glorifying rallies and fear. Bureaucrats in Nazi Germany do what they're told. Because if they don't the noose is always handy and no one wants to dangle from a lamppost with a sign around their long neck saying 'Volksfeind!'. The bureaucrats of both countries represent these attitudes respectively. Other than the good impulses of Mr. Tagomi, whose name we remember, and the efforts of the German opposition, personified by Hugo We-gener – the real name of Mr. Baynes, the other bureaucrats need not be named.

From *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE* we learn that realities can be long-standing regardless of their nature. The Empire never ended.

Of all the antagonists in PKD's stories there is one who none who've read *THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH* will ever forget and this is Palmer Eldritch himself. In this novel we remember the antagonist and have to scratch our heads to recall the heroes: Leo Runcible and Barney Mayerson. That's because after taking the drug Chew-Z – Eldritch's drug – and on the taking of only one dose, the taker is henceforth contained in the world of Palmer Eldritch. There's no getting out of it, you never know if the seemingly normal world around you is the normal world or are you still inside the container of Palmer Eldritch? So, by the title of the novel itself, where the name Palmer Eldritch is prominent, and the very direction of the plot, Dick effects a clever switch of our expectations. Palmer Eldritch is not the hero but we remember him. I can think of only one other popular novel that pulls off a similar trick and that is Agatha Christie's *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*. Note the similarity in title structure to *THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH*.

This novel leads to the frightening realisation that nothing about oneself is necessarily real. Your reality, no matter how bad it is, is not even your own. This is particularly poignant in these days of Donald Trump, a Palmer Eldritch wannabe if ever there was one.

To pull another novel out of the hat we get *OUR FRIENDS FROM FROLIX 8*. In this story Thors Provoni is the hero who goes out to the stars to seek help for the downtrodden Old Men in their political struggle with the mutant psychics, the Unusuals, and the artificially evolved New Men who are characterized by large heads and advanced brains. From the point of the ordinary Old Men these two groups are their antagonists. They are about to become third-class citizens and the fact that Thors Provoni is their only hope shows how desperate is their plight. At the moment of the novel the society is led by the Council Chairman of the Extraordinary Committee for Public Safety, Willis Gramm, who is an Unusual. He reads minds. When Gramm intercepts a message from Provoni saying he's found help and is coming back he intuitively knows that he is in danger from an



Underman uprising and he opens the prison doors. But in the end this placatory move is not enough. Provon lands enveloped in an indestructible alien and he goes about correcting things. The alien transmits a signal that eliminates the psychic powers of all the Un-usuals and turns the super-smart New Men into simpletons. Situation solved.

And just so does Philip K. Dick expose the problems with rule by elites. Claims of special powers by the Unusuals are exposed as limited and irrelevant. Messiahs like Willis Gramm with feet of clay are a dime a dozen these days but when crisis comes, they all fail. You can see change coming but cannot stop it. Similarly with scientific or technical elites. In OUR FRIENDS FROM FROLIX 8 the brainiac New Men, the Scientists, are busy constructing something called the 'Big Ear' to be used to surveil the thoughts of the population and thence nullify the mind-reading abilities of the Unusuals. They're not working on an essential scientific problem. Like scientists of our own time who study distant stars while around them a par-boiled world steams towards destruction.

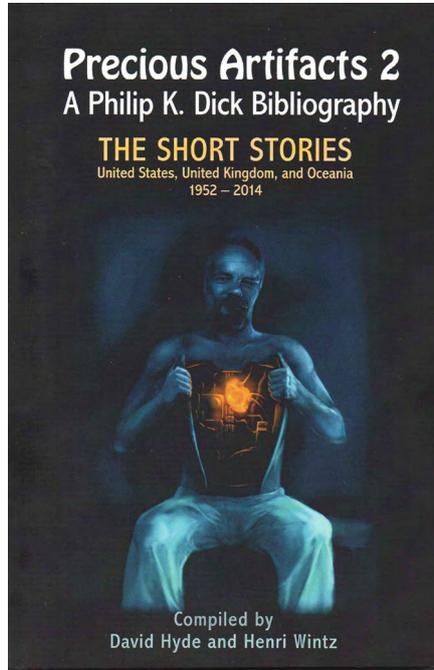
Thus a main thrust of FROLIX 8 is, again, things can change in an instant. Don't expect those in charge to do anything about it. It reminds me of the oft-alluded-to by Dick passage in The Bible, Corinthians 15: "Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet..." So it is with reality is what I understand from this.

In Gregg Rickman's Philip K. Dick: The Last Testament (1985) Phil describes his encounter with the girl from the pharmacy and the flashing fish sign: "In that instant as I stared at the gleaming fish sign and heard her words, I suddenly experienced what I later learned is called anamnesis – a Greek word meaning, literally, 'loss of forgetfulness.'

"I remembered who I was and where I was. In an instant, in the twinkling of an eye, it all came back to me. And not only could I remember it but I could see it. The girl was a secret Christian and so was I. We lived in fear of detection by the Romans. We had to communicate in cryptic signs.

She had just told me all this, and it was true."

Time is traversable. The Empire never ended. PKD had the hope that this instant transformation would happen, and for him it did in 1974.



In his short stories Dick presents many aspects of reality. A good early one is "The Last of the Masters", written in 1953. In this story Dick is not concerned with what reality is – it is Capitalism which has been destroyed by the anti-government Anarchist League centuries earlier – but with creating a new reality. But... there are problems. Old ideas die hard and a resurgent group of would-be capitalists led by an ancient robot has come to the attention of the ruling anarchists. It has been 200 years since they destroyed the governments of the world but they cannot allow such discarded ideas as corporate greed and militarization to once again rear their ugly heads. This pocket capitalist society is investigated by volunteer

agents of the Anarchist League and the ancient robot is destroyed. But in a twist at the end Dick reminds us that the seed of reality resurrection can be very small. From this story I get the uncomfortable notion that whatever one's reality is there is likely someone trying to destroy it.

To find a last story for this brief foray into reality I opened up the pages of PRECIOUS ARTIFACTS 2: The Short Stories (Wide Books 2014) to "If There Were No Benny Cemoli" (1963). The thing about Benny Cemoli is, of course, if he weren't there it would be necessary to invent him. When things go wrong someone has to take the blame, better a straw man be blamed than the actual miscreants be discovered. And with this story we are reminded that those in control of a reality don't want to give it up.

Each of PKD's stories can be observed from the antagonist's viewpoint and by so doing the nature of the protagonist's tribulations is revealed. Whatever reality is we know it is hard to define. Perhaps it never can be truly defined outside of its experience but reading the stories of Philip K. Dick reveals some ways in which it can be distorted by any damn thing and anybody at all at any time.

– Lord RC, June 2019

Two E-Mails, a Letter and a Mystery to Perry Kinman

by Patrick Clark & Perry Kinman

Perry,
Just noticed a few remarks concerning DEUS IRAE in the Bowling Green correspondence of 1968. You probably came across it in your research since that has been so incredibly thorough. Scott Meredith remarks, in a letter dated September 30 [1968], that Doubleday was anxious to see Phil's new book. He then says:

"And, of course, they're very anxious about DEUS IRAE, mostly because they'd like to contract for THE NAME OF THE GAME IS DEATH as soon as possible, but cannot until they have something more on DEUS IRAE. This is necessary because GAME is only in outline form, whereas the new one is complete in rough draft."

That would seem to confirm our original opinion that the delay in completing DEUS is causing problems for Phil in getting is other novels in the publishing pipeline.

But I have to say I'm confused. It's the whole problem of "what exactly is THE NAME OF THE GAME IS DEATH?" Is it MAZE by another name? On October 21 Phil sent the manuscript of A MAZE OF DEATH to Larry Ashmead at Doubleday (or so he says in a letter to Donald Wollheim dated October 22). Certainly Phil could have pounded out the full length of MAZE in a couple of weeks -- you know his habits -- but is that from the outline of GAME that Meredith refers to or was the MAZE Phil refers to the "new novel" that Meredith says Doubleday is anxious to see?

Did NAME become FROLIX 8? Phil is either working on already FROLIX at this point or at least gathering notes for an outline. The handwritten outline and notes were part of the 1968 Bowling Green papers. On the other hand, in the October 22 to Wollheim, Phil state that he's interested in doing another novel for Ace and "I have this one

new novel in the works intend to start on another as soon as possible." "This one new novel in the works" -- is it FROLIX? Is it NAME OF THE GAME? What the hell is it? By November 13 Phil is telling Terry Carr that he has sent Wollheim "three and a half chapters and an outline (or is it <<outline>>) of an even more recent novel I'm working on, one especially for Ace that no one has seen." Surely this is FROLIX.

Anyway, the other reference to DEUS in the Bowling Green '68 letters is a letter to Roger Zelazny dated November 13 where Phil thinks, "Maybe the viewpoint -- and locale -- could shift, at about page 55, to the God of Wrath himself." But I imagine you know that one already.

Patrick

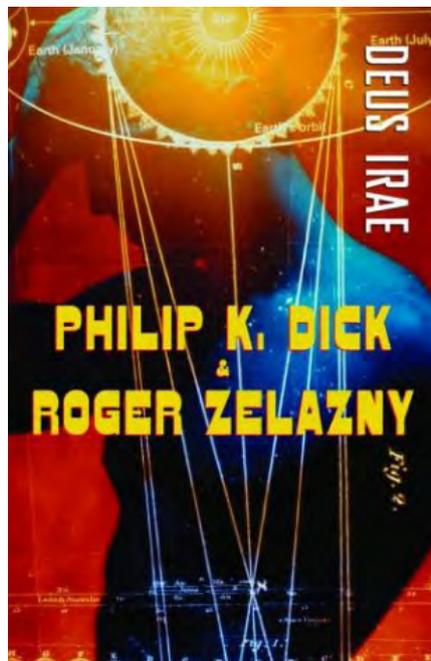
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Perry,

Some notes...

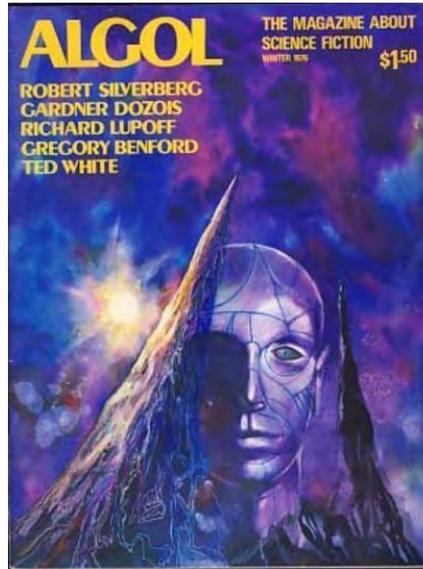
1. Phil is already referring to his new novel as DEUS IRAE ["actually I started it"] as early as May 1964. In a letter to James Blish dated May 22, 1964, Phil says he's submitted an outline to his agent to shop around. Scot Meredith seems to have been successful and in 1964 Phil appears to have a contract with Doubleday to deliver the novel - which, as we know, was a long time coming. Sutin remarks that the finished novel was remarkably faithful to the outline [pp. 309-10] which suggests that Sutin has seen the actual outline. But where? Sutin provides no citation. 3 STIGMATA was delivered to SMLA on March 18, 1964. If Phil is talking about DEUS IRAE in May he must have started thinking/writing immediately after finishing 3 STIGMATA. But where does KNEELING LEGLESS MAN fit into this chronology?

2. Ted White (in the 1976 ALGOL column) says that Phil showed him the manuscript to DEUS IRAE in 1966 and he took it back East with him to study and, possibly, collaborate on. White describes the ms. as being much more than an outline, more an extended es-



say on which direction the novel should go. This does not particularly sound like the 50 page draft that became the opening chapters of the finished novel. In the same column White relates he passed the ms. on to Roger Zelazny in 1968. (Sutin says 1967 by the way (again without a citation) but surely White is the better source. On the other hand that causes a problem of chronology. See below.)

3. By late October 1967 Zelazny had contacted Phil about a possible collaboration. Phil replied enthusiastically in a letter dated October 26 accepting the offer of co-writing a novel and offering a somewhat detailed possible plot. But this plot is not DEUS IRAE. It appears to be JOE PROTAGOROS/NAME OF THE GAME IS DEATH which Phil had written circa April/May 1967. (The outline was published, as you know, years later in NEW WORLDS with an introduction by Paul Williams.)



By May 1968 Phil and Zelazny are actively (albeit slowly) working on DEUS IRAE as Phil remarks in a letter to “Andy” dated May 21, 1968.

4. My research stopped in 1968 but you can see the problem with the chronology. Presumably Zelazny nixed the JOE PROTAGOROS plot and went with DEUS IRAE instead. But if White did not send him the manuscript until 1968 then why did Zelazny contact Phil in October 1967 with the idea of collaborating? The assumption has been he read the DEUS IRAE outline ms., presumably sent to him by White, and approached Phil as a result. The simplest solution is that White has the year wrong, that he sent Zelazny the ms. in 1967, not 1968. But if so, why did Phil suggest a totally unrelated plot? And Phil’s letter of October 26 is curious in that he does not mention DEUS IRAE at all. He also seems genuinely surprised, though delighted, to have heard from Zelazny in the first place. As if it was unexpected.

One possibility is that Zelazny approached Phil before seeing the DEUS IRAE ms.; that he contacted Phil to suggest collaboration for reasons unrelated to DEUS IRAE at all. Phil then kicks around the idea of JOE P but for one reason or another this did not pan out. (We really need to

see Zelazny’s letters to Phil - assuming they are intact - since Phil’s own letters for 1967-68 are so sparse, at least as published so far.)

Paul Williams in the NEW WORLDS introduction says Scot Meredith shopped the JOE P. outline to Doubleday but they passed on it - most likely because they already HAD an unfulfilled contract with Phil to deliver DEUS IRAE dating back to 1964. At that point perhaps Phil (or Meredith or Larry Ashmead?) suggested Zelazny continuing DEUS IRAE instead. Part of it was already written, after all, and had already been accepted by Doubleday. And only then did White send the ms. on to Zelazny, in 1968 as White states. Curiously, Doubleday did accept DO ANDROIDS DREAM and MAZE in 1968 even though DEUS IRAE was still undelivered and I wonder if being able to tell Doubleday that he now had a collaborator -- hot new writer Roger Zelazny -- working with him on DEUS soothed Doubleday enough for them to take the new works. Just speculation of course....

(You know what this is all about, don’t you? It the absurd hope, the pointless dream, the impossible wish, that somewhere out there is an unpublished Philip K. Dick SF novel.)

*

13 April 2003
Dear Perry,

I went back to my files, still hoping to figure out THE NAME OF THE GAME IS DEATH. I had forgotten all about the two outlines that appeared in NEW WORLDS #2: “Joe Protogoras is Alive and Living on Earth” and — of course! — “The Name of the Game is Death.” According to Paul Williams both outlines were written in 1967. Scott Meredith received “Joe Protogoras” on May 1, 1967 and “Name of the Game” on May 4th. The two weeks later “additional material for the science fiction outline The Name of the Game is Death.” Meredith shopped both of them around but without much luck. Doubleday and Avon rejected “Joe Protogoras” outright. Berkeley received it next and sat on it for a year and a half before finally accepting it on

January 31, 1969. Phil stiffed them and never wrote the novel; Williams says Phil didn't finally fulfill the Berkeley contract with until 1978 when he sent them the collection THE GOLDEN MAN. What this also means is that by 1969 Phil had two unfulfilled contracts with two different publishers: DEUS IRAE for Doubleday and JOE PROTAGORAS for Berkeley. By the way, the plot to "Joe Protagoras" looks suspiciously like "Today the World" the unfinished story that appeared in PKDS Newsletter 20. "Today the World" is thought to date from 1963.

"Name of the Game" went first to Terry Carr at Ace who held it for five months before declining. It then went to Avon and Lancer who both rejected it. At last Meredith submitted it to Doubleday in May 1968 possibly because Doubleday had requested something by Phil: "By the way — I got a letter from Larry Ashmead at Doubleday asking for another novel. This is a good sign, I think." — PKD to Scott Meredith: February 28, 1968 (Selected Letters vol. 1). Considering that Phil had not yet delivered DEUS IRAE this seems like a strange request. It might explain why Meredith originally submitted "Name of the Game" to the paperback houses (Ace, Avon, Lancer) first rather than directly to Doubleday in 1967.

Then, in September 1968 Phil attended a science fiction convention in San Francisco nicknamed "Baycon." Shortly after the convention he wrote to Ashmead: "Meanwhile, I have started on a novel which I think is a giant step forward for me. I am not going to do an outline on this one. It is, I think a totally new sort of novel for me, one in which the nature of reality is firmly stated; there won't merely be layer after layer of illusion. I had the idea before the Baycon, and when I came away from it I had a totally new piece of material emerging, perhaps because of what I said there and what was said to me. Perhaps I was too timid in the past to dare say what reality was; I only felt competent to say what was illusion. My confidence in myself is much greater at this point than it ever was before in my seventeen years of s-f writing and selling." ~ PKD to Lawrence Ashmead: September 7, 1968. This novel

would eventually become A Maze of Death. It seems to me that Phil abandoned his original concepts from 1967 and struck off on a completely new direction as "Joe Protagoras" and "Name of the Game" plots have nothing in common with MAZE. In fact I believe that "The Name of the Game Is Death" was never the new novel's working title and certainly not a source of ideas at all and that it refers only to the 1967 outline. (Incidentally, the title The Name of the Game Is Death had already been taken. Dan Marlowe had a crime novel by that name published in 1962.)

Despite what he told Ashmead, Phil did indeed write an outline. It is part of the collection at Bowling Green State University. There are a number of differences between the outline and the finished novel though in the main Phil stayed on course. But it is clear from the notes that Phil's original intention was not to write a "mystery novel" at all. The new novel was always intending to be strictly a work of science fiction, albeit with significant theological content.

The 1968 outline has the working title of "The Hour of the T.E.N.C.H." This is also the title on the carbon copy of the draft in the Bowling Green collection as well, which, again, casts doubt upon the "Name of the Game" as source material. The title is a bit of a mystery. Phil used the MAZE title — or a variation of it - in his letter to Donald Wollheim on October 22, 1968:

"My situation is this: yesterday I sent off a new novel, A MAZE WITH DEATH, to Scott [Meredith]. It is an s-f mystery, and Larry Ashmead is interested in it for a series of "future mystery novels," as they're called."

"The Hour of the T.E.N.C.H." draft at Bowling Green must then pre-date October 22. Perhaps it is the "rough draft" Meredith speaks of in his September 30 letter. The manuscript has numerous handwritten corrections, all fairly minor in nature, and when Phil typed the final draft for

"My confidence in myself is much greater at this point than it ever was before"

Doubleday perhaps he changed the title to A MAZE WITH DEATH. On November 13th Phil wrote to Roger Zelazny: “Speaking of Doubleday ~ I got news from my agent today that Doubleday has bought my most recent novel, a sort of “future mystery,” as it’s going to be called (working title: A MAZE WITH DEATH.)”

Note again the alternative wording of the title. The actual title was still up in the air in 1970 as the book was nearing publication. Phil kept tinkering with it until the last minute: “I, too, prefer MAZE OF DEATH, but I think a THE should start it; i.e., THE MAZE OF DEATH (or possibly A MAZE OF DEATH). So go ahead.” (PKD to Judith M. Glushanok: January 13, 1970)

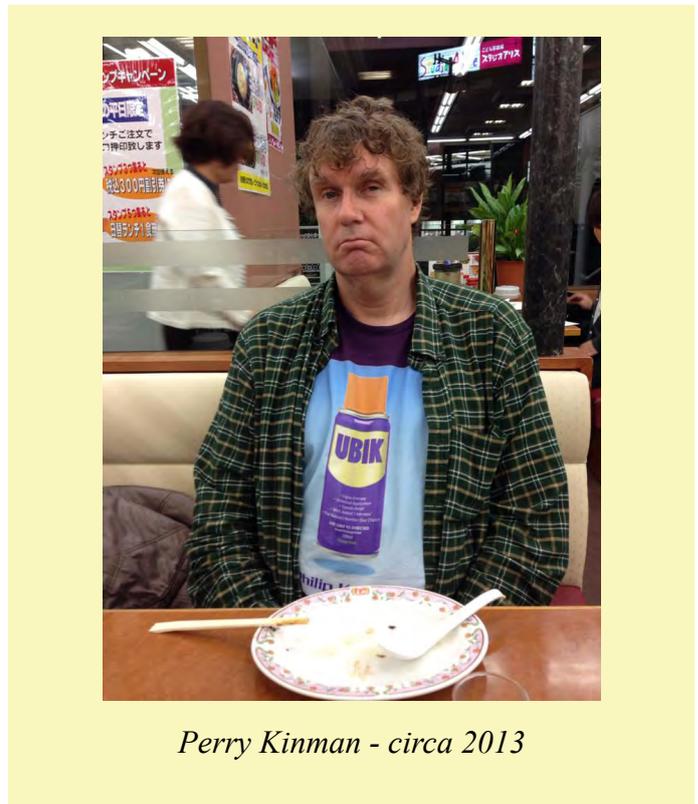
So my guess would be this. There are three manuscripts in contention at Doubleday in September-October 1968; the unfinished DEUS IRAE, the outline to THE NAME OF THE GAME IS DEATH and the completed rough draft of what will soon be titled A MAZE WITH DEATH. MAZE is the “new one” they speak of. The relevant paragraphs of the September 30th letter from Meredith read: “Doubleday, of course, is very anxious to see the new book you’ve mentioned to us and to Larry, and if you could send in a completed half, say in two weeks or so, they’ll be able to issue an immediate contract. And, of course, they’re very anxious about DEUS IRAE, mostly because they’d like to contract for THE NAME OF THE GAME IS DEATH as soon as possible, but cannot until they have something more on DEUS IRAE. This is necessary because GAME is only in outline form, whereas the new one is completed in rough draft.”

Meredith may have the manuscript for “The Hour of the T.E.N.C.H.” in its possession but from the sense of the letter wants a more polished draft to send to Doubleday — though they may have contacted Larry Ashmead about the manuscript’s existence. Meanwhile, while all of this is going on, the outline to “Joe Protagoras” is sitting at Berkeley waiting for them to make up their minds; Phil is collaborating with Roger Zelazny on the writing of DEUS IRAE (see the letter of November 13); and Phil is also working on a novel for Donald Wollheim at Ace — what will become FROLIX 8 (see the letter to Terry Carr of November 13th as well). It’s a wonder if Phil himself could have kept it all straight, let alone you and I.

But the upshot, I’m afraid, is that there probably really is no unpublished PKD science fiction novel. Just the out-

lines to “Joe Protagoras” and “The Name of the Game.” Yet there may be at least part of something still out there even if not a completed novel. In a letter to Zelazny on October 26, 1967 Phil pitches an idea for collaboration on a new book. This is before the DEUS IRAE collaboration comes up. The plot he sends to Zelazny appears to be a merger of the “Joe Protagoras” and “Name of the Game” outlines. Paul Williams points this out in his NEW WORLDS introduction. Here is the interesting part. Phil writes: “I have pages and pages of notes on this novel, including a full list of well developed characters. What I do not have is any sort of final part — i.e. resolution ~ of the novel. In other words I have half a novel....”

“Half a novel” finished is the assumption here. Though perhaps that reads too much into it. It does sound like Phil continued to think about his two orphaned outlines even though they are both circulating separately amongst various publishers. Or he may have spontaneously melded the two together in his excitement at the idea of working with Zelazny, who he obviously greatly admired. But the plot described in the October 26th letter is sufficiently different so that it seems more likely that Phil had been thinking about the matter at least somewhat before Zelazny came into the picture. What he apparently is not thinking about at all is DEUS IRAE. And isn’t that odd?



Perry Kinman - circa 2013

We should remember from time to time that not everyone is or was enthralled by our guy, Phil. The following appeared in the UK fanzine *Speculation* no. 29 October 1971 pp. 26-28.

What Do They See in Philip K Dick?

By Tony Sudhery

It baffles me. It doesn't even seem to be a case of mere fashion, of people becoming devotees of Philip K. Dick by infection from other devotees, because I've encountered cases of Dick-mania which have certainly developed in complete isolation from the main epidemic. This makes me feel uneasy; if so many people enjoy Dick's books and discover them independently, there must be something there to enjoy. I want to know what it is.

Well, what do they say? I've been working from three articles, one by Michael Moorcock in *Vector*, from 1966, one by Bob Parkinson in *Speculation* (1969), and particularly a very useful and specific article by John Brunner in *New Worlds* (1966). From these I've pieced together, some sort of picture of the writer who has attracted so much praise. It's an image of a deeply serious, brilliantly inventive and absorbingly entertaining writer, who never lapses from the consistently high standards that he sets himself. John Brunner says he is "the most consistently brilliant SF writer in the world".

This writer they describe has certain characteristic preoccupations, rather abstract and philosophical ones. In fact he seems to be mainly concerned with "the nature of reality". But he can carry on profound discussions on these themes without detracting from the superficial story he's telling; and this is always meticulously well constructed, and really tremendously gripping. Indeed, some of his admirers grumble at him for being too enjoyable. He's not a sensational writer, the man in this picture; his style and

characterization are modest, but they're clear and direct - well, he's a super craftsman in every way. Ultimately, though, everything is at the service of his fundamental themes.

Well, this description is of a writer whom I ought to enjoy very much indeed. I don't like sensationalism, prefer icy SF to be low-key and thoughtful, and I'm a sucker anyway for a good gripping plot. So give or take a couple of phrases such as "the nature of reality" it sounds great - everything I look for in SF, all in one writer. But to turn from criticism about him to books by him is a terrible let-down!

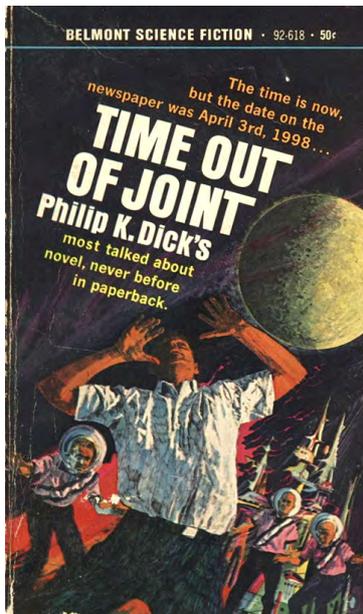
I had a look at the books he'd actually written. And I looked, and I looked, and I looked...and I found not a trace of the writer all those articles had been describing. In fact, I didn't find anything much.

There's one good Dick novel - just one THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE. It won him a Hugo, and it deserved to, (though not for the reasons that the Dick-maniacs probably think). Otherwise his books are utterly undistinguished; they're occasionally moderately enjoyable - TIME OUT OF JOINT, for example, gave me a comfortable evening's reading - but they're completely ordinary and, apart from a rather hectic feel in the more hastily written ones, quite flavourless.

Well, not quite flavourless. After exposing myself to Dick books constantly for about a week, I find that they have had some effect on my emotional taste-buds; they've produced a dull, grey, numb feeling, a sort of generalised ache. It feels just like the onset of 'flu'.

Now this feeling doesn't correspond to anything in Dick's characters, situations or themes. If it did it might be a basis for praise rather than criticism. But I think it arises from a curious numbness and dullness in his writing - you might think it was a zombie writing. Listen to this paragraph from TIME OUT OF JOINT (and remember,

'they're completely ordinary... quite flavourless'



this is one I enjoyed). The character has just arrived in his office to find a note which makes him decide he must leave again at once:

I can't believe it, Black thought to himself. He stuck the note in his pocket, got up from his desk and went to the closet for his coat, closed the window, left his office and walked down the corridor and past the receptionist's desk, outside on to the path and then across the parking lot to his car. A moment later he had backed out on to the street and was driving downtown.

You know, it's hard work being a character in a Dick novel. But to John Brunner this is "an almost hallucinatory sharpness of detail in whatever non-real world he cares to create".

Dick's clumsiness with language shows in many other ways (a tiny examples in NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR, which is about prosthetic surgery, he keeps referring to "artiforgs". I spent half the novel trying to work out what a forg might be), but I don't think there's any point in being pedantic about this. Though it's worth pointing this clumsiness out, for Dick does have some claim to being a stylist - that is, in the restricted sense, of being a pasticheur. For example, in THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH he writes a very clumsy, jargon-laden prose - ungainly and stiff. - which is just like the prose, that the NASA officials use, and which is very appropriate to the sort of world he is describing here.

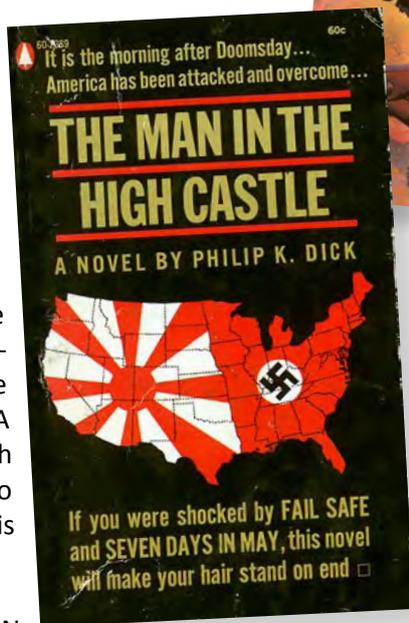
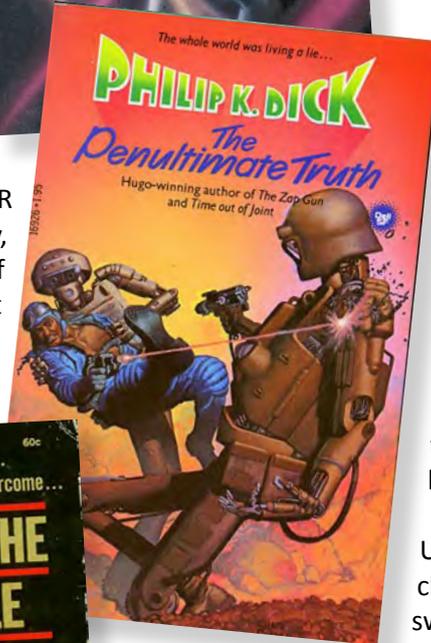
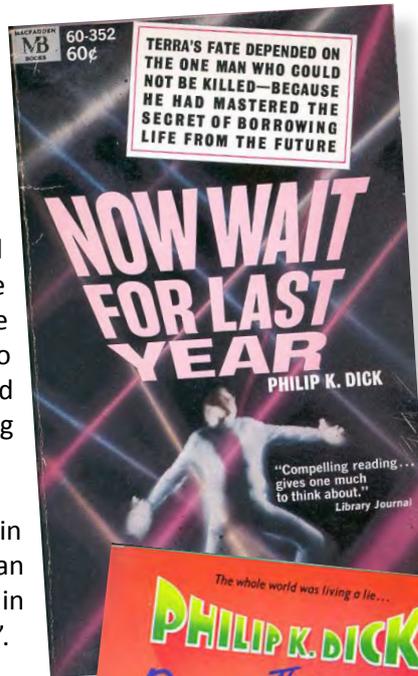
And again, in THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, Dick distinguishes the various nationalities by slight differences in style. This is

one of the things that don't quite come off in the novel - the various national styles aren't quite right. Nevertheless, this style-juggling must be put on the credit side of the ledger.

The other technical aspects of Dick's writing - tension, mood, point of view and so on - show the same picture as his style; normally mediocre, but at least competent, they can occasionally rise to an interesting effect but are much more likely to lurch into disaster. The outstanding exception is his characterization, which is good - in some places his characters actually develop, and convincingly at that. But since the characters are never the central concern of Dick's novels, this doesn't help him much. (Except, again, for THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE; there the characters do matter and they do come off.) Since I once cited the ugliness of THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH in a general criticism of Dick, perhaps it's worth emphasizing that this is not representative of his usual style.

Usually any interest in the characters in a Dick novel is swamped by the plot they're caught up in, or the science fictional idea they're illustrating. And what plots! And what ideas! The plots snaggle along in tighter and tighter knots of confusion and complexity, while the narration gets vaguer and vaguer, more and more careless, until ultimately they don't so much unravel themselves as just sort of fray at the ends. The ideas are badly thought out and inconsistent, when they're not trivial variants of traditional ideas.

Let me anticipate an objection. "But none of this matters. This is fiddling, carping, technical criticism. You ought to be looking at the underlying theme of the Dick novels." Well, I don't know what a "theme" is if it can be so easily



divorced from technical matters, particularly if it can be divorced from plot, idea, and concrete imagination. But let's see where something like this might take us.

One phrase crops up again and again in Michael Moorcock's writings on Philip K. Dicks: "the nature of reality" (actually, it crops up again and again in Michael Moorcock's writings on everything). In *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*, as everyone knows, one of the characters receives from the I CHING, which is used as an oracle, the information that his world is not the real world at all; in reality Japan and Germany lost the war. After this ending, Moorcock tells us, "the question we are left asking is 'What is reality?'"

But I don't think it is. I think the question we are left asking is "What does Philip K. Dick mean by reality?" - which is a much less interesting question. And if we do ask this question, then we do so as the first step on the positivist road to the conclusion that Dick's ending, though amusing, is ultimately a meaningless piece of frivolity.

The true interest in *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE* for me lies in its treatment of conquest and government - a serious theme (unlike "the nature of reality"), and one which Dick develops here to a far greater extent than anything in any of his other novels. Everywhere else his serious themes, if any, suffer the fate of his superficial plots - they just fade away.

For a striking example, take *THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH*. There is one point in this novel where Dick seems to be stating his theme quite explicitly, and saying "What I'm talking about is this Religion is the opium of the people," For perhaps half the length of the novel, it did indeed seem to be about that. Fine. Unfortunately,

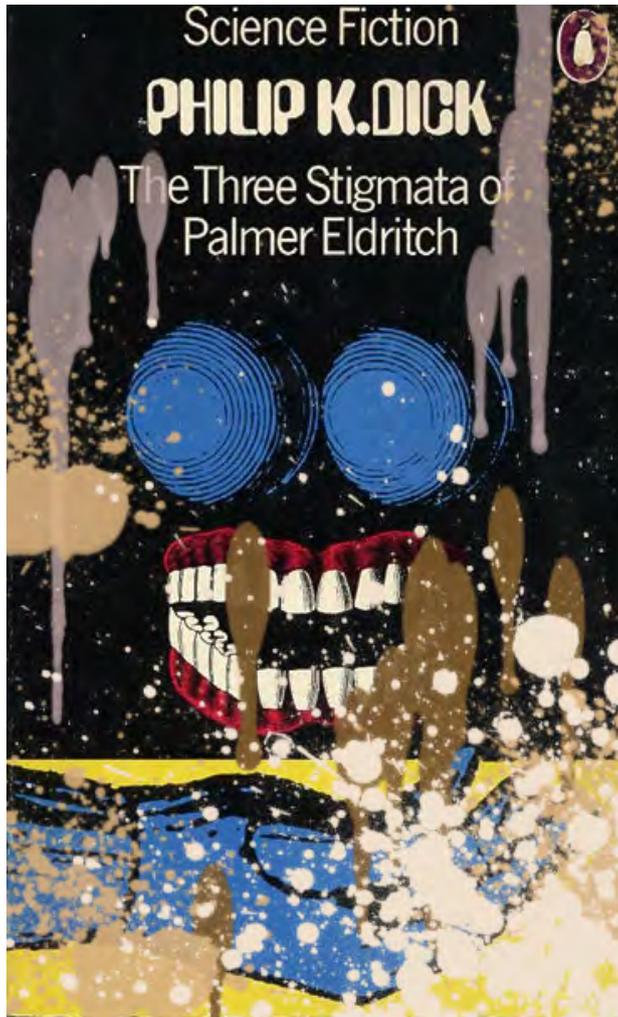
when he's got halfway through, he just leaves this theme hanging in the air while he tries to spin a complicated plot involving multiply-connected hallucinations, with sane characters dreaming other characters| and at the same time being dreamt by them. He tries to get back to his original theme at the end, but for me he fails when he apparently can't even keep track off his own labyrinths - and when the plot falls apart, so does the theme with it.

Well, there you are. There's my picture of Philip K Dick. I have an uncomfortable feeling, though, that at least in the immediate future it will remain a minority report. I wish I knew why.

The essay ends [here](#). Speculation's editor, Peter R. Weston, then remarks, "I'd like to return to more discussion of Philip K. Dick in the next Speculation." A few letters did appear in the following issue, number 30, Spring 1972. Of particular note is this one on page 50 from Michael Moorcock:

"I've changed my mind about Philip K Dick since 1966, and, frankly, haven't read anything since *THREE STIGMATA*. I think to some extent I was enthusiastic about Dick's potential, and haven't found that he's developed it. A lot more interesting writers have emerged since 1966 (Disch, Sladek, etc) and others like Silverberg have hit new and more exciting veins so I'd like to make it plain to one and all, that my stuff on Dick is nearly six years old and my enthusiasm has waned though I still think Dick was good for the time and at the time, particularly in *MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*."

Et tu, Michael?



The Three Stigmata abused by Nick Buchanan

“It’s Enough To Keep You Awake At Night,” PKD & Gnosticism: Facts vs. Wishful Thinking Part 2 – as a spiffy postscript-augmentation-supplement-addendum

by Frank. C. Bertrand

In the first part of this essay, in *PKD Otaku* #38, December 2018, p. 28, one was able to glean two important facts from the evidence presented. First is that Philip K. Dick did **not** start using the words “gnostic” and “Gnosticism” in his extant and available essays, interviews, and letters until **after** his “experiences” of February and March 1974. That is some 22 years **after** he was first published in July 1952.

The second item is that in spite of available evidence to the contrary, an increasing number of self-proclaimed PKD scholars, critics, pundits, and hangers-on continue to strive to characterize Philip K. Dick as a mystical-gnostic-guru, a true believer in Gnosticism. Such subjective efforts are a prime example of the post hoc ergo propter hoc fallacy, that is, correlation does not imply causation.

As Phil’s best narrative biographer, Lawrence Sutin (a Harvard Law School lawyer by training, 1976), states it:

“For Phil the Gnostic view that our world is an illusory reality created by an evil, lesser deity was utterly compelling. It could account for the suffering of humankind, as well as for startling phenomena such as a vision of “absolute evil” (the Gnostic god’s true visage!) in the sky. Not that Phil would have labeled himself with conviction as a Gnostic. But as a fiction writer, Phil naturally gravitated to theories that spurred his imagination

and provided a useful framework for his experiences – and Gnosticism fir the bill most excellently.” [*Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick*, NY: Harmony Books, 1989, p. 128]

More importantly and to the issue of facts vs. wishful thinking, Sutin writes in his “Introduction” to *The Shifting Realities of Philip K. Dick: Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings*, NY: Vintage Books, 1995, that:

“This is not to argue that Dick even remotely resembles an “enlightened” mystic; it is well to remember that Dick’s forte was questions, not answers; those who would see his ideas as fodder for a “cult” merely reflect their own hunger for conditioned thought. Dick’s experiences, as reflected in the writings in the present volume, reflect a root indeterminacy, a persistent puzzlement and skepticism that underlie even his wildest speculations.” (p. xxi)

I really do like the second part of the first sentence from this quote: “...those who would see his ideas as fodder for a “cult” merely reflect their own hunger for conditioned thought.” It aptly and incisively summarizes what has been done by the

“self-proclaimed PKD scholars, critics, pundits, and hangers-on” crowd for many years now, with little or no accountability. It’s almost as if such individuals are interpreting the world from a subjective personal perspective and abjectly failing to consider information critically. Quite the opposite of Philip K. Dick’s root indeterminacy, persistent puzzlement, and skepticism!!

Now, it is certainly the case that Phil had an “intellectual interest” in the subject of Gnosticism though he had **a much stronger one** for Philosophy, Psychology, and German history, music, and poetry. The research and reading that he did in these subjects (remember, he owned a set of *The Encyclopedia Britannica* and *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*) became “intellectual tools” which he used to help fashion potential answers to his two prominent



themes: What is reality?, and, What is an authentic human being?, with the corollary question what kind of reality and authentic human being would allow evil to exist, in particular that of totalitarianism. Yet those who continue to feed their hunger for conditioned thought using Phil's short stories and novels conveniently overlook this.

This is similar to what John Dillon, Emeritus Professor of Greek at King's College, Dublin, writes in his essay "Monotheism in Gnostic Tradition," about "...the Gnostics...the magpies of the intellectual world of the second century, garnering features that take their fancy both from the Jewish and Christian scriptures, and from the metaphysics of contemporary Platonism." (in *Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999, p. 74) Take note of his pithy phrase "garnering features that take their fancy," while recalling that magpies are a long-tailed crow with boldly marked plumage and a raucous voice, the name sometimes used to refer to individuals who collect things of little value or chatter idly.

And there is this incisive summary by Fr. Gerald Hanratty, who lectures in the Department of Philosophy at University College, Dublin:

"Since the early Gnostics borrowed indiscriminately from mainline and esoteric religious sources, and from various mythological and philosophical traditions, they did not form a unified and homogeneous movement. The variations in the hypotheses which have been constructed to account for the geographical and temporal origins of the movement testify to the difficulty of establishing clear lines of demarcation." [*Studies in Gnosticism and in the Philosophy of Religion*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997, p. 15]

Perhaps the more important question to ask is **why** aren't those PKD scholars, critics, pundits, and hangers-on who desperately attempt to make Philip K. Dick into some kind of mystical-gnostic-guru via blogs, vlogs, and podcasts held more accountable? Why isn't any kind of critical scholarship being applied to those that use Phil's short stories and novels to feed their hunger for conditioned thought?

They don't seem to be aware of, or even care that, with respect to the Gnosticism they're still trying to plaster

over Philip K. Dick with, that:

"The evidence, in any case, is conflicting, as James M. Robinson declares in the opening sentences of the introduction to this book. It has also been pointed out that none of the Nag Hammadi texts use "gnostic" as a term of self-designation. Other ancient sources tell us that "gnostic" was used by some sects as a self-designation, but certainly not by all of the various sects that came to be called Gnosticism." [Richard Smith, *Afterword "The Modern Relevance of Gnosticism,"* in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, revised third edition, New York: HarperOne, 1990, p. 549]

Nor do they bother to inform you that the word/concept gnosis itself is problematic, instead manipulating it like silly putty or slime to fit their favorite current faddish theory about Philip K. Dick's gnosis. You won't learn from their blog, vlog, and podcast propaganda efforts what David Brakke, Professor and Engle Chair in the History of Christianity at Ohio State University wrote in his 2010 Harvard University Press study, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual and Diversity in Early Christianity*, that:

"Before Irenaeus wrote in 180 CE, the adjective gnōstikos (having to do with gnōsis) was not applied to people but to capacities, intellectual activities, or mental operations: a "gnostic" activity or capacity was one that led to or supplied gnōsis, that is, knowledge that was not merely practical but theoretical, immediate, even intuitive. Philosophers and other learned persons used the term "gnostic"; it was not a word that ordinary people would use every day." (p. 30)

Still not convinced that those who attempt to force fit Philip K. Dick into a mystical-gnostic-guru niche should be cogently questioned as to their viability and validity, along with the concept of Gnosticism? Don't agree with Charles Darwin when he writes, in the "Introduction" to *The Origin of Species*, "A fair result can be obtained only by fully stating and balancing the facts and arguments on both sides of each question." Really?

Here are three examples culled from books for you to crit-

ically think about their *facts and arguments*.

Dr. Stephan A. Hoeller, *Gnosticism: New Light on the Ancient Tradition of Inner Knowing*, Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books, 2002, 257 pgs.

“To the extent that today’s intellectual becomes aware of Gnosticism, he or she is likely to interpret gnosis as information. To this point, one of the most creative writers of imaginative literature, Philip K. Dick, who enthusiastically incorporated Gnosticism into several of his works, interpreted gnosis simply as “information.” (p. 214)

Sean Martin, *The Gnostics: The First Christian Heretics*, Harpenden, Herts: England, Pocket Essentials, 2006, 160 pgs.

“Arguably, no writer has employed Gnosticism more consciously than Philip K. Dick, whose fiction abounds with false realities and salvific knowledge, often appearing in the world in the unlikely guise of graffiti in a men’s room, or in the apparently random arrangements of rubbish in an alleyway.... However, he did not consciously begin to employ Gnostic themes in his fiction until after experiencing a series of mystical life-changing events in early 1974.” (p. 130)

Eric G. Wilson, *Secret Cinema: Gnostic Vision in Film*, New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006, 174 pgs.

“In the wake of the popular science fiction of Philip K. Dick and the trendy cyber-punk of William Gibson, Gnostic themes have become “hip.” In a culture increasingly paranoid over the possibility that a secret society controls the world, Gnostic inflections of cosmic conspiracy are especially appealing.” (p. viii)

“This Gnosticism for the masses continued to thrive in twentieth century America. It informed H.P. Lovecraft, a composer of weird tales devoted to questioning mainstream cosmology. It influenced Philip K. Dick, a sci-

ence fiction writer committed to uncovering the suffocating conspiracies of big government and big religion.” (p. xii)

The third excerpt, by Professor of English at Wake Forest University, Eric G. Wilson, is the most intriguing with multiple implications in need of explication. What does it mean to characterize “gnostic themes” as hip, or “Gnosticism for the masses” continuing to thrive? Would a Gnosticism for individuals be different? When and how did it become “hip?” Then there is “suffocating conspiracies of big government and big religion.” Is Gnosticism some form of a conspiring “big religion?” Just how is it conspiring?

All of this you need to **cogently** take into critical consideration as you evaluate the viability and validity of what some individuals are trying to do with, and to, Gnosticism and Philip K. Dick. You need to ascertain facts and arguments, **not** wishful thinking based on subjective faith and/or belief. And as you do so, please keep in mind what Hannah Arendt, someone Phil read and quotes in some of his published letters, has perceptively and incisively written:

“The effectiveness of this kind of propaganda demonstrates one of the chief characteristics of modern masses. They do not believe in anything visible, in the reality of their own experience; they do not trust their eyes and ears but only their imaginations, which may be caught by anything that is at once universal and consistent with itself. What convinces masses are not facts, and not even invented facts, but only the consistency of the system of which they are presumably part.”

(*The Origins of Totalitarianism*, NY: A Harvest Book, 1973, new edition with added prefaces, p. 351)

[FCB © 2/2019]



Phil's typewriter and coffee mug

Living in a Philip K. Dick Novel: The Cosmic Prank Continues

By Charles C. Mitchell

Horselover Fat lives in a small college town in Mississippi. Here, we've built up a friendship; jamming out to the likes of Eric Lampton and Brent Mini. I still remember the day Eric passed away. Fat sat with his cup of coffee in one hand and his hash-pipe in the other, listening to Eric's final album that had dropped only a few days before. I remember calling it dark-jazz. With cloudy eyes, Fat commented on how beautiful it all was. He seemed to be in a trance and I knew he wasn't talking about the music anymore. I could tell that any minute now he would start rambling about how the universe, or some force within it, was out to get him. A few sips from his mug later and he went into it. It was, more or less, the same speech I'd heard for the past couple of weeks. Fat had recently discovered that, according to him, he was "living in a Philip K. Dick novel" and the whole thing really seemed to have fucked him up. He was plagued with, or as he'd say, "blessed with," a number phenomenon and a series of strange dreams and synchronicities. The number 17 kept popping up in all sorts of strange places in his life. Being his friend and roommate, and seeing that he was clearly losing it, I did what I could to help out. Normally, this just meant listening to him go on and on about his theories on reality and the meaning of life; his life in particular. Though I remain a bit of a sceptic, Fat tends to bring up some interesting points. I've even had the "honor of" (Fat's words, not mind) witnessing some of the peculiar phenomenon.

Fully out of his trance and almost out of coffee, Fat went on, "You see, the thing is, I didn't know the Temple of Kukulcan existed until I had that dream; the one where I climbed it. I saw the feathered serpent heads at its base and assumed it was the Temple of the Quetzalcoatl because that's all I was familiar with at the time. Only later, after some research, did I discover my error. I'd mistaken a Mayan pyramid in Chichen Itza for an Aztec pyramid in Teotihuacan. You'd think I could tell the difference between the dense vegetation in the Yucatan and the

scattered trees of central Mexico. What's interesting is that Kukulcan and Quetzalcoatl are similar deities. They're both described as feathered serpents. Wait, I'm getting off track." Fat paused and crammed what looked like a moss-covered human thumb into the end of his pipe. "What's interesting is that I'd never heard of Kukulcan's pyramid. I went there in a dream and it was new to me. I can," gesturing toward me, "WE can go places in our dreams. Who knows where else we've been or where we'll go. Can we visit people and they visit us? I've had the one visitor that I know of."

Here it comes, I thought; Fat's visitor with his words of wisdom; Fat's catalyst out of a depressed agnostic funk into the wild realm of belief. "Rather than taking the stairs up the pyramid, I climbed the terraces to the top. When I got there, I was shocked to see that I wasn't alone. An older man dressed in a shamanistic garb was there on the platform waiting for me. He was sitting with his legs crossed and his eyes closed. He kept them closed as he delivered his message; my message. Only his lips moved and boomed out the words, "SOON YOU WILL LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR PAST LIVES, BUT FOR NOW YOU ARE THE 17TH LIFE." The words hit me in concussive waves.



Having nearly blown over the side of the pyramid with only the force of his voice, I was terrified and confused, but all my mind could come up with was, "well that's not a very big number," so I managed to yell back, "17?!" The old shaman's lips moved and his words boomed out again, "YES 17, THE SAME NUMBER OF YEARS

IT TOOK YOU TO CONCEIVE A CHILD IN THIS LIFE." When I woke up, I had to calculate how old I was when my daughter was conceived, to see if the shaman knew what he was talking about. I knew that I was 18 when she was born, but I had to count backward to her conception to confirm the loud mouth." Fat paused and took a long drag from his pipe. I knew that he had difficulty talking about his daughter. He didn't see her as often as he'd like. Already aware of the narrative, I picked up for Fat, "And the shaman said 17 words to you with his first phrase and 17 words to you in his second." Laughing, Fat nodded and added, "Don't forget that the Temple of Kukulcan is made up of 18 terraces, so my journey up the side was a visual representation of my ascension to the next life."

Kukulcan Pyramid (courtesy of Wikipedia)

Fat carefully slid his pipe across the table to me and got up to flip the record. As I took a drag, Fat paced the room and continued his story. "A week after the dream, I picked up my first Philip K. Dick novel. I was at the library with Amelia, my girlfriend at the time. We'd both gone off in different directions in search of our own idea of a good book. I ended up grabbing a copy of UBIK. When I'd found Amelia among the rows of books, I excitedly waved the UBIK at her and told her what I'd just read in the preface; which was basically that Philip K. Dick had taken an interest in

'Philip K. Dick had taken an interest in The Tibetan Book of the Dead and he had used it as inspiration for UBIK'

The Tibetan Book of the Dead and that he had used it as inspiration for UBIK. She smiled and held up the book she'd picked out. She was holding up "The Tibetan Book of the Dead." Interrupting Fat, I asked, "Didn't you and Amelia honeymoon at Chichen Itza, to see the temple of Kukulkan?" Ignoring me, Fat went on, "Reading UBIK blew my mind. Everything all seemed so familiar. I later learned that what I experienced is called anamnesis." Fat paused and let out a laugh. "I learned the term "anamnesis" from Philip K. Dick, when I read VALIS."

A few weeks after the death of Eric Lampton, I witnessed the universe play a prank on Horselover Fat. We were both off of work that day, so we planned to each take a hit of LSD and watch a movie that I had downloaded. One of our other roommates, Ri, also had the day off, so she decided to join us. As I connected my laptop to our television so we could watch, "The Adjustment Bureau," Fat pulled a book from the shelf beside him. Opening his copy of the National Audubon Societies "Field Guide to Trees," he flipped to a page bookmarked with a piece of aluminum foil. From the fold of the foil, Fat produced what looked like a blank index card. Ri and I had both taken acid with Fat before and we'd both heard Fat's crazy rants about his life in a Philip K. Dick novel, so we thought we knew what we were getting into. We could already feel the electricity in our jaws, by the time we started the movie. "This film is an adaptation of a Philip K. Dick story," Fat told us," but

I was already aware. "You're not the only Dickhead, Fat." In one of the scenes in "The Adjustment Bureau," a member of the adjustment team attempted to intimidate the main character. He told him, "I can read your mind. Think of a color." Inspired by Ri's vibrant dyed hair, the three of us thought of the color blue. "Blue," says the team member, justly stunning the lot of us, including the main character. "Think of a number," the man continued. Inspired by Fat's rants, we all thought of the number 17. It was like Eris herself slapped us each across the face

as the man said, "17." I could almost hear the internal chatter of voices within Fats head rushing to find an explanation. Ri and I both stared at Fat with our mouths open. I knew that Fat saw the number 17 more often because he looked for it, but did it look for him too? Was the universe, or something like it, sending him a message? What did it mean? We kept watching. "Where have you been? We need you in room 17," said a character in the film. I thought, "My friend may be crazy, but he's on to something." As the movie progressed, the main character's love interest invited him to her dance recital at dock 17, but he had a speech to deliver nearby. This caused him to speed through the speech as he continually glanced over at the very clearly labeled dock 17. In an attempt to lighten the mood, I joked with Fat, "Maybe the films creators are into Discordianism. Maybe you're actually living in a Robert Anton Wilson novel."

After the movie, during the peak of our LSD trip, I made the mistake of asking Horselover Fat if he had ever learned anymore about his past lives or if the shaman had been full of it. Without hesitation, Fat replied, "Well the anamnesis was the biggest clue. Obviously I lived my previous life as Philip K. Dick." Concerned for my friend, I said, "You're joking right? That must be the acid talking," but I knew that a sober, or stoned, or highly caffeinated Fat would have told me the same. "Don't be ridiculous," he said, "you and I both know acid can't talk."

Interview with Paul Giamatti 2011:

from Collider.com

[...] Speaking of playing another real-life writer, what is happening with Philip K. Dick, with that film, *The Owl In Daylight*. Is that still going forward? I know it was through your production company.

GIAMATTI: Yeah. We were talking to his family, actually, about this for a long time. I mean, it's been a-

His daughters, not (widow) Tessa, right?

GIAMATTI: Isa, one of his daughters, we were talking to about it. I, I don't know. You know, it's a tough thing. They never did a script based on that story which was the last unpublished thing of his that still hasn't ever been public-. Well, he never wrote it. It only exists in the form of him telling somebody on tape, the plot to it. So, we were gonna use that actually 'cause he got more and more into that thing of using himself as a character. So that seemed, actually, like a good launching pad for some kind of biopic about him 'cause a straight biopic about him would be sort of pointless. So, it was always a tough thing to get the script right and that didn't happen for a while. So, it's gone in and out and I think they've gone back and forth about being willing to do it or not and, you know, it's, he's a tricky figure and, you know, for them I think it's... There's days when I think they're very enthusiastic about it and then there's days when they're like, "You know what? Maybe we should just..."

It's too tough to tell.

GIAMATTI: It's a tough story, you know? He had a tough life and you know, he was a tough personality; tricky guy.

So, would you escape into his imagination?

GIAMATTI: Well, that's what I kept saying was, you know,

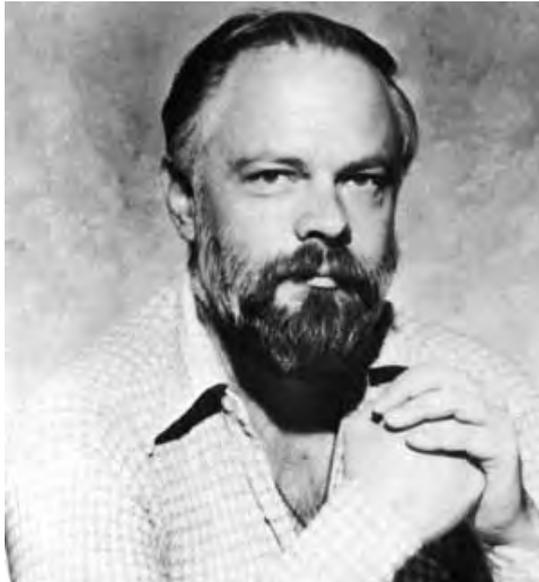
the idea is almost more to make a biopic about his mind, or something. You know, and it's like, so yeah, there were lots of interesting ideas that got thrown around, but always with him as a character in a story that's more fictionalized, OR, take, like, a very specific period of his life. Like, the whole thing at the end of his life where he had these kinds of, you know, I guess, sort of, schizoid visions about, you know, that we were actually living in ancient Rome

still and stuff like that. You know, to either really narrow it down or do something that kind of opened it up and made it, sort of, fictional, in some way. You know? 'Cause, it just doesn't seem, like, to have a whole lot of point to just make a biopic about him. He's too interesting? (Laughs) You know what I mean? It's like, his mind is too interesting. His life was sad. I don't know that it would be all that (pauses then laughs). It would just be kind of depressing.

But it would lend itself to flights of fancy within-

GIAMATTI: It could! Exactly! You could take something of him. I mean, that (*The Owl In Daylight*) book is very (complicated), but it's got, kind of, two parallel stories of a guy who is, delusionally, maybe thinks he's been, kind of, possessed by aliens and it's these two- then you have it kind of flip to this other side which is sort of the aliens that can make contact with some person. And, they're very separate stories, but they begin to dovetail in a really interesting way. So, I thought, well, maybe that's a good starting point.

*Source: Collider web site
Paul Giamatti via www.collider.com*



Disunion: Visions of Our Fragmented Future

by Paul Di Filippo

[...] But a strong candidate for the decade's chief example of the USA ripping itself apart due to internal strains, one that harks back to the primal Sinclair Lewis mode, yet with a metaphysical overlay, is *Radio Free Albemuth*, by Philip K. Dick. (In its hybridization of politics and spirituality, it's a curious kissing cousin to C. S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength* from 1945.)

Although released in 1983, a year after Dick's death, the novel was written circa 1976, and thus might be expected to exhibit more of a Nixon era vibe than a Reagan era affect. But despite its earlier origin, it still encapsulates the ongoing tensions between authoritarianism and independence of thought being played out under the Reagan presidency.

The first half of the novel is told from the first-person viewpoint of a hack SF writer named Philip K. Dick, who is watching his close friend Nicholas Brady undergo baffling communications from a Vast Active Living Intelligence System. Dick and Brady live in what was already, at the time of Dick's composition in 1976, an alternate timeline. In this continuum, the USA is a dictatorship run by President Ferris F. Fremont — a mélange of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan — who strives to protect the country from a fictional enemy dubbed Aramcheck. Beside the usual government agencies, Fremont employ the Friends of the American People as spies and vigilantes, and a young woman member of FAP seeks to entrap Phil.

Meanwhile, VALIS, or Radio Free Albemuth (Albemuth being the name of the star system where VALIS originates), is revealing much useful information to Nick, such as how to cure his son's illness and that time really stopped at AD 70, resulting in "Black Iron Prison" status for a duped planet. At the midpoint of the text, the first-person voice

switches seamlessly to Nick's (thereby cementing the identity of Brady and PKD). The two men, along with a similarly touched woman named Sadassa Silvia, strive to utilize VALIS's help to set things right.

Dick's patented blend of paranoia, anti-authoritarianism, and droll self-deprecation, his roller-coasting between optimism and despair, and his continuous and continuously frustrated attempts to balance saintliness with the

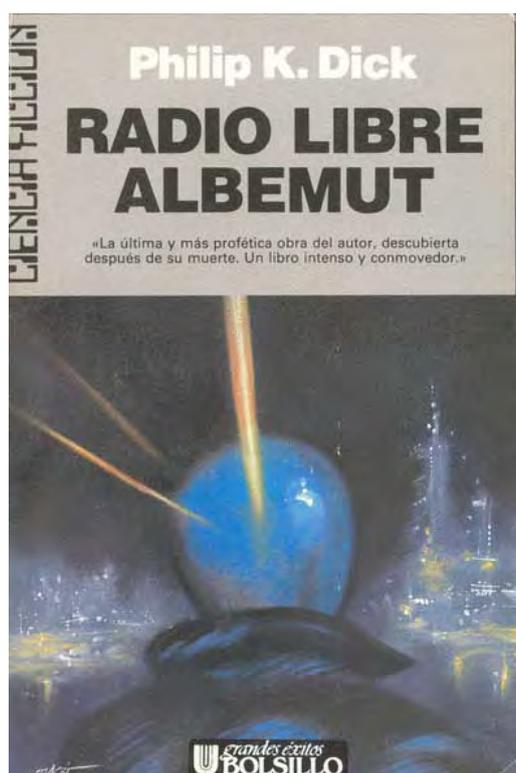
demands of the flesh, achieve a fine expression and balance here. And while he would rework much of this material into more sophisticated form in VALIS (which actually saw print earlier, in 1981), this rudimentary form better highlights the civic issues over the esoteric ones.

Readers will chuckle at the closing paragraphs, where a distant salvation arrives in the form of a rock group named Alexander Hamilton. But they will surely jump with surprise at this passage, testament to Dick's sage-like tap into futurity:

[The] Soviet Union . . . still holds [Fremont] in great respect. That Fremont was in fact closely tied to Soviet intrigue in the United States, backed in fact by Soviet interests and his strategy framed by Soviet planners, is in dispute but is nonetheless

a fact. The Soviets backed him, the right-wingers backed him, and finally just about everyone, in the absence of any other candidate, backed him. When he took office, it was on the wave of a huge mandate. Who else could they vote for? When you consider that in effect Fremont was running against no one else, that the Democratic Party had been infiltrated by his people, spied on, wiretapped, reduced to shambles, it makes more sense. Fremont had the backing of the U.S. intelligence community, as they liked to call themselves, and ex-agents played an effective role in decimating political opposition. In a one-party system there is always a landslide.

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/review/disunion-visions-of-our-fragmented-future?>



Radio Free Albemuth - Spanish edition (1990)

Letters to the Editor



A Fisher Darkly

Dear Patrick,

A few days ago I was in the midst of my usual late night Internet perambulation, or perhaps it was just a meandering, in fog shrouded PhilDickian Land. Did my best to stay clear of macabre mystical houses of ill repute, along with garish gnostic drainage ditches, priggish PoMo potholes, and archaic alchemical sewer drains when I chanced upon a flickering video display in the front window of a dimly lit bookshop showing the familiar words “Mors Ontologica.”

This is because at my increasingly youthfully challenged stage of life I was able to recall that they were an allusion to the chemical name of Substance D in Philip K. Dick’s 1977 novel *A Scanner Darkly* and mean “ontological death,” death-of-being.

But upon closer reading of additional text on the video screen it was not from Phil’s novel but instead the title of a blog posting in *K-Punk*, September 21, 2006, from thirteen years ago (when *PKD Otaku* was but a wee lad of four) and written by Professor Mark Fisher (7-11-1968 to 1-18-2017), a British cultural theorist, critic, and writer who taught in the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London. His July 1999 Ph.D. dissertation is titled *Flatline Constructs: Gothic Materialism and Cybernetic Theory-Fiction* (University of Warwick, 220 pgs).

He sadly died young, at age 48, via suicide. As Simon Reynolds wrote in a poignant opinion piece for *The Guardian* newspaper: “His on/off struggle with depression was something he wrote about with courageous candor in ar-

ticles and his landmark book *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*” (January 18, 2017, online) And Hua Hsu movingly notes, in his article for *The New Yorker*, December 11, 2018, that “It is difficult to separate Fisher’s own struggles with depression from his critical outlook; he was not inclined to do so, in any case, frequently blogging about the relationship between mental health and modern life. “The depressive,” Fisher writes, is one who is “totally dislocated from the world”—who does not labor under the fantasy that “there is some home within the current order that can still be preserved and defended.” (“Mark Fisher’s “K-Punk” And The Futures That Have Never Arrived,” online)



Mark started the *K-Punk* blog in September, 2003 because, as he is quoted by Gerta Dayal in her column, “PH.Dotcom,” for *The Village Voice*, April 5, 2005, “The way I understood theory – primarily through popular culture – is generally detested in universities. Most dealings with the academy have been literally clinically depressing.” For him, *K-Punk* “seemed the space – the only space – in which to maintain a kind of discourse that had started in the music press and the art schools, but which had all but died out, with

appalling cultural and political consequences.”

“Mors Ontologica,” however, was not his first blog piece about Philip K. Dick. Some eleven months earlier, October 25, 2005, he posted “Ubik as petit objet a.” Then, almost three years after “Mors Ontologica,” he posted “Eliminative Naturalism,” mostly about *Time Out Of Joint* (August 1, 2009).

The blog posting I came across turned out to be a lengthy article of some 3,100 words. To his credit Mark Fisher focuses in it on the zeitgeist of *A Scanner Darkly*, which is the spirit of its time, the dominant school of thought or

Mark Fisher photo via Repeater Books

intellectual fashion that influences the culture/setting of *A Scanner Darkly* itself and not some current faddish academic theory.

Now, we know from Lawrence Sutin's *Divine Invasions: A Life of Philip K. Dick* (NY: Harmony Books, 1989), the best narrative biography of Phil's life and works, that: "Phil produced a first draft of *Scanner* from February to April of 1973, then revised intensively (with the valued assistance of editor Judy Lynn-Rey) in summer 1975." (p. 202) And Phil himself, in a June 20, 1977 interview with D. Scott Apel, says: "Judy, you know damn well the book is about the '60's. It says so in the Author's Afterword... The book is about the past, as a matter of fact. You know it, because it says so. Not that I'm lazy... It's just that I'm trying to capture a milieu which is already perishing, and I'm setting it ahead, since this is a convention of my writing." (*Philip K. Dick: The Dream Connection*, San Jose, California: The Permanent Press, 1987, p. 77)

It's quite relevant and perceptive, then, when Mark Fisher writes in "Mars Ontologica" that:

"*A Scanner Darkly* is about the painfully drawn-out end of the Sixties – the collapse of psychedelic expansiveness into sulphate psychosis. Its analogue in pop would lie somewhere between the sleazy strung-out street corner clamour of *On the Corner* and the burned-out synaptic tenements

of *Unknown Pleasures*, between Funkadelic's derangement at its most doleful and Cabaret Voltaire's paranoia at its most personality-disintegrated. *A Scanner Darkly* is one of Dick's bleakest novels, and almost certainly his saddest."

Mark also persuasively notes that: War drug - everyone knows that:

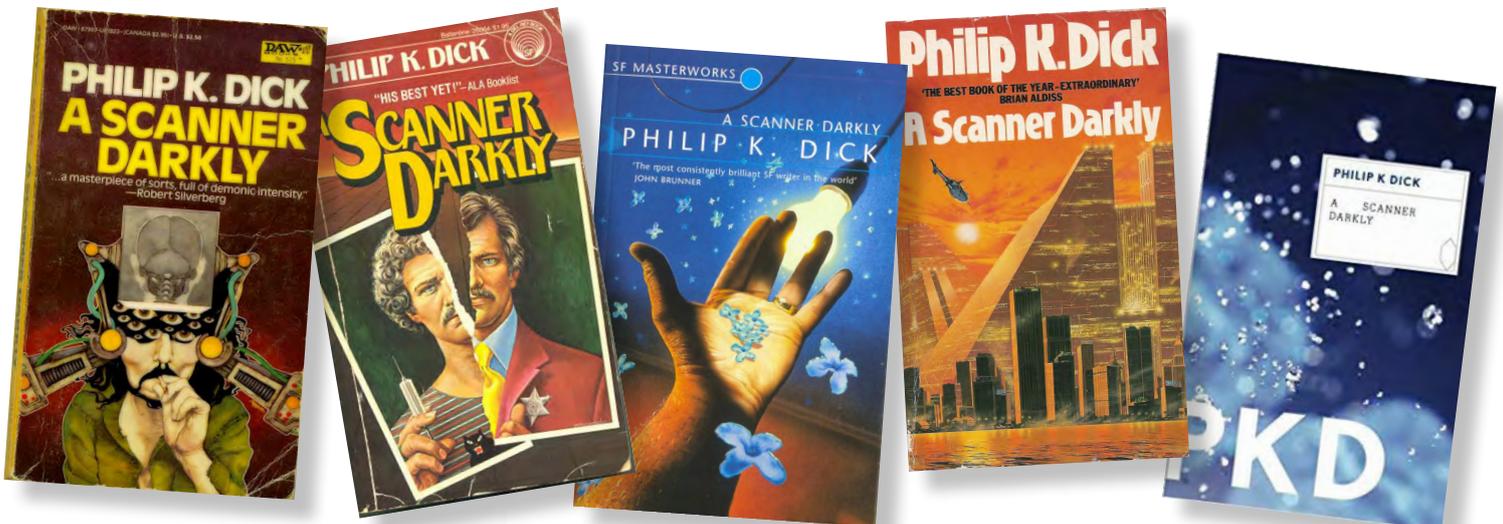
"Kennedy was famously wired during the Cuban Missile Crisis – and seeing *A Scanner Darkly* now makes one suddenly aware that Dick's fiction presupposed the Cold War as a constant backdrop. The Cold War recurs - distorted, refracted, deflected - as a Real in all of Dick's worlds. It's possible to position *A Scanner Darkly* was one of the last moments in a trajectory of Cold War SF paranoia dating back to the 50s."

It's certainly encouraging to read such commentary from an academic who has given cogent attention to what Philip K. Dick actually wrote and describes the relevant zeitgeist of not just *A Scanner Darkly* but also of the drug culture and countercul-

ture experiences of the late 1960s and early 1970s Phil lived through leading up to his writing of this novel.

Yours in kipple, gubbish, and dead bug words,
Frank C. Bertrand

"A Scanner Darkly is one of Dick's bleakest novels, and almost certainly his saddest"



More Book Reviews

Vertex, October 1974, p. 99.

Ubik

Samuel Mines: *Luna Monthly* no. 4

December 1969, p. 31

A Hugo to Philip K. Dick for producing a real mind-blower. I've never been tempted to take an LSD trip, but I have a hunch that it must be something like reading this book. The author's ability to thread his way along a thing line between reality and unreality and pull the line out from under the reader at intervals, excites pure admiration. If you can stand it, you have the opportunity of living in several different worlds simultaneously and these include the present (or the future actually, since the story is set in the future), the world of the past, plus the world of the living and the world of the dead.

If this brief description puzzles you, despair not, the book will not clear it up. The essential plot gimmick is the idea that if a dying individual can be quickly frozen before death stills his brain processes, he remains for a long time in a dream-like comatose condition from which at intervals he can be roused for direct mental communication. This is not permanent; like a battery, he eventually runs down and is lost. But the quiet horror which Dick evokes is to begin on the living side, with his characters reaching out to the living-dead and then, although you don't know it, you transfer to the world of the dead-living. The hallucinogenic quality comes from the fact that you can never tell where you are or what switch is coming next.

All this is done with great skill and if you are subject to the screaming meemies, don't read it alone at night.

The Preserving Machine

Jan Slavin: *Luna Monthly* no. 9 February 1970 p. 31

At last! A (as a typo on my rough draft put it) collection of Phil Dick's stories. It's a rare anthology nowadays that doesn't contain one of his stories; finally here are the best, all together in one book. They all possess a strong streak of surrealism, characteristic of Dick's writing. Although most of his stories are too short to have the multilevel realities of his novels such as *Eye in the Sky*, a few stories, "What the Dead Men Say" and "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale," for instance, can leave the

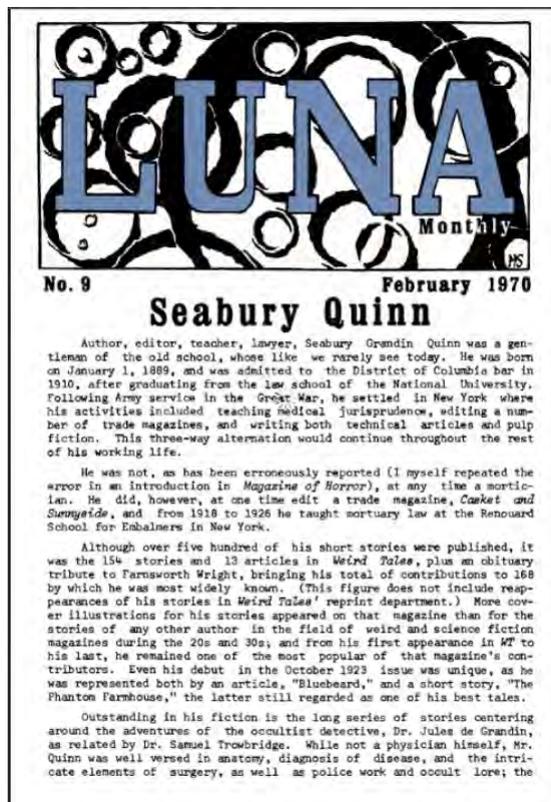
reader wondering just what is real. In most of the stories there is the feeling of tricks within tricks, guises within guises, fakery that may be real after all; "War Game" and "If There was No Benny Cemoli" are typical of this. Some of his stories are mind-croggling, leaving the reader with a sense of floating mid-air, no strings attached. I don't recommend "Retreat Syndrome" or "Upon the Dull Earth" for those whose heads are not firmly tied down. A few end with an evil twist that will keep the reader glancing over his shoulder looking for a shadow; "Captive Market" is like that.

This is a great book. It consists of intricate, enthralling science fiction. It might be called escape, but from what to what? It's like riding a rollercoaster, definitely worth the money if your nerves can take it.

Galactic Pot-Healer

Samuel Mines: *Luna Monthly* no.13 June 1970, p. 22

Philp Dick continues to impress me with the scope and dimensions of his talent. He excels in three important areas: range of imagination, quality of ideas



and ability to project them to the audience. Particularly in his skill at communicating complex imagery he is head and shoulders above the great majority of writers.

Galactic Pot-Healer is not easy to describe and a bare outline of the plot would convey little of impact. Put it this way: a group of losers from Earth is assembled by a huge interstellar creature (himself a loser) for a far-out crusade foredoomed to failure. If that sounds like a hopeless business recall that some of the world's great stories were written around just such impossible dreams, from Don Quixote to Cabell's multi-volume *Geography*. What makes *Galactic Pot-Healer* as good as it is lies in the three-D writing, the universality that makes a totally foreign situation and foreign problems as real as the familiar ones of our world. The world of total regulation is not as far off as we might think and here is a grim look at it from a mind that sees its consequences with singular clarity.

Alexis Gilliland: *WSFA Journal* # 73 November 1970. pp. 44-45

Galactic Pot-Healer (GPH) concerns Joe Fernwright, a man with a highly-developed but unusable skill, namely healing pots – specifically, mending ceramics, in the standard gloomy welfare state extrapolation.

As the story begins, he has not had a pot to mend for seven months and is subsisting on the Government dole – a daily ration of trading stamps with a half-life of about 10 hours. For amusement he plays the Game, translating book or movie titles back into human after they have been translated by an idiot computer. A paltry diversion.

And then – as he contemplates drastic action when no drastic action is available to him – he is approached by the alien Glimmung with a fantastic business proposition. (Indirectly, by anonymous messages hidden in the toilet

bowl.)

It seems that Glimmung is going to raise the great sunken cathedral on Plowman's Planet, otherwise Sirius V, and has hired a corps of experts, including pot-healers, to join him to do it.

The action moves to Sirius V, where we encounter opposition and the story is under way with a vengeance.

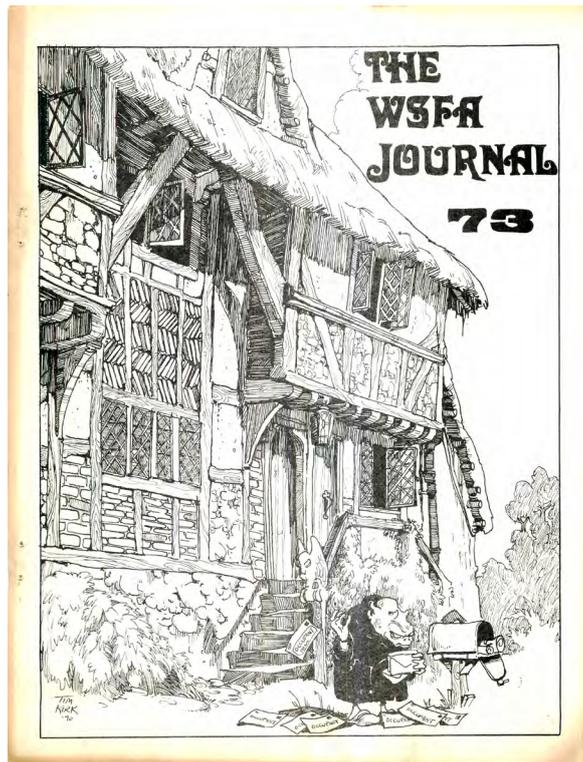
A very curious thing. GPH held my interest; I read it through in one sitting, but on a purely cerebral level. I watched the antics of Dick's people, but I could not get involved with them.

There are lots of good ideas – GPH is alive with wit, and Dick makes many valid comments on the human condition, Faustian man, Faust, religion, the welfare state, failure and related topics. For a change, drugs do not play an important role. The robot named Willis is brilliant in a cameo role. He comes across vividly, more alive than the people, more human than Glimmung, who is encumbered with his/her/its duties as Deus Ex Machina. But the aspiring free-lance writer robot is not involved. Willis may not like it, but he does as he is told.

And that may be the key to GPH. Purportedly an action-adventure story, it is actually a parable writ large, or a set of parables. Dick is entertaining, even upbeat at times, and what he says is worth paying attention to – but his message distorts the medium. All his characters do as they are told. Or they seem to. (If I am in fact exercising free will, must I also appear to be exercising free will? In a novel it comes to the same thing.)

Dick's philosophizing held my interest, his people and creatures only held my attention. Still, GPH is a first rate novel of ideas, and merits reading.

The cover is a view of Heldscalla, lost cathedral, and is both evocative and rather pretty. A good job by whoever Berkley didn't credit.





Notes & Comments

Introduction to *The Selected Letters of Philip K. Dick* 1974

by William Gibson

When I first encountered the country you are about to enter, it consisted of a pristine stack of unbound proof pages housed in a special sort of cardboard box native to the workshops of serious small press publishers. But these letters formed part of a whole that was anything but tidy; they constitute a harrowing literary journey—one which can never entirely be separated from the corpus of Philip K. Dick's fiction. They are, to borrow a phrase from J. G. Ballard, terminal documents, demanding our full and immediate attention; I regret the decision to publish them in anything less than their terrible human entirety.

I never met Philip K. Dick, but I know that he inspired loyalty and affection in many who knew him. At the start of my own writing career, Vancouver's science fiction community still swayed slightly in the wind of PKD's recent passage. He had arrived as guest of honor at the local convention, and had delighted the locals by unexpectedly jumping ship and taking up residence. Fans who were privy to this Vancouver Period subsequently spoke of him, but fondly, as one might of some profound Fortean singularity, the human equivalent of a torrent of frogs. And though no two versions of the sighting ever seemed to quite match up, it could be agreed that the luminous object had definitely vanished over the southern horizon.

Now we are left with his fiction, and with these letters, the majority of which were typeset from the carbons he scrupulously preserved. To those who protest that he might have objected to the publication of much of this material, I can only point to that extended act of literary preservation. The letters exist: they were not written on water. And

they allow us insight:

However strange, however sad, however embarrassing.

Their cumulative effect, I think, is one of nightmare.

But if they frequently resonate, as they certainly do for me, with paranoia and an underlying sense of dark momentum, so then does our age. Much of the postmodern esthetic is prefigured in Dick's best work—in his sleepless deconstructions of generic science fiction's shopworn tropes, in his lively sense of pastiche, and in a certain abiding tone of exhaustion in the face of a most imperfect present and an ominous on-rushing futurity.

Yet the turbulence that rises beneath the surface of this collection, this de facto testament, is also exactly and heartbreakingly personal, the product of one single soul's

passage through savagely lonely country, in the latter half of our increasingly strange century.

Illuminating and embarrassing, brilliant and pathetic, the letters of Philip K. Dick are the real thing.

(24 September 1990)



A Preliminary List of Unrealized PKD novels

Collated by Patrick Clark

"Today the World" 1963. *PKDS Newsletter* no. 20 pp. 5-6.

"The Name of the Game is Death" 1967. *New Worlds* [1992] No. 2 pp. 271-275 and Selected Letters 1 pp. 223-226.

"Joe Protagoras is Alive and Living on Earth" 1967. (*Selected Literary and Philosophical Writings*, pp. 138-143.

"VALISYSYSTEM A", "Ring of Fire", "Fuji in Winter" 1974-75. Suggested titles to a sequel to "The Man in the High Castle".

Conversations with Philip K. Dick pp.151-156; *Philip K. Dick: The Dream Connection* pp. 135-141.

"Fawn, Look Back" 1980. *Science Fiction Eye* vol. 1 no. 2 pp. 41-44.

Untitled interstellar war novel 1981. *Selected Letters* 6 pp. 89-92

"The Owl in Daylight" 1982. Several conflicting plots. *Selected Letters* 6 pp. pp. 154-56; *What if Our World is Their Heaven?* pp. 87-94.

"The Ultimate Truth" date unknown. Sequel to "The Penultimate Truth". *Conversations with Philip K. Dick* pp. 156-159.

"Wink-Out!" date unknown. Cited in a Sotheby auction catalogue December 2014.

PKD Festival

August

Colorado 2019

SEE
PAGES 4-7
FOR DETAILS



Cowboy Philip K. Dick 1935