

Above Photo of Phil © Tessa Dick, by kind permission

September 2019



Image by Brent Houzenga

**SPECIAL - Fort Morgan
PKD Fest 2019 Issue!**

P K D

#40

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

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

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

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

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

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

pkdotaku@gmail.com

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

Thank you for maintaining the dialogue!

-- The PKD OTAKU Team

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


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Editorial

by Patrick Clark




**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**

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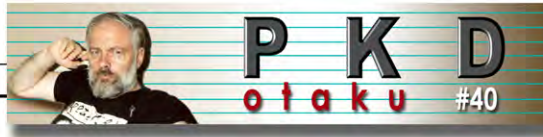


MorganCountyTourism.com

WIDE BOOKS

Dave Hyde, God love him, with the assistance and (I have no doubt) the patience of a number of other likeminded PKD enthusiasts, organized and successfully launched the Second Philip K. Dick Festival in Fort Morgan, Colorado. The event ran from August 8th through the 10th. I had to go, of course; I've gone to all of Dave's PKD events, and I convinced my wife Esther to come along this time as well. We packed ourselves into the car with music, an appalling amount of junk food (I never have to eat candied ginger slices again), an address in Eastern Colorado and hit the road. A reasonable first-day to Omaha followed by an excruciating long drive across most of Nebraska – including an hour's worth of stop-and-go traffic outside of Lincoln, a horrendous rainstorm North of Fort Morgan and a mysterious icon lighting up on the dashboard. Nine hours later we reached our destination. We located Dave and his family at a friendly downtown bar, had a late dinner and were ready to listen and learn the next morning as the Festival officially began.

The festival opened with **Dave's gracious welcome to all** of us gathered in Phil's name then the proceedings started in earnest. David Gill was supposed to attend with a discussion "**THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE: Phil's First Masterpiece**" followed by a panel discussion on this novel. But David was having post-surgery complications and was unable to attend. (He has since recovered and sounds like he is on the mend.) **Ted Hand**, his colleague, stepped in to start us off properly. Ted talked about David's ideas, that HIGH CASTLE is Phil's first masterpiece and that is also the first time that androids appear, here in the form of the Nazis. You know, the cold creatures who look human but lack all empathy. Interesting idea. Ted talked about his concept of HIGH CASTLE and whether or not it was a masterpiece at all and if so, was it his first? And is the I Ching an actual character in the novel? Then the panel of **Andrew Butler, Tessa Dick** and **Frank Hollander** entered the discussion. That was fun. Everyone had their own idea about Dick's "masterpiece" from EYE IN THE SKY to UNTELEPORTED MAN (from Dave Hyde in the audience). Tessa had one from left field: THE MAN WHOSE TEETH WERE ALL EXACTLY ALIKE. Likewise, the opinions on the I Ching were poles apart. There was a consensus that the fate of HIGH CASTLE would inevitably be confused with the Amazon television series and no one was happy about that! You can listen for yourself as it's on YouTube via Wide Books.



https://wide-books.com/pkd-festival-2019-gallery.html?fbclid=IwAR3yCszvPpUyOZHrUO8iY9ElkolLo36Bz_jt0bMNjl4n71N3SAosZOR4jEo

Andrew M. Butler followed with **“The Blood Red Light Experience: Philip K Dick’s Scream”**. Great title! Andrew used Edvard Munch’s art as a jumping off place for a discussion of DADOES where, you will recall, there is an extended scene with Deckard viewing Munch’s “The Scream” and “The Adolescent” at an exhibit. Much to chew on here especially the connection between the paintings and the doomed androids. I found myself wondering about an early 20th Century android being hunted through the streets of Munch’s Oslo under a blood-red sky. Andrew also drew some eerie parallels between Phil and Munch. Kind of disturbing. Do all artists have an anima by their side?

We moved then to the CACE Gallery in downtown Fort Morgan for an **art show and discussion** with **Brent Houzenga** and his works. Fascinating stuff and a heart-felt narrative of how Brent came to discover PKD and how it worked itself into his art. Note our cover illustration – just a hint of the riches on display in Fort Morgan.

After lunch a musical interlude with **Sean Nye** on **“The Music of Philip K. Dick”** via Skype but there were various technical snafus and I bailed. I guess they got it to work finally.

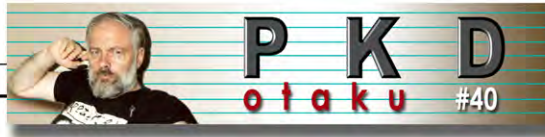
Frank Hollander followed with **“Early PKD Show and Tell”**: artifacts from his extensive collection of PKD-related object. Frank had gone deeply into the sorts of things Phil remembered from his early years: comics, SF pulps, newspaper articles, advertisements, obituaries, “Horror of War” cards. Frank had examples of all of these and more (45 pounds of it!) which he passed around the assembled guests. This will sound odd but there was a sort of visceral connection as these books and papers circulated. To hold in your hand a copy of a 1937 issue of *Astounding* and know that Phil read this sort of magazine and (my own conceit) perhaps this very copy! Why not? Phil’s personal collection was scattered to the four winds when he went to Canada. Maybe this issue of *Astounding* or *Planet Stories* or *Science Fiction Quarterly* still had Phil’s fingerprints on its pages.

Then on to another art exhibit and commentary and discussion by **Ted Hand** entitled **“The Fool’s Journey of**

Philip K. Dick”. This revolved around the “PKD Tarot” that Ted and artist Christopher Wilkey created and Wide Books published in a limited edition. Large-sized copies of all 80 cards were posted around the lecture room and they are really amazing. You can see what works of Phil’s are being dramatized but they are by no mean simple illustrations. Each card, much like a traditional Tarot deck, holds multiple meanings, perspectives and mysteries. Ted spoke at length on the process of creating the imagery, and how it can work as an esoteric divination tool both as in a traditional Tarot reading and as a form of the I Ching. Or simply as works of art that the individual viewer can enter into on a personal level. There was no time to examine all 80 cards but Ted walked around the display picking out a number of cards and explaining the particular elements that went into its genesis and birth. I think you have to be deep into the gnostic/mystical/occult branch of PKD studies to fully appreciate what the cards are trying to do but as actual works of art they are splendid indeed. You can see some of them in this issue and at <https://wide-books.com/pkd-tarot-the-fools-journey-of-philip-k-dick.html>

We broke for dinner then and re-assembled at 7:30 at the local cemetery for a visit to Phil and Jane’s gravesite. I had been there two years ago for the festival and as then this was still a sobering moment and yet also one of community. Night fell. Red Wing Blackbird launched a vivid goth/punk/metal musical storm. Certainly my first concert in a graveyard. Meanwhile, a lightning storm played out on the horizon moving our way. Then we all went home to our respective dwellings. For Esther and I that was the Great Western Hotel on the edge of town.

Next morning **Doug Mackey** started us off with **“The Contemporaries of PKD and their Influence on his Writing”**, an examination of four PKD novels and another complementary famous novel by a different author. A kind of “Phil vs ___” argument. The pairs are Solar Lottery/World of Null-A; The Unteleported Man/The Stars My Destination; Our Friends from Frolix-8/Childhood’s End; and Ubik/The Lathe of Heaven. Doug had much to say about how these novels reflect each other, illuminate each other and inspired each other. In the case of A.E. Van Vogt’s book, Doug examined how Phil essentially re-wrote the ideas in Null-A and transcended them. Alas, Doug ran out of time soon after getting to Childhood’s End and graciously deferred to the next speaker but you will find it complete in this issue.



On to **Nick Buchanan**, who came all the way from Liverpool and was manhandled by TSA in New York (subversive alien?). Nick spoke of **“Philip K. Dick and The Craft of Writing”** and this was quite intriguing. He’s a big supporter of Phil’s many short stories which he feels tend to be overlooked in favor of the novels. But he also wanted to refute the whole idea that Phil was a hack writer. On the contrary, said Nick, Phil was a very careful writer who crafted impeccable short works but we are in such a hurry to follow the narrative that we look at the forest and not the trees. To demonstrate this, Nick chose a very early tale, *“Explores, We”*, and walked the audience through Phil’s very careful construction, his word choices, how he showed you rather than told you, what was going on and how the poor deluded Martian of the story were the real human beings and the Earthlings acting like the cold androids of his later fiction. It was illuminating in the best way and I was chagrined to realize that I was one of those busy “forest watchers” and, honestly, need to look at the trees more closely.

Tessa Dick finished off the afternoon schedule with a **“Q & A on her life with Phil”**. It was something of a recap to her talk two years ago and something of an expansion. So the famous house break-in 1971 may have something to do with the escape from Federal prison of Timothy Leary, an incident that deeply embarrassed the authorities who went overboard looking for collaborators. Phil was only tenuously connected to Leary: a single phone call arranged by Paul Williams (he spoke with John Lennon at the same time) but Phil was already in the FBI’s files. So, perhaps. (On the other hand, Leary escaped from prison more than a year before the break-in but the Feds are notoriously slow.) Tess talked about the 1974 Pink Beam incident; a bit more prosaic than Phil’s own account. Phil was on Percodan, not sodium pentothal after the dentist visit. The Pink Beam was after the girl with the fish necklace had left. But the phone taps, the voices coming through the speakers even though the radio was turned off, the Xerox Letter were all real. There were questions from the audience about Phil’s writing habits (he would type furiously for a while, then take a nap, then get up and type again, over and over all through the night); his favorite dictionary (Merriam Webster’s International 2nd and 3rd editions); how much time he spent with his son Christopher (lots). Tessa believes of the manuscripts stolen in the break-in, two were elsewhere: a copy of DEUS IRAE was with collaborator Roger Zelazny and a copy of what would be FLOW MY TEARS was in the hands

of Phil’s attorney. But the third...Tessa thinks it might have been a very early version of The Owl in Daylight and that with its disappearance Phil lost heart to try to resurrect it until many years later. She believes that Phil may have been working out the plot in the pages of the Exegesis, which I find a fascinating idea.

Then we broke for lunch, having much to think about. After lunch there was a free showing of **TOTAL RECALL** at the local cinema but Esther and I passed on that to hike along the South Platte River outside of town and revisit my favorite Fort Morgan coffee shop, now being run by three 15-year old girls (as far as I could tell) who make an excellent Americano. There was a dinner party for everyone that evening. **Dave Hyde and Cameron Mitchell** presented **“A Philip K. Dick Mystery Play”** in which Hercule Poirot attempts to figure out what happened to Philip K. Dick. It was pretty funny though there were “wardrobe failures” with the mustaches. There was a **PKD trivia contest** on which I did poorly but still managed to come in third and so won a copy of the Finnish translation of A SCANNER DARKLY or *Hämärän vartija* which translates back into English as “Twilight Guard”(?). **Music by Dan Allen** followed but I was beat and we had a long drive the next day so we retired before the conclusion of the festivities.

Many goodbyes the next morning and then an excruciating 8-hour drive to Omaha through the most boring State in the Union. Home the next day and glad to be there.

It was a terrific festival with fascinating speakers, art and displays. A number of people attending made long journeys to attend, to speak, to learn and to enjoy the camaraderie of we PKD Otaku. It pleased me very much to see a good turnout of local Fort Morgan folks, too. I have to say the city’s gracious hospitality was very much appreciated by we out-of-towners.

Many people could not attend in person so I am extremely happy that we can here at least present the papers and some of the art that made up the 2019 PKD Festival. We can share the texts but not, alas, the lived experience of being there with friends old and new and dare I suggest, the spirit of Philip K. Dick himself.

The 2019 Philip K. Dick Festival, Fort Morgan, Colorado

by Dave Hyde

This 2019 PKD Fest in the friendly city of Fort Morgan once again reminded me of why we have these celebrations of our favorite writer, Philip K. Dick. It's meeting other fans. And for me it's a somewhat random process. I find myself in animated conversation with someone only to be distracted by some part of the festival operations and drawn away to find myself in another conversation on something completely different. The hubub of excited fans brings joy to my heart, not least because it means something is going right!

This year we had a PKD festival that will surely go down in the annals of such things as one of the best ever. I can't thank the people of Fort Morgan and Morgan County, Colorado enough for their support and active aid as we establish the Philip K. Dick Festival in their fine city. Thanks Emily, Chandra, Brian, Suzanna, Debbie, Lindsey, Matt, Alvina, Francisco and the citizens of Fort Morgan!

And among the fans great credit must go to Henri Wintz and Cameron Mitchell who handled all the things I couldn't with grace, intelligence and charm, qualities in which in many circumstances I am completely lacking. Thank you Henri and Cam!

Of course, I would be amiss if I didn't extend my heartfelt thanks

to my family who, objectivity-wise, solved all the problems I'd managed to overlook. Thank you Patti, Alan, Tami, Kristen, Ella and Jackson!

And to all you PKD fans who made it to the festival, tried to but didn't get there, wanted to but were too far away, thank you!

As to commenting on the festival itself, I'm not sure I can with any coherence. It was good to see old friends. Sad to miss others. I learned a lot about Philip K. Dick. Informative lectures and panels from respected scholars and fans, great music from Dan Allen and Redwing Blackbird, two awesome art shows from Brent Houzenga, and Chris Wilkey - Ted Hand. Cameron and I and our silly PKD Mystery Play. Frank Hollander's ancient PKD artifacts. People and PKD that's how it was for me. And that's how I wanted it to be.

Thanks to our presenters and participants: Tessa Dick, Andrew M. Butler, Nick Buchanan, Doug Mackey, Ted Hand, Frank Hollander, Cameron Mitchell, Sean Nye, Dan Allen, Paul Butler. And to Patrick Clark thanks for all you do and very pleased to see Esther again

And a final shout out to Laura Entwisle, David Gill, John Fairchild, William Sarill, Erik Davis, John Alan Simon, Elizabeth Karr, Christopher Wilkey and Michael Fisher. And may God bless Perry Kinman.

See you all in 2021! - Dave Hyde



Pink Beam hits the Library by Nick Buchanan

4 x 4 x 4: Phil and the Giants

by Douglas A. Mackey

The challenge: to read four selected Philip K. Dick novels alternating with four acknowledged masterworks of science fiction by four 4-star writers who are not PKD. How would Dick stack up against the SF giants?

By picking some of Dick's less respected works (in three of the four cases), I was risking setting up Phil for a fall. In the end, I was satisfied that PKD acquits himself well even in his less perfect moments. Let us see what happens when the master of ideas is thrown into the ring with SF's master wordsmiths.

THE WORLD OF NULL-A vs. SOLAR LOTTERY



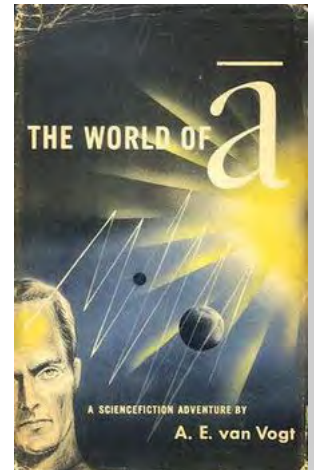
In August of 1945, two bombs went off. One was the A-bomb on Japan. The other was a Null-A bomb: an explosion heard throughout the science fiction world: the serialization in *Astounding Science Fiction* of *The World of Null-A*, by A. E. van Vogt.

Three years later the book version, heavily revised, was published by Simon and Schuster. It was the first hardcover science fiction novel published by a major publisher after World War II. It was a huge success in the U.S. and in France as well, and was credited with having all by itself created the French science-fiction market (A. E. van Vogt, Preface to *The World of Null-A*, 2010 edition).

The exploding wave of paperback science fiction novels, published in book form by Ace, Berkley, Ballantine and others, largely replaced the SF magazine market by the mid-50s when Philip K. Dick published *Solar Lottery*, which was modeled successfully along the lines of van Vogt's landmark work. When you read *The World of Null-A*

and *Solar Lottery* back to back you may find yourself getting mixed up, as I did, about what happened in which novel. Van Vogt's influence in Dick's first sf novel is manifest: the shadow of what Dick called van Vogt's "numinous quality" pervades *Solar Lottery*. As Dick said of his predecessor:

"I realise now that what I was sensing was a kind of metaphysical world, an invisible realm of things half seen, essentially what medieval people sensed as the transcendent world, the next world." (in **Who Writes Science Fiction**, by Charles Platt, 1980, p.164)



The World of Null-A is mysterious to be sure; it is a confusion matrix where false positives and negatives outnumber the true ones.

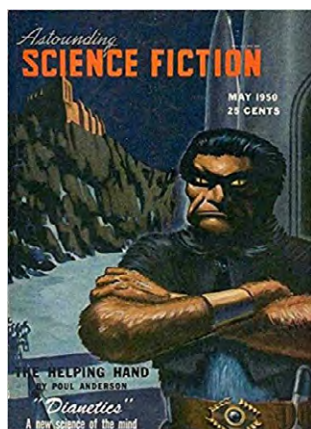
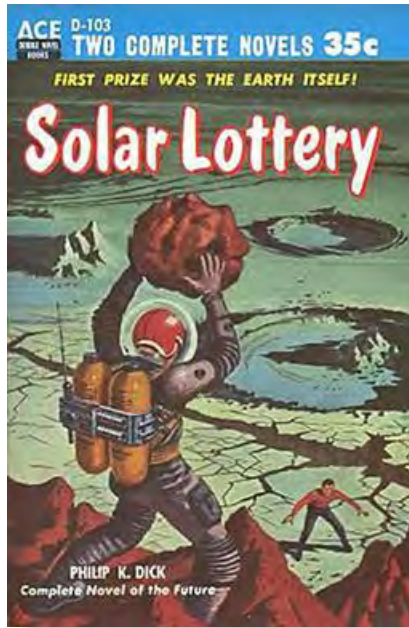
Reading *The World of Null-A* today, it may not seem like an unqualified success artistically. One thing to remember is that van Vogt revised the book version considerably, partially because he was derided in a 1945 fanzine as being a "pygmy at a giant typewriter" by none other than budding critic Damon Knight. Van Vogt tightened it up so much, in fact, that he made it almost impossible to follow the excessively complicated plot. The magazine version is some 10,000 words longer and contains some information that is not in the book version; let that be a clue for the intrepid van Vogt reader.

The World of Null-A was a novel of ideas with cosmic dimensions: a perfect prototype of an SF novel for Dick to follow.

I reread *World of Null-A* several times as a teenager, perhaps because of the cognitive confusion produced when it shifts suddenly and makes one try once again to figure out the story. But in van Vogt, this turns out to be a feature, not a bug. Van Vogt's innovation was to deliver into science fiction the novel of ideas. From him, Dick learned to layer ideas into his scenes. The layering became a feature of Dick's style. Characters, ideas, and levels of mind are juxtaposed in a strange logic. It's a layer cake and the resulting density is exactly the cause of Dick's

addictive style. It has an experiential drug-like effect.

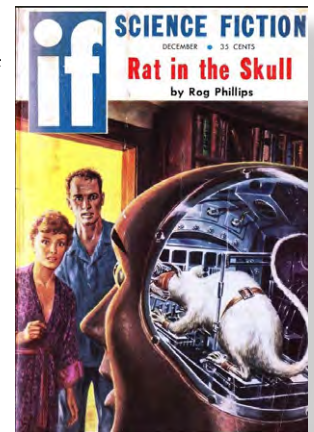
The organizing principle of the social order in van Vogt is the Null-A philosophy, which is actually a real philosophy called General Semantics, popularized by Alfred Korzybski in 1933. It is portrayed in *The World of Null-A* as a physical and mental discipline which creates super-powerful individuals capable of operating outside the hypnosis of the group mind. Similarly, in *Solar Lottery* there is a guiding principle called the Minimax game, based on complete randomness. A “twitch of the bottle” determines who the new leader of the country will be. In both novels the game turns out to be rigged. In van Vogt, the all-powerful Machine that determines who is the best qualified person to lead the government is influenced by a Distorter; in Dick the supposedly random casino game that picks the president turns out to be fixed. The head of government in *Solar Lottery* is the Quizmaster; we think of the popularity of quiz shows in the 1950s and that they actually were fixed, although that fact wasn’t established until the Charles van Doren scandal in 1959, four years after *Solar Lottery* appeared.



Null-A, also represented by an A with a line over it, stood for non-Aristotelian. Aristotelian logic was identified with Boolean logic, where the only answer is true or false. In contrast to this is the Null-A mind, which is always thinking outside the box.

In the real world, General Semantics led to Dianetics, which L. Ron Hubbard introduced in the pages of *Astounding* in May of 1950. Van Vogt became a very public

promoter of Dianetics throughout the 1950s, but when Hubbard morphed Dianetics into a religion, Scientology, at the end of the decade, van Vogt dropped his affiliation with the organization. Dick never got on that bandwagon; in fact, in one of his short stories, “Null-O,” we find a rather trenchant condemnation. The story, originally written in 1953 but not published until 1958, is clearly a satire on the hyper-rationalistic Null-A philosophy. It is easy to see why it took so long to get accepted for publication (ironically, van Vogt-hater Damon Knight was the editor of *If* at that time). “Null-O” contains one of the most pessimistic scenarios of the future Dick ever wrote. A group of scientists take over the world advocating the philosophy of Null-O, which posits that complete destruction of the world is the highest and noblest goal. Null-O resembles Null-A in that it is completely devoid of sentiment and empathy. In the story, a child actually convinces his psychiatrist to adopt this nihilistic philosophy. The destructive impulse spreads over the planet until there are only a few thousand handymen and other Dickian type heroes left, who manage to put a stop to the killing. So all is not lost, but pretty nearly.



In “Null-O” we see Dick’s ambivalence about the whole subject of the paranormal and how it is never to be divorced from a larger philosophical grounding. As Ian Watson puts it, “the increasing prominence of paranormal talents ... can too easily become a quasimystical escape route from real problems: ethical, psychological, epistemological, and practical. A seductive nonsense supervenes. The meaningful pole in SF is represented by Philip K. Dick, and the nonsense pole by A. E. van Vogt. Dick invariably subsumes the paranormal within a zone of genuine social concerns, and thus avoids mystification. His pre-cogs, time-shifters, and other characters with ‘wild talents’ are presented with tact, zany wit, and, most important of all, in an organically structured relation to society—whether this society is human, quasi-human (android, robot), or alien. Van Vogt’s use of the paranormal, on the other hand, is a bag of conjuring tricks, amounting to a negation of any society, alien, human or ‘post-human.’” (“Le Guin’s *Lathe of Heaven* and the Role of Dick,” in *Science-Fiction Studies*, March 1975)

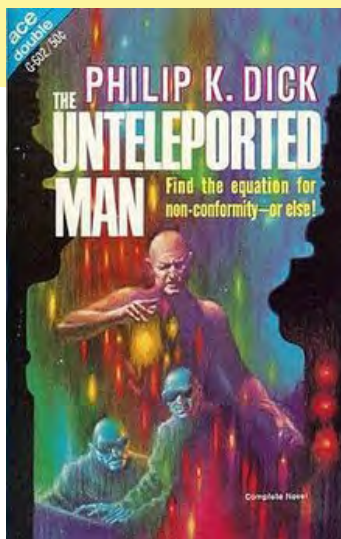
To a large extent *Solar Lottery* can be seen as a corrective to the nonsense pole of van Vogt, and is an improvement even in terms of style. Thomas Disch jocularly called *Solar Lottery* “van Vogt’s best novel.” Despite van Vogt’s intense interest in the mind, Dick represents it better in its inexorable restlessness. If Van the Man was his Golden Age godfather, Dick carried van Vogt’s conceptual breakthroughs to a new level of literacy in the Fifties and into the mind-altered New Wave of the Sixties.

THE STARS MY DESTINATION vs. LIES INC.

tracks the distance one is able to “jaunte.”



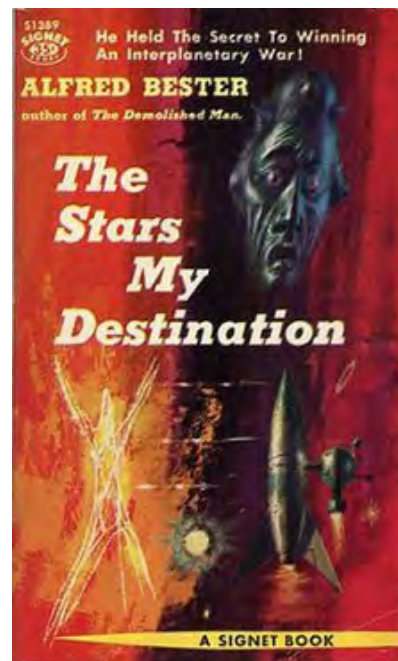
Bester’s style is fantastical and pyrotechnic, exuberant, over the top. His story is a revenge tale: the Count of Monte Cristo in space, jumping around the Solar System in sudden explosions of action. It wears its historical and literary allusions on its sleeve. But it seems a thoroughly modern science



For my next match I am pitting one of SF’s all-time classics against one of PKD’s books that is not so highly regarded. One may or may not be aware of all the details of the tortured story of how *The Unteleported Man* was expanded, revised, pages lost, chapters rewritten, and finally republished as *Lies Inc.* Some may feel that it were better left unexpanded in its original Ace edition published in

1966. *Lies Inc.* in its expanded and corrected version was published in 2007, with an afterword by Paul Williams that explains its bibliographic backstory. Let us try setting aside these considerations and read the novel as a real, unified work, as if it were all one piece that is exactly like it was intended to be.

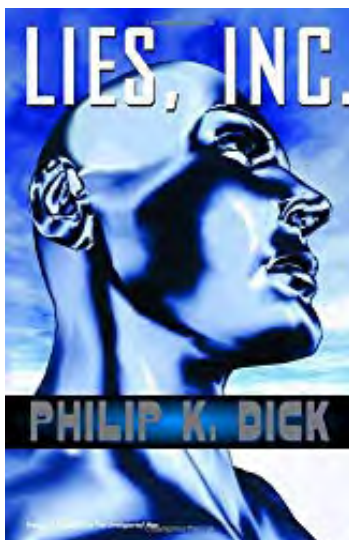
fiction book; it could have been written yesterday. The setting is a hypercapitalist future ruled by giant corporations. It has often been noted that *The Stars My Destination* is a proto-cyberpunk novel. It has the urgency of tone that we find later in William Gibson. The first lines of Bester’s novel are indicative: “This was a Golden Age, a time of high adventure, rich living and hard dying... but nobody thought so. This was a future of fortune and theft, pillage and rapine, culture and vice... but nobody admitted it. This was an age of extremes, a fascinating century of freaks... but nobody loved it.”



Literary echoes (Joyce, Blake, Dumas) pepper Bester’s stylish landscape, providing historical depth while plunged into radical future excursions.

One can legitimately question whether there is substance

First, in the opposite corner: Alfred Bester, one of the most influential SF writers of the 1950s, whose *The Stars My Destination* ranked ninth in Locus’s poll of the best SF novels of the 20th century. An adventure story about teleportation, this novel portrays a world where people can instantly transmit themselves mentally across large distances; social status



beneath the style. At times the reader can feel exhausted by the density of characters, incidents, and sudden shifts in scene. The book is not an epic but it reads as if it has epic scope. In short, the suspicion is that there is less here than meets the eye. The main character, Gully Foyle, begins as low and rough with more muscle than brain, and ends up a sort of god-man, the first human with the ability to “space-jaunte” across millions of miles. But we never know this man or feel much kinship with him. The character and the stars themselves, his “destination,” leave us cold in the end. Still, the journey is compelling on its own terms, and one every science-fiction lover must take.

The approach to teleportation is very different between *The Stars My Destination* and *Lies Inc.* In Bester, this is a mental phenomenon and the teleport range is different from person to person. Gully Foyle becomes a virtual superman at the end of the tale by busting through the assumed limitation on a human’s ability to teleport across outer space.

In *Lies, Inc.* teleportation is not mental, it is mechanical. And it is not presented as a good thing, but as a technology that can be misrepresented and subverted. The creator of Telpor invents a scientific law that states teleportation can only go one way. Therefore, when the largest corporation in the Solar System starts teleporting willing emigrants to the distant planet of Whale’s Mouth, the fact that they are being consigned to prison camps there is never known because no one returns to tell the truth. Transmissions of fake testimonials, glowing reports of utopian conditions on the other side, are believed because there is nothing to contradict them.

Thus, in Dick teleportation is not a Bester-case scenario.

The second half of *Lies Inc.* consists of a hallucinatory episode brought on by the main character being shot with an LSD dart. The style shifts to give the effect of a real acid trip: jumbles of images, transformations piled one upon the other, and time dilation. For example:

“Within him all his language disappeared; all words were gone. Some scanning agency of his brain, some organic searching device, swept out mile after mile of emptiness, finding no stored words, nothing to draw on: he felt it sweeping wider and wider, extending its oscillations into every dark reach, overlooking nothing; it wanted, would

accept, anything, now; it was desperate. And still, year after year, the empty bins where words, many of them, had once been but were not now.” (*Lies Inc.*, Vintage ed., p. 75)

Here is a pressure of consciousness that cannot find purchase. In describing a mental state, Dick brings powerful testimony that is surely wrested out of personal experience.

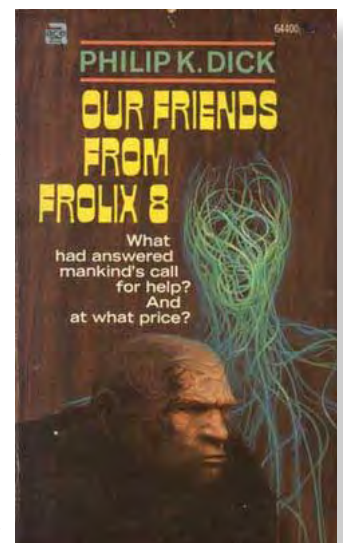
Both these books are psychedelic, but by no means in the same way. In contrast to Bester’s fiery verbal pyrotechnics is Dick’s dark and empty silence. Timothy Leary he is not; closer to Samuel Beckett on Substance D.

CHILDHOOD’S END vs. OUR FRIENDS FROM FROLIX 8

Among Dick’s 1960s novels, *Our Friends from Frolix 8* does not seem to get much love. It may be because there is a strong air of depression about the main character, Nick Appleton. He is a tire regroover, an occupation that one might be surprised still exists in the 22nd century, but it fits the personality. Nick is in love with a 16-year-old revolutionary guttersnipe, Charlotte, for whom he eventually leaves his wife and son.

There are some tragic and absurd deaths and perhaps not as much humor as we are used to in a Dick novel. Characters have a tendency to rattle on endlessly, without purpose. Another cause for disillusionment about this book may be the ending, as it seems to resolve very little.

But this future world has an interesting sociological layering. There are four categories of people in this world: Old Men, who possess normal intelligence but are passive and servile; Under Men, who are basically rebels to the authoritarian social order; New Men, who have highly developed brains; and Unusuals, who have advanced psi powers such as telepathy. The News and the Unusuals run this world with a tight grip using the PSS, an elite police corps also known as Pissers.



There is a type of character we have encountered in other Dick novels such as *The Simulacra* and *Now Wait for Last Year*. This is the conflicted world leader, here named Willis Gram, who is able to enforce his despotic rule through telepathic powers. However, his downfall is that like Nick he falls for the 16-year-old. This intersection of Dickian males meeting dark-haired girl plunges Nick into the center of the political plot and into an “advisor” role of sorts to Gram.

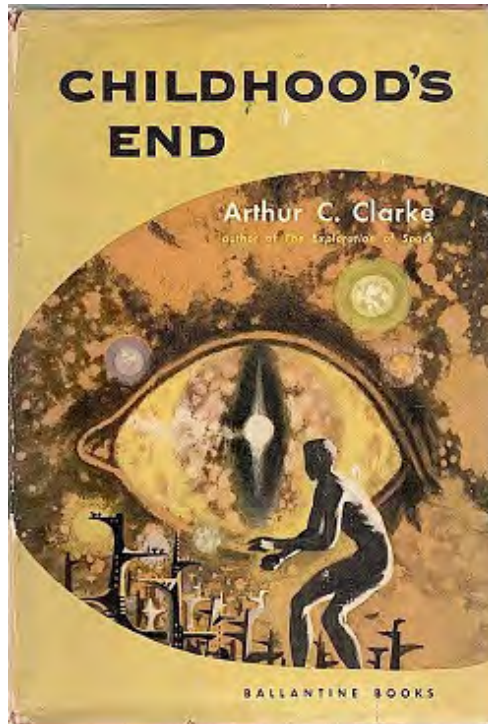
The leader of the Under Men, Thors Provini, has been away on a long space journey for decades, and is returning with a giant protoplasmic alien in tow, Morgo Rahn Wilc, from the planet Frolix 8. This alien has extraordinary powers and upon return of Provini’s ship to earth the Frolixan is able to scan the minds of the New Men and the Unusuals and in an instant reduce them to childish idiocy.

It might seem that this is an overly easy solution to a difficult problem. The authoritarian government is toppled, as it deserved to be, and the unempathetic brainiacs, the New Men, or “double-domers” as they are called, are put out of business with just a bit of mental sabotage on the part of Morgo. Besides the political plot finding some resolution, however, the existential plight of Dick’s characters remains tenuous. It’s not a feelgood book.

But Dick’s creations always fascinate beyond what we think they should, given the supposed faults in the writing. It has something to do with the fact that he wrote so many novels and they tend to run together in the mind, because they share many elements of a background reality. And a book like *Our Friends from Frolix 8* benefits from that.

However, you might ask, is the novel we want to put up against Arthur C. Clarke’s *Childhood’s End*? Clarke’s book is a masterpiece that ranked #14 on Locus’s list of the best sf books of the 20th century. (Dick’s highest ranking entry was #22 with *Man in the High Castle*).

One problem for partisans of Dick is Clarke’s eloquent, resonant voice:



“Six thousand million kilometres beyond the orbit of Pluto, Karellen sat before a suddenly darkened screen. The record was complete, the mission ended; he was homeward bound for the world he had left so long ago. The weight of centuries was upon him, and a sadness no

logic could dispel. He did not mourn for Man; his sorrow was for his own race, forever barred from greatness by forces it could not overcome. For all their achievements, thought Karellen, for all their mastery of the physical universe, his people were no better than a tribe that had passed its whole existence upon some flat and dusty plain. Far off were the mountains, where power and beauty dwelt, where the thunder sported above the glaciers and the air was clear and keen. There the sun still walked transfiguring the peaks with glory, when all the land below was wrapped in darkness. And they could only watch and wonder; they could never scale those heights. Yet, Karellen knew, they would hold fast until the end; they would await without despair whatever destiny

was theirs. They would serve the Overmind because they had no choice, but even in that service they would not lose their souls.”

This is the style of an inheritor of the lineage of H. G. Wells and Olaf Stapledon. Its profundity rings like a clarion to all who have looked in science fiction for glimpses of a higher truth. It is not the style of a Philip K. Dick. However, when you look at Clarke’s vision of human evolution as an evolution of consciousness, it is somewhat troubling. In *Childhood’s End*, we have an alien race of Overlords who look like demons, with horns and tails, but are unexpectedly benevolent. They bring peace to the Earth and teach humans to treat each other decently. But their ultimate job, under direction by the Overmind, is to foster the rapid development of a new more evolved race of humans, essentially a telepathic cluster of minds that is joined in some unimaginable merger. The works of humankind throughout history no longer have a scintilla of meaning.

But in Dick’s *Our Friends from Frolix 8*, the Unusuals

and the New Men do not triumph. They collapse in autistic isolation. Dick is skeptical about the whole evolutionary vision that catapults the human race out of its present physical and psychological configuration. His style, appropriately, is not poetic nor profound. The characteristic humor is always lurking, but is not in your face. He's not ushering in the next era in the development of a higher consciousness. He is trying to pierce the veil that prevents people, ordinary humans, from awakening to their essential nature as conscious beings.

THE LATHE OF HEAVEN vs. UBIK



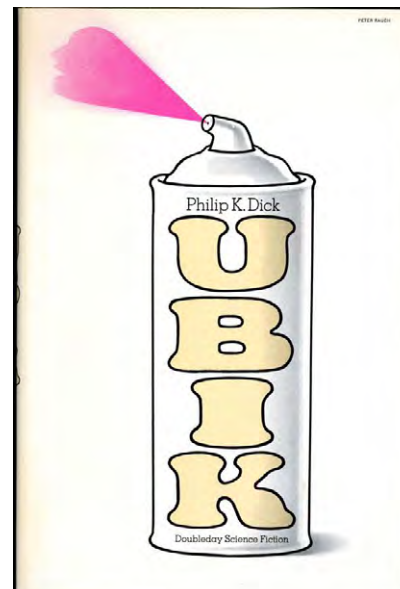
In our final bakeoff, between Philip K. Dick and Ursula Le Guin, we have the case of an SF grandmaster being influenced by Dick rather than vice versa. *Ubik* was published in 1969 and Le Guin's *The Lathe of Heaven* in 1971. Le Guin was familiar with Dick's work (her favorite of Dick's novels was *Galactic Pot-Healer*), and one

should look at *Lathe of Heaven* as being influenced by the totality of his work rather than by *Ubik* in particular. Ian Watson, in the same essay I quoted earlier, noted that *Lathe* was quite different from Le Guin's other works, including *The Left Hand of Darkness*: "It is as though while writing of those inner lands with her left hand, and of outer space with her right, a third hand has mysteriously intruded on the scene, attached to Palmer Eldritch's prosthetic arm, and it is this hand that has tapped out *Lathe* on the typewriter." But there is a theme of reality construction and deconstruction in both *Ubik* and *Lathe* that is instructive for comparison.

In *Lathe* there is a man named George Orr (and Orr is not well)--so he seeks help from a psychiatrist, Dr. Haber, an oneirologist, a specialist in sleep and dreams. Orr

is disturbed because he is trying not to dream, for the reason that his dreams have a habit of coming true, and possibly killing people. Haber has invented a machine that allows him to control a person's dreams and he is bent on using it to improve the state of the world. What we see, in multiple iterations of Haber's dream interventionism, are nominal improvements with rather catastrophic side effects. For example, Haber induces Orr to dream away the problem of overpopulation. The end result is a plague in which six billion people die, but the world is no longer overpopulated.

We have aliens in this book that could have stepped right out of a Dick novel like *Martian Time-Slip* or *Our Friends from Frolix 8*: the wise, transcendentalist but obscure E.T. prone to enigmatic pronouncements. For example, Le Guin's alien tells George, "Take evening. There is time. There are returns. To go is to return." These aliens have a word for the kind of dream alchemy Orr and Haber are engaged in: *iahklu*. It refers to the deeper experience of conscious dreaming that Orr is learning to deal with that has objective as well as subjective consequences. The patient deconstructs the reconstructed reality that his psychiatrist has induced. Le Guin reverses T. S. Eliot's dictum that humankind cannot bear very much reality to say that humankind cannot bear too much *unreality*. Orr is able to restore the much-beleaguered reality structure



to the world at the end while Haber loses his mind like the New Men in *Frolix 8*. Reality may be malleable and deconstructable, but ultimately is not to be meddled with without dire penalty.

Dick in *Ubik*, on the other hand, is not concerned with landing in some baseline normality but is content to leave us questioning the possibility of ever finding a real landing strip. If you remember the ending of *Ubik*, Joe Chip has found out that he is dying and his whole world is a hallucination produced by his half-life state. He and his

temporary reality is being sustained by coins with the face of his boss Glen Runciter as well as by spray cans of a miracle product called Ubik. The final scene shows coins with Joe Chip's visage appearing in Glen Runciter's reality. And as the final words indicate, "This was just the beginning."

There are many interpretations of this scene, which I won't go into. But it is obvious that a reversal has taken place. Whereas Runciter money has been infiltrating the pores of Joe Chip's half-life reality, now Joe Chip's saving presence is being found in Runciter's world, which is by extension our own. Why does PKD seem to be ever more encroaching upon our everyday reality, in comics,

in media, in memes, in Facebook posts? It must be that Philip K. Dick is alive and we are dead. That is the only explanation.

With *Ubik*, which is certainly second to none compared to any book in the SF canon, I end my quixotic contest of 4x4x4. I'm not keeping score here. Science fiction is more of a galaxy than a genre, and it's big enough for planet Alfred and planet Arthur and planet Ursula, as well as, of course, planet Phil. It's a good thing he decided to inhabit this galaxy. It's luminous and it's numinous, and sometimes you can even get here from there.



The Blood Red Light Experience: Philip K Dick's *Scream* or: Did Edvard Munch *Scream* at Electric Sheep?

by Andrew M. Butler



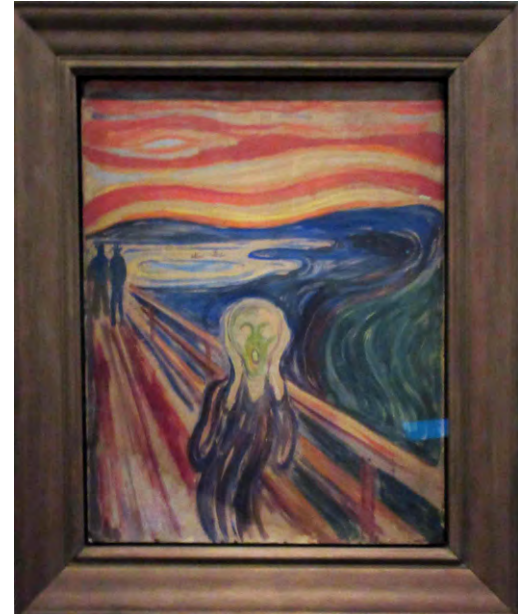
Munch Scream National Art Museum - Photo by Andrew M. Butler

There is a moment in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* when bounty hunter Rick Deckard and fellow police officer Phil Resch visit an art gallery in search of the escaped android Luba Luft and look at a painting:

The painting showed a hairless, oppressed creature with a head like an inverted pear, its hands clapped in horror to its ears, its mouth open in a vast, soundless scream. Twisted ripples of the creature's torment, echoes of its cry, flooded out into the air surrounding it; the man or woman, whichever it was, had become contained by its own howl. It had covered its ears against its own sound. The creature stood on a bridge and no-one else was present; the creature screamed in isolation. Cut off by – or despite – its outcry.

The painting is one of the several versions of Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, one of the most famous paintings in the world, much parodied over the last century. Whilst this is, as far as I know, the only time Dick mentions the Norwegian – indeed Dick is more likely to allude to composers than visual artists – I think this is a scene that is useful in thinking through Dick's themes and how we should approach his work.

Whilst there are resonances between the two creators, I don't want to overstate this connection – Munch is not the Philip K. Dick of art (that would most likely be René Magritte), nor is Dick the Edvard Munch of sf. Munch was born 12 December 1863 on a farm in Ådalsbruk in Løten, Norway, to Dr. Christian Munch and Laura Catherine Bjølstad, and moved with his family to Christiania – later renamed Kristiana and then Oslo. His father was a medical officer at the military Akerhus Fortress in Oslo and over the next few years they moved around several unhealthy apartment in that part of the city and then in the suburb of Grünerløkka. In 1868, his mother died of tuberculosis, an event that was to overshadow Munch's life and to be represented in a variety of his paintings and prints. Almost a decade later, in 1877, his favorite sister Sophie died, also from tuberculosis, at their Fossveien 7 apartment. That name "Sophie" resonates for me with the figure of Sophia in Dick's post-1974 writings and certainly the loss of his twin Jane Charlotte in 1929 was to haunt him as much as Munch's family bereavements did him. Munch repeatedly painted or printed variants on the same motif as a means of processing grief, replacing a painting with a near identical version as one sold. Indeed, his painting of *The Sick Child* (1886) was his artistic breakthrough and he produced six versions oil versions as well as dry points, wood cuts, lithographs and etchings over the next forty



Munch Scream Munch Museum - Photo by Andrew M. Butler

years. Much as Dick borrows elements from one story to reuse in another, so Munch seems to work through a series of motifs, perhaps obsessively repeating himself, perhaps trying to get it exactly right, perhaps through financial necessity, certainly finding what the impact of shifting between painting, drawing, lithographs, woodcuts and other prints is.

– Tired to death – looked out over – The flaming clouds like blood and swords – The blue-black fjord and city – My friends walked on – I stood there quaking with angst – and I felt as though a vast, endless Scream passed through nature



The Sick Child - Photo by Andrew M. Butler

This is Munch's pink light experience, to be replicated through a number of works and changing his fortunes. Like the pink light experience, a number of theories have been advanced for the phenomenon – a rare kind of sunset, a memory of the volcanic eruption of Krakatoa – and the walk in Ekeberg was above the site of the asylum where his sister Laura Catherine was a patient. Munch too worried about his mental health – his heavy drinking and poverty did not help – and was accused by critics of being insane. The blood-red skies first appear in *Despair (Deranged Mood at Sunset)* (1892), in which



Despair - Photo by Andrew M. Butler

Initially, Munch had begun training as an engineer, to please his father, but soon left to go to art school and immersed himself among the Bohemian drinkers, writers, artists, and activists of Oslo, an anticipation of Dick's sojourn amongst the poets in the late 1940s. He won a scholarship for a trip to Paris, where he exhibited, and in 1892 he was invited by Norwegian artist Adelsteen Normann to have a one man show at the Union of Berlin Artists. Munch's paintings caused controversy, leading the exhibition to be closed within a week, but Munch exploited this publicity and his work toured Germany.

It was in Berlin that he produced the first oil and pastel versions of *The Scream*, drawing upon events described in a diary entry in Nice of 22 January 1892 – almost exactly a century before the date that *Do Androids Dream* is set:

I was walking along the road with two friends – the sun was setting – I felt a wave of sadness – the Sky suddenly turned blood-red – I stopped, leaned against the fence

a hatted figure looks to the right over the railing and the two walkers, clearly conferring with each other, are paused whilst walking away from us. The sky is yellow and blood red, and more clearly a sunset. He produced a charcoal drawing and pen and ink sketches, playing with the direction of the foreground figure, still leaning over the fence, in one turning their head towards us.

Dick's description of the painting is accurate up to a point and it is unclear if he had encountered any versions

in the flesh. Certainly, there were Californian exhibitions of Munch in the years leading up to Dick writing his novel, but it seems more likely he saw newspaper or magazine coverage or a reproduction. The figure is not on a bridge but rather on a road, looking over the Bjørvika fjord in Oslo, with two boats on the water and the cathedral and the Royal Palace at the top of Karl Johans gate to the right. Whilst it might be that the figure was inspired by a Peruvian mummy Munch had seen at the Musée d'ethnographie du Trocadero in Paris, it is likely a self-portrait. Dick assumes that the figure is screaming when it is the landscape itself, but this is a common misperception. The mistake is reinforced by Deckard's reaction to Luft's retirement: "She began to scream; she lay crouched against the wall of the elevator, screaming. Like the picture, Rick thought to himself". Resch's comment of it depicting "the man holding his ears and yelling" further insists on an embodied screaming.

There is an earlier moment in the novel that offers a parallel to Munch's existential scream, when John R. Isidore is in his apartment:

Silence. It flashed from the woodwork and the walls; it smote him with an awful, total power, as if generated by a vast mill. It rose from the floor, up out of the tattered gray wall-to-wall carpeting. [...] It assailed not only his ears but his eyes; as he stood by the inert TV set he experienced the silence as visible and, in its own way, alive. Alive! He had often felt its austere approach before; when it came it burst in without subtlety, evidently unable to wait. The silence of the world could not rein back its greed. Not any longer. Not when it had virtually won.

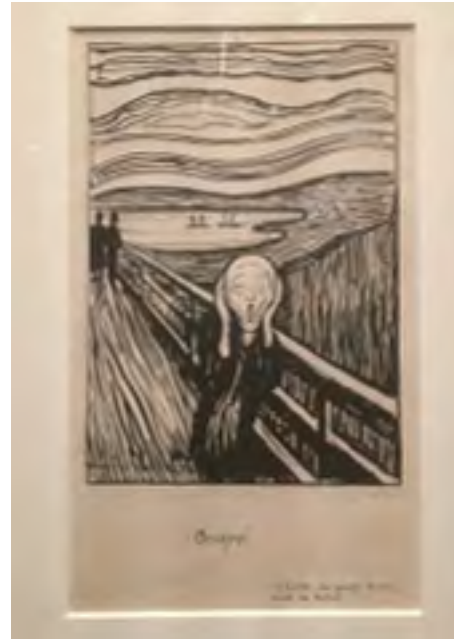
He wondered, then, if the others who remained on Earth experienced the void this way.

We have here the same assailing, invading, overwhelming force that Munch's figure experiences. Isidore's role in the novel is to question the definition of what a human being is, one of Dick's major themes throughout his oeuvre. His intelligence has been limited by the effects of radiation, and he is forbidden to leave Earth. However, he is perhaps the most caring of the characters in the novel, and such empathy is definitional of the human for Dick.

To return to the scene at the exhibition, Resch and Deckard display two very different responses to *The Scream*:

"He did a woodcut of this," Rick said, reading the card tacked below the painting.

"I think," Phil Resch said, "that this is how an andy must feel." He traced in the air the convolutions, visible in the picture, of the creature's cry. "I don't feel like that so I maybe I'm not an —"



Leaving aside the fact that the label is mistaken – Munch made lithographs of this image – Resch is demonstrating his empathy here, associating the purported screamer with the experience of the android. As John Goodridge notes "[Deckard fails to] respond to the image at all, merely repeating some inconsequential

information from the card underneath it." Deckard, as the novel's protagonist, does have his humanity and empathy called into question at various points in the novel, indeed he has to repress his empathy in order to retire andys. He is also skeptical of Resch's cultural intelligence, which is rather undercut by this moment. Whilst we are told that androids operate alone, Pris, Leon, Roy and Irmgard form a surrogate family, and Garland and Luft are associated with many others. Deckard, in contrast, operates alone and seems alienated from his wife Iran and the andy Rachael.

The Scream motif finds its way into *Angst* (woodcut and lithograph, 1896), alongside the walkers on their daily promenade from *Evening on Karl Johans gate* (1892). Here "the city dwellers are reduced to an almost zombie-like state, their faces fixed, staring masks as they proceed along the street" (Frances Fowle). Munch later wrote "I see their hollow eyes – skulls behind the pale masks", and this is evidence of his distrust of the bourgeoisie. *Angst* replaces the architecture with a blood red sky and white reminiscent of *The Scream*.

Angst (woodcut) - Photo by Andrew M. Butler



But *The Scream* is not the only Munch artwork that is mentioned in the novel: “Holding a printed catalogue, Luba Luft, wearing shiny tapered pants and an illuminated gold vestlike top, stood absorbed in the picture before her: a drawing of a young girl, hands clasped together, seated on the edge of the bed, an expression of

Lady of Shalott and so on.

It has to be said that Munch, who never married, had ambivalent feelings about women. As a young man he had an affair with Milly Thaulow, wife of Munch’s mentor the Norwegian artist Fritz Thaulow. He also had an affair with Dagny Juel, Stanisław Przybyszewski’s wife, who was shot dead by another jealous lover in Tbilisi, with suspicion falling on Munch as the killer. There was also a long on-again, off-again affair with Tulla Larsen, with Larsen pursuing him around Europe, culminating in Munch shooting himself in the hand, in circumstances that have never quite been resolved. Larsen and many of the women in Munch’s art are red headed, unlike the dark-haired girls that permeate Dick’s fiction.

Dick tended to depict two archetypes of woman: the dangerous, seductive, young anima figure and the older, angry, vindictive woman. To some extent these map onto three female archetypes – virgin, mother and crone – that Munch was to depict in various images known as *Woman in Three Stages* (1894 onwards, also called

Karl Johans Gate Bergen - Photo by Andrew M. Butler



Woman in Three Stages (1894) - Photo by Andrew M. Butler

the face.” The image is *Puberty* (1894, painting 1894-95). It is tempting to see this as Rachael in a hotel bedroom. It is a composition ambiguous in its balance of between a young woman subject to a (our?) gaze and her staring back at us. Her shadow is somewhat phallic; she is evidently having a sexual awakening of some kind. Whilst Deckard buys the exhibition catalogue for Luft, he destroys it having destroyed her. Deckard frequently has problems with female agency, and in narrative terms women who look are punished – see, say, Lot’s wife, Pandora, the



Sphinx), with a young woman with long hair, a naked female, a subdued older woman in black and what may well be Munch himself in the shadows to the right. There is also a red-haired woman in the various versions of *Vampire* (1893 onwards), a painting originally called *Love and Pain* but renamed by Przybyszewski. Again, there is a sense of ambiguity about the image – the newer title suggests that she is biting the man’s neck rather than kissing, but it might be simply that she is consoling him.

Frank Bertrand, in trying to think through the relevance of *The Scream* and *Puberty* to the novel, notes that Deckard and Resch mischaracterize Munch’s place in art history as being during a time of realism: “Munch is

Puberty (National Art Museum collection) http://samling.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/object/NG.K._H.A._18993



actually considered a major Expressionist, not a Realist – Expressionism being a revolt against Naturalism and Realism.” Munch moved through and between a huge number of styles, and *The Sick Child* for him marked his break from Impressionism to Expressionism. He painted what he saw and what he felt, with what he felt predominating. Somewhere he wrote that “Nature is not only all that is visible to the eye... it also includes the inner pictures of the soul”, and that might bring us to the Symbolist art of the 1880s-1920s. Anna-Maria von Bonsdorff argues that “Symbolist artists attempted to open the door to the unconscious and to depict the world from a completely new viewpoint – from beyond visible reality”. Through drawing on the unconscious, artists could access the world of ideas – Platonic or otherwise – and thus provide a clearer vision than straightforward, “realist” observation. This is certainly a feeling I get through reading Philip K. Dick. And it might be worth thinking through his work in the light of such Symbolist artists as Vincent Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Akseli Gallen-Kallela, James Whistler and above all the quasi-hallucinogenic Wassily Kandinsky.

Dick’s life was cut short in 1982, tragically young, and in death he was reunited with his twin Jane in a grave in Fort Morgan, Colorado. In contrast, despite suffering from bronchitis and contracting Spanish flu in 1919, Munch lived to an old age, being found dead with a copy of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *The Devils* (1871-72) at his side. Sadly, he was buried at Our Savior’s Memorial Cemetery among a number of great Norwegian artists and writers – Ibsen is barely a minute away – rather than in the family plot at Krist Cemetery where mother, sister, and other family members lie.

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Sue Prideaux’s *Edvard Munch: Behind The Scream* (Yale University Press, 2006) is a useful biography, albeit skipping a bit over the most famous painting. Karl Ove Knausgaard’s *So Much Longing in So Little Space: The Art of Edvard Munch* (Harvill Secker, 2019) is an intriguing anti-appreciation. The majority of Munch’s works are in Oslo, but the National Museum has closed pending the move to a new building near the Oslo fjord, where it will be joined by the materials from the Munch Museum. Many of his works are available to view at <http://samling.nasjonalmuseet.no/en/>. The Rasmus Meyer Munch collection forms the core of the works at Kode 3, Bergen, Norway. See <http://kodebergen.no/en/article/bergen-munch-collection>. Andrew M. Butler blogs at <http://andrewmbutler.blog>.



Explorers We of Explorers We

by Nick Buchanan

So many words have been devoted to Dick's novels, and comparatively little has been written about his short stories. Dick sometimes reworked themes from his short stories and extended them into novels. We know *The Mold of Yancy* informed *The Penultimate Truth*, *The Days of Perky Pat* influenced *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *The Great C* was adapted into *Deus Irae*, etc. However, their true worth is not in whether they became longer pieces, their worth is intrinsic.



There are two reasons why Dick switched from writing short stories and focussed on novels. One was purely economic, and borne perhaps from necessity – he could earn more money with a novel. Authors like Ray Bradbury had learned this and were selling collections as novels, even though they were really short story collections. Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* and *The Illustrated Man* are a case in point. Phil realized that it would be near impossible to make a living out of short story writing. This is how he related his change of direction to Paul Williams in 1974 (the interview was later released - in audio cassette form - as PKDS Newsletters #9 and 10:

"In '54 I went to my first convention and they said 'you ought to write novels, you'll never make it writing [short] stories.' They were right you know, you'd kill yourself trying to live. So I said 'Oh, is that how you do it?' and they said 'Yeah. Have a martini.' and I said 'what's a martini?'"

- note Phil's dry sense of humour in pointing out his navete ('*what's a martini?*') - devastatingly economic!

The second obvious reason why Phil reworked some of his short stories into novels is that he wanted to revisit themes and explore them in greater depth. The novel would afford him more space to reflect on his ideas and

extrapolate further. Any reader of *The Exegesis* (which of course was never intended for publication) will know just how far Phil could go with hypothesis, deduction and cogitation.

Fans often express a preference for the novels, believing that they house the most important material. Of course, when faced with *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, *VALIS*, *A Scanner Darkly* and *Time Out of Joint*, it is easy to see that they have a strong case. However I don't want to play one source of treasure against another. I'd rather point to the fact that many of his short stories are every bit as good as these aforementioned novels - and to think otherwise is to impoverish the scope of our experience of Philip K. Dick.

Indeed, some of his short stories are enhanced by their very economy. Like a beautiful haiku, they make their point neatly then exit. As a great poet once indicated - some things are not enhanced by their being more:

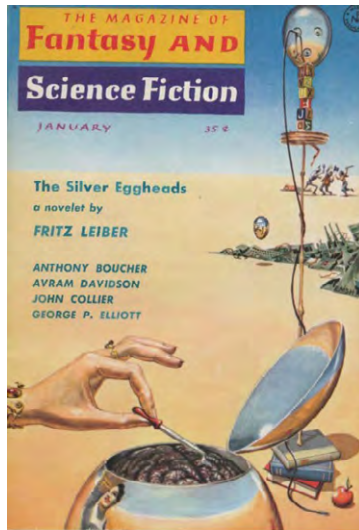
Why did he think adding meant increase?
To me it was dilution.

(from Dockery and Son by Philip Larkin)

Stories like *Mr Spaceship*, *The Electric Ant*, and *I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon* work all the more powerfully because of their concentrated form. Dick manages to say so much in just a few pages, leaving us with ideas which expand and reverberate in the mind long after we have returned his books to their shelves.

My abiding view (having been a Dick reader since the late 1970's) is that both the novels and the short stories are equally important. If that sounds shocking, I would suggest that you just haven't read the short stories closely enough. Furthermore I would posit that the demarcation between Dick's *important work* and his *lesser work* doesn't coincide with the divide between his novels and his short stories - both contain good and bad.

Of his 121 short stories, I would recommend, *The Little Movement*, *Beyond Lies the Wub*, *The Skull*, *Paycheck*, *The King of the Elves*, *Second Variety*, *Some Kinds of Life*, *The Commuter*, *A Present for Pat*, *Human Is*, *Adjustment Team*, *Imposter*, *Small Town*, *The Hanging Stranger*, *The Golden Man*, *The Father-Thing*, *Exhibit Piece*, *Service Call*, *Captive Market*, *The Minority Report*, *The Days of Perky Pat*, *We Can Remember it For You Wholesale*, *Faith of our Fathers*, *The Electric Ant*, *The Pre-Persons*, *I Hope I Shall Arrive Soon* and *Rautavaara's Case*.



Dick was a master of the short story form. I say this at a time when it is not the fashion for Dick fans to discuss his understanding of the craft - and (dare I say it) his literary merit. I have heard many fans and scholars of Dick's work apologising for the quality of his writing. They hastily point to the richness of his ideas, as if to divert attention. However, I think that Philip K Dick was not only a good writer, but a *very good* writer who wrote with great skill.

Sometimes the great art of a person's craft is concealed. We are too busy being transported by the meaning of their communication, that we (appropriately) miss the means by which they have achieved this. In the case of Dick it is often assumed that he was some kind of hack writer whose only virtue was that he happened to have a few good ideas. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Great artists are in the habit of making it look effortless. Just as reality is in the habit of concealing itself.

I would like to illustrate my argument with examples from his short story, 'Explorers We' which first appeared in the January 1959 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Dave Hyde and Henri Wintz's great (short story) bibliography 'Precious Artifacts 2,' gives *Explorers We* five out of five

In referring to its content and craft, I shall be giving away its plot, so please go and read it before you continue. We will read much of it here as we explore Dick's art.

The writer's first task is to engage the reader, to grab their attention - and keep it. Openings are very important. With

Shakespeare, I have found that the opening of each play lays out the main underlying themes. Often with great subtlety... For example, *King Lear* is a play concerned with the difference between *representations and reality*, between *hollow words and sincere action*. Thus the play opens with a King examining a map of his kingdom (we are reminded that the map is not the territory) then, in the same scene, the King mistakes flattering words for *real* love. A representation is not itself reality - no matter how close it seems.

The Belgian Surrealist, René Magritte demonstrated this with his painting 'The Human Condition' which shows a painted canvas in front of a window with a landscape view. The image on the canvas lines up perfectly with the reality it is in front of.

The representation is not the reality. Then we realize that the reality (real landscape) is itself just another representation in paint. In effect they are nested realities with diminishing claims on what is actual.



The Human Condition by René Magritte

As for first lines in stories, some of the French existentialists, liked to kick-start the reader with a hook - Albert Camus' brilliant *The Outsider* begins thus '*Mother died today or yesterday, maybe. I don't know...*' How could a person not remember when their mother died? We are shocked and hooked - we read on. Dick employs a similar device at the start of *Explorers We*:

"Golly," Parkhurst gasped, his red face tingling with excitement. "Come here, you guys. Look!"
They crowded around the viewscreen.
"There she is," Barton said. His heart beat strangely.
"She sure looks good."
"Damn right she looks good," Leon agreed.

Dick deliberately draws us in - he has used the word 'she' three times in as many lines. Who can she be? - who is it that causes faces to redden and tingle with excitement? *She* must look stunning. And then in the continuation of Leon's statement, we discover who 'she' is:

He trembled. "Say—I can make out New York."

These are six astronauts returning from a failed mission to mars and this is their first sight of earth. Dick's use of *defamiliarization* has led us to consider the attributes of a beautiful woman only to then ascribe them to our own majestic planet.

Their dialogue reveals that they thought they might be marooned on Mars indefinitely, until one of their colleagues (Barton) managed to effect a repair. The small-talk which ensues has the crew anticipating all the things they have missed:

"You know what I'm going to do, first thing I'm back?"
Parkhurst yelled.
"What?"
"Go to Coney Island."
"Why?"
"People. I want to see people again. Lots of them. Dumb, sweaty, noisy. Ice cream and water. The ocean. Beer bottles, milk cartons, paper napkins—"
"And gals," Vecchi said, eyes shining. "Long time, six months. I'll go with you. We'll sit on the beach and watch the gals."

"I wonder what kind of bathing suits they got now," Barton said.

"Maybe they don't wear any!" Parkhurst cried.

"Hey!" Merriweather shouted. "I'm going to see my wife again." He was suddenly dazed. His voice sank to a whisper. "My wife."

"I got a wife, too," Stone said. He grinned. "But I been married a long time." Then he thought of Pat and Jean. A stabbing ache choked his windpipe. "I bet they have grown."

"Grown?"

"My kids," Stone said huskily.'

Notice how overcome the crew were when they recalled their families - they are '*suddenly dazed*,' their voices '*sink to a whisper*,' they experience a '*stabbing ache [choking their] windpipe*' and their voices become husky with emotion.

Dick is reinforcing the idea that these are plain earth people just like you and I. We recognize their likes and responses as being natural. Their ordinariness is claimed in a line which draws no attention to its claim:

'They looked at each other, six men, ragged, bearded, eyes bright and feverish.'

This apparently throwaway line slips in (with beautiful stealth) the idea that these are just 'six men'. As a sentence, it would work perfectly well without the words 'six men,' (*try it*) but Dick knows what he is doing. He is setting up the imminent counterpoint.

After a bumpy landing during which they were all thrown on the floor,

one of them suffers a minor injury:

'Parkhurst got unsteadily to his feet. He caught hold of the safety rail. Blood dripped down his face from a cut over his eye.'

This further reinforces the 'just like us' idea. In Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, Shylock says '*If you prick us do we not bleed?*' to assert his humanness. Shylock is insisting that he is nothing but a mere human and every-

'As a writer, Phil was very skilled and knew exactly what he was doing.'

thing common to humans is common to him. As indeed are these astronauts (we are led to believe).

As might well be the case after such a crash landing, others too are injured:

“Give me a hand,” Leon said. “My damn ankle’s twisted or something.”

They got him up. Merriweather was unconscious. They revived him and got him to his feet.’

The vulnerability of the crew further establishes their human frailty.

Next, the crew make smalltalk concerning where precisely they have landed - South of San Francisco. They speak enthusiastically of the cable cars, the Golden Gate Park and the Funhouse.

All of this apparent preamble seems like a fairly ordinary narrative when it is first read. Indeed it is intended not to draw attention to itself, but because I have highlighted its purpose, you will now expect its forthcoming antithesis.

Once the crew open the hatch and emerge they hear and see familiar things:

“What’s that sound?” Stone said, listening intently. “A train.”

It was coming along the distant track, black smoke pouring from its stack. A faint wind moved across the field, stirring the grass. Over to the right lay a town. Houses and trees. A theater marquee. A Standard gas station. Roadside stands. A motel.’

These are the things of earth, and we are reassured, this is indeed their home (and ours). This too is very important for the ensuing puzzle which Dick is setting up.

As they start walking towards the nearest town, Parkhurst starts fantasizing about the Royal reception they will probably receive:

“Maybe they’ll give us free eats . . . Hell - champagne!”

His chest swelled under his tattered uniform. “Returning heroes. Keys to the town. A parade. Military band. Floats with dames.”



As they walk towards town, they notice some kids watching them - as they approach, the crew get an unusual and unwelcome reaction:

‘The kids stared at them, eyes wide.

“What’s wrong?” Leon muttered.

“Our beards. We look pretty bad.” Stone cupped his hands. “Don’t be scared! We’re back from Mars. The rocket flight. Two years ago—remember? A year ago last October.”

The kids stared, white-faced. Suddenly they turned and fled. They ran frantically toward the town.

The six men watched them go.

“What the hell,” Parkhurst muttered, dazed. “What’s the matter?”

“Our beards,” Stone repeated uneasily.

“Something’s wrong,” Barton said, shakily. He began to tremble. “There’s something terribly wrong.”

This is the first confirmation the reader gets that things are not what they seem. And Dick has set it up beautifully, persuading us through skillful writing that these are earthmen and that this is the earth we know and love. Without these two ‘givens’ firmly in place - the story would hold no tension or mystery. Only with proper *thesis* can there be *antithesis*. Did you also notice Dick’s subtle re-use of the term ‘six men?’ (*the six men watched them go*’).

The crew have passed off the children’s reaction as being on account of their bedraggled and bearded appearance, however they meet others and get a similar reaction:

‘A youth on a bicycle fled at their approach. Some railroad workers, repairing the train track, threw down their shovels and ran, yelling.

Numbly, the six men watched them go.

“What is it?” Parkhurst muttered.’

As the crew continue they reach the town of Burlingame. Dick takes a moment to further reinforce the prosaic ordinariness of the town:

‘They looked down a street. Hotels and cafes. Parked cars. Gas stations. Dime stores. A small suburban town,

shoppers on the sidewalks. Cars moving slowly.'

More people run from them - a Gas station attendant, men and women from their stores all scatter wildly, until the streets are deserted. As they continued their journey, Dick is careful in the words he chooses. He doesn't say: "*They walked down the main street, dazed and silent.*" -which would be perfectly legitimate. He says:

"The six men walked down the main street, dazed and silent."

On an ordinary read-through we probably wouldn't notice that once again Dick is subliminally reminding us that these are 'men' - 'six men.' It is a property of great craft that for the most part it is invisible. It should be. Great craft is in service to the art. The art is visible, but the craft ought to be transparent.

This story only works if the returning crew are obviously real people - and earth and its (inhabitants) are also validated as real. Dick has been at pains to subtly emphasise the efficacy of both.

Dick then takes a moment to strengthen our belief in the humanity of this crew, knowing this will maximize the impact of the imminent clash of realities:

"Stone said nothing. His mind was blank. Numb. He felt tired. He sat down on the curb and rested, getting his breath. The others stood around him.

"My ankle," Leon said. He leaned against a stop sign, lips twisting with pain. "Hurts like hell."

"Captain," Barton said. "What's the matter with them?"

"I don't know," Stone said. He felt in his ragged pocket for a cigarette."

Thus they have ankles which can get sprained, lips which can twist, and cravings - just like us!

As they walk down the street, frightened faces peer out from windows and shutters are pulled down. They find a cafe which has been deserted but which still has a hamburger cooking and a glass coffee pot boiling on a burner.

With no one to serve them, they decide to leave the cafe - all except Captain Stone. Once outside, they are met by the FBI who turn up in two black sedans:

"I'm Scanlan," one said. "FBI." An older man with iron-gray hair. His voice was clipped and frigid. He studied the five of them intently. "Where's the other?"

"Captain Stone? In there." Barton pointed to the cafe.

Note Phil's subtle and elliptical '*the other.*' Not the other man. or even the other guy. The language used here also reminds us of a machine world of utility and function; of metal, and of the grey lifeless world which lacks colour. He speaks only the words necessary and there is an icy coldness.

One of the crew, Barton, retrieves the Captain from the cafe. Ominously FBI man Scanlon confirms that they have all of them now. The crew are distressed, but the FBI remain resolute. The crew desperately appeal to them:

"Wait!" Barton cried thickly. His head spun. "What—what's happening?"

"What is it?" Parkhurst demanded deprecatorily. Tears rolled down his face, streaking his cheeks. "Will you tell us, for God's sake—"

The FBI men had weapons. They got them out.

Notice Dick's brilliant evocation of the cold machine brain in the juxtaposition of those last few lines; the last line could have said '*The FBI men got their weapons out.*' But instead Dick uses two very short clipped sentences which serve to show the FBI's response as something clinical, cold, procedural. A follows B.

Dick has us identifying strongly with the confused and defenceless crew.

Vecchi backed away, his hands up. "Please!" he wailed. "What have we done? What's happening?"

Sudden hope flickered in Leon's breast. "They don't know who we are. They think we're Commies." He addressed Scanlan. "We're

the Earth-Mars Expedition. My name is Leon. Remember? A year ago last October. We're back. We're back from Mars." His voice trailed off. The weapons were coming up. Nozzles—hoses and tanks.

"We're back!" Merriweather croaked. "We're the Earth-Mars Expedition, comeback!"

Dick has us identifying strongly with the confused and defenceless crew. Then he gives us the opposing perspective which in true Dick fashion undermines the scenario as we understood it. It is FBI man, Scanlan's response which gives us this jolt:

Scanlan's face was expressionless. "That sounds fine," he said coldly. "Only, the ship crashed and blew up when it reached Mars. None of the crew survived. We know because we sent up a robot scavenger team and brought back the corpses—six of them."

Note: 'Scanlan's face was 'expressionless.' He speaks 'coldly.'

The FBI men fired. Blazing napalm sprayed toward the six bearded figures. They retreated, and then the flames touched them. The FBI men saw the figures ignite, and then the sight was cut off. They could no longer see the six figures thrashing about, but they could hear them. It was not something they enjoyed hearing, but they remained, waiting and watching.'

Is this a demonstration of the non-empathic android mind which chillingly despatches other beings with cold impersonality - or is this the rational act of a world protecting itself from alien invasion? If it were the latter, then why the use of flame-throwers and not quicker, less painful forms of execution?

Dick has given us the humanity of the crew, then the coldness of the FBI. And now to confound our loyalties, he has just given the FBI a credible rationale.

Nevertheless, Scanlon's disrespect for the newly dead crew is evident:

Scanlan kicked at the charred fragments with his foot. "Not easy to be sure," he said. "Possibly only five here . . . but I didn't see any of them get away. They didn't have time." At the pressure of his foot, a section of ash broke away; it fell into particles that still steamed and bubbled.

As people start to come out from doorways a boy shouts something which gives us our first handle on how these

"returning crew" have been perceived in the wider media:

"They got 'em!" a boy shouted excitedly. "They got the outer space spies!"

The idea of a child feeling such glee and triumph over six sentient beings being killed by flame-thrower reveals the shocking inhumanity of these earth-people.

Scanlon's, dialogue with his FBI colleague, Wilks, gives us another startling piece of the puzzle:

"What's this—the twenty-second time?" Scanlan said, "Twenty-first. Every couple of months ... the same names, same men. I won't tell you that you'll get used to it. But at least it won't surprise you."

These are most likely Martian impersonators, and not who they say they are. However, Dick is not a peddler of easy solutions, certainties or mono-perceptions. We have been privy to something the FBI agents were not, namely the crew's in-flight conversation. These were not mere impersonators, these were individuals who *actually believed they were who they said they were* - these are 'people' who were genuinely celebrating their return - and who each had precious memories of earth.

Dick pits these two opposing viewpoints against one another. FBI agent Wilks expresses a dilemma which Scanlan is not willing to contemplate:

"I don't see any difference between them and us," Wilks said, speaking distinctly. "It was like burning up six human beings."

'And now to confound our loyalties, he has just given the FBI a credible rationale.'

Great writers draw from their own experiences and the admonition to 'write what you know' might be better worded as 'write what you have experienced' or even, 'write what you can imagine experiencing.' Here is Phil

relating something he experienced:

"I had seen in the world what the Buddhists saw - pointless suffering. Suffering of animals, suffering of people. Suffering of nations. I remember during World War II when I was a kid seeing newsreel film in the theatre of a

Japanese soldier who had been hit with a flamethrower by the Americans. He was burning to death and running, burning and running. And I had seen a kid burn up at camp when I was in primary school. And the audience seeing this Japanese soldier burning to death and running from this flaming torch, cheered and laughed - and I was dazed with horror at the sight of the man on the screen and at the audience's reaction, and I thought, *something is terribly wrong.*" (PKD Interview with Charles Platt published in *Who Writes Science Fiction* Savoy Books 1980).

rat, and it still didn't die. Here was this rat, it had tried only to come in and get food, it was poisoned, its neck was broken, it was stabbed, and it was still alive. At that point I simply went crazy with horror. I ran in and filled a tub with water and drowned it. And I buried it and took the St. Christopher medal that I wore and buried that with the rat. And the soul of that rat I carry on me from then on, as a question and as a problem about the condition of living creatures on this world. I could not exorcize the spirit of that rat which had died so horribly...even in 1974 I was still remembering that rat screaming."(PKD Interview with Charles Platt published in *Who Writes Science Fiction* Savoy Books 1980).



It seems highly likely that this powerful incident informed the writing of *Explorers We*.

Back to the narrative. Although Scanlon insists that they only 'looked like six human beings,' Wilks thinks there ought to be a better way of dealing with them than flamethrower.

"But—" He gestured. "Isn't there anything else we can do with them?"

Scanlon is adamant. These were only imitation people.

One of the Bureau men informs Scanlon that there were only *five* charred bodies in the ashes. Scanlon tells Wilks:

"One got away; they think they saw him. He's crippled and not moving fast. The rest of us are going after him—you stay here, keep your eyes open."

This hunting down something crippled and not moving fast reminds me of an incident Phil related in the same Charles Platt interview:

"When I was in my thirties and living in the country I had to kill a rat that had gotten into the children's bedroom. Rats are hard to kill. I set a trap for it. In the night it got into the trap, and the next morning, when I got up, it heard me coming and it screamed. I took the trap out with a pitchfork and sprung the trap and let the rat go out in the pasture, and it came out of the trap and its neck was broken. I took the pitchfork and drove the tines into the



Returning to *Explorers We*... Wilks ponders his position and considers alternative responses to non-human life forms:

"Mimicry... everybody terrified. But— Had anybody really tried to make contact?"

Throughout the story Dick has fortified these opposing perceptions beautifully. On the one hand these are *invaders from Mars*:

- Scanlon has explained this
- They mimic those who died in a failed mission
- Are they perhaps responsible for the original crew's deaths?

On the other hand these are *sentient beings with humanity*:

- Beings who might not know what they are (they seemed to believe they were the actual crew)
- They might indeed *be* the original crew who have found a way to inhabit other life forms
- They appear to be peaceful

The scene is set. Dick now stacks the odds against the helpless, lone individual. Indeed this feels very much like the *individual versus the state*:

"Two policemen appeared, herding people back out of

the way. A third black Dodge, loaded with Bureau men, moved along at the curb, stopped, and the men got out.”

Notice these are forces which ‘herd people,’ they come ‘in black’ and their vehicles are ‘loaded’ with Bureau men. Authority. Darkness. Force.

One of the Bureau men checks that Wilks knows how to kill ‘it’ if he sees it. Wilks answers in the affirmative. But he is still pondering what his response would be:

“If it was up to me, Wilks asked himself, what would I do? Try to find out what they want? Anything that looks so human, behaves in such a human way, must feel human . . . and if they—whatever they are—feel human, might they not become human, in time?”

It is Wilks who first spots the crew member who got away, and thus he is caught in a moral dilemma:

“At the edge of the crowd of people, an individual shape detached itself and moved toward him. Uncertainly, the shape halted, shook its head, staggered and caught itself, and then assumed a stance like that of the people near it. Wilks recognized it because he had been trained to, over a period of months. It had gotten different clothes, a pair of slacks, a shirt, but it had buttoned the shirt wrong, and one of its feet was bare. Evidently it did not understand the shoes. Or, he thought, maybe it was too dazed and injured.

As it approached him, Wilks raised his pistol and took aim at its stomach. They had been taught to fire there; he had fired, on the practice range, at chart after chart. Right in the midsection . . . bisect it, like a bug.

On its face the expression of suffering and bewilderment deepened as it saw him prepare to fire. It halted, facing him, making no move to escape. Now Wilks realized that it had been severely burned; probably it would not survive in any case.

“I have to,” he said.

It stared at him, and then it opened its mouth and started to say something.

He fired.

Before it could speak, it had died. Wilks got out as it pitched over and lay beside the car.

I did wrong, he thought to himself as he stood looking down at it. I shot it because I was afraid. But I had to. Even if it was wrong. It came here to infiltrate us, imitating us so we won’t recognize it. That’s what we’re told—we have to believe that they are plotting against us, are inhuman, and will never be more than that.”

The desperation of the creature, the inept attempt at disguise, the suffering and bewilderment at having to die, all of these are contrasted with Wilks’ rationalisation that he “had to.” He was just following orders. We might contemplate which of the two beings is truly *human*? I think the answer should be based more on *empathy* than *biology*.

Wilks wants to console himself that for better or worse - it’s all finished with:

“Thank God, he thought. It’s over.
And then he remembered it wasn’t...”

Another returning spaceship has a rocky landing and once again, a Captain Stone, Parkhurst, Barton et al, emerge bruised and shaken, but excited and pleased to be safely home. And thus the story ends anticipating an endless cycle of killing.

The humans in this story respond immediately to new life forms by incinerating them. Thus the humans lack humanity and the invaders behave with humanity. We are exploring one of Dick’s most persistent themes; *What is human?*

In the short story ‘*Human Is*’ a woman finds her husband so emotionally cold that in a police line-up, she *deliberately mis-identifies a friendly android* as her real husband because she prefers an android with humanity than a human with no empathy. That word again. *Empathy*.

And what happens to Deckard in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* What is Deckard’s work doing to him?

Who are the androids and who are the humans? We would be wise to reflect on our fixed categories. In King Lear, Shakespeare asks similar questions regarding who is who. In Act 4, when the King has had a mental breakdown he meets an old friend (Gloucester) who has been blinded. Lear, though mad has had an epiphany and now understands much more (just as the blind Gloucester now ‘sees’ more). Lear ponders governance and considers who is the real law-breaker - the judiciary or the defendant :

“A man may see how this world goes with no eyes.
Look with thine ears. See how yon justice rails upon yon simple thief. Hark, in thine ear - change places and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief?
(King Lear Act 4 Scene 6)

That *Explorers We* remains unresolved is to Dick's great credit. It resonates in the mind long after it has been read. We are left with questions rather than answers and we are invited to explore issues, rather than to cease questioning (by holding glib certainties). *Explorers we become.*

In many ways the story is a puzzle which cannot be settled - indeed it is Dick's intention, no doubt, to *unsettle* us. Each side apparently believes itself to be authentic and true. Each view invalidates the opposing view.

René Magritte¹ once found a visual analogue for this in his painting 'The Telescope:'

Looking at this image, we might conclude

- A) These windows have a painted sky on their surface, OR
- B) These windows are see-through or hollow

If we consider the left hand pane we might conclude that it is a window and we are seeing clouds through clear glass. But then when we see through the gap between the panes we notice that beyond the window is darkness, therefore the left hand pane must be a mere painting of a sky. Then the right hand pane contradicts both previous perceptions - it presents a normal glass pane (note the upper left corner) which tells us that there is indeed genuine blue sky beyond. The dark gap between both panes nevertheless contradicts this. It is paradoxical and like *Explorers We*. Its beautifully balanced mechanism operates the way it does in every well designed paradox:

Imagine a country where those condemned to die are allowed to decide whether they will be *hanged* or *beheaded* by making a statement. If their statement proves *false* then they will be *hanged*; and if it proves *true* then they will be *beheaded*. A condemned man, when asked for his statement, says cleverly, "I shall be *hanged*."

Likewise *Explorers We* does not allow us an 'answer.' Had the returning crew been shown as less human - or the FBI and earth people more humane, then a conclusion would have been possible. It is to Dick's credit that he has balanced these opposing forces so well that ones allegiance cannot be fully resolved. Our loyalties are confounded.

Dick has placed us in a super-position between two mutually exclusive realities. Like a Zen koan this story holds us in contemplation. We bathe in its questions rather than race toward any glib answers.

Dick has achieved this through both the structure of his writing and his careful choices of words and their connotations. He revelled in the very process of writing and he crafted his stories until they 'worked.' In a letter² to a fellow American Author (James McKimney), Dick said:

"A good story is a good story. It, like math, is a self-contained world. It validates itself. You don't have to look outside to find out if it's so. The impact of good writing is the test; political opinions come and go, but once you do a good yarn, it's a living thing."

And if you want confirmation of just how much Dick put into his writing, here's another extract of a letter to James McKimney:

"After I write a really successful story I always say to



The Telescope by René Magritte

myself, “By God, now I can die happy!”... The process of life goes on; I change, the world changes; new combinations arise and the old ones are lost. But here on this handful of paper is one of these combinations, my reactions and responses, the sum of my personality and character as it interacts with a particular idea-experience. The idea never came to me before; it'll never come to me again. But look, man. Here it is!”

The field of Science Fiction is rife with stories of alien invaders versus humans, but in typical Dick fashion, he has made the aliens very human and the humans very inhuman. Concepts like *us* and *them* are found to be bankrupt. What matters is not what we *are*, but what we are *becoming*. And what matters most of all is empathy, agape, caritas, love.

Note: This piece was first presented as ‘Philip K. Dick and the Craft of Writing’ by Nick Buchanan at The Philip K Dick Festival (August 9-11th, 2019, Fort Morgan).

1. Where Dick was a philosopher who found the perfect expression for his ideas in Science Fiction stories, Magritte was a philosopher, who found that paintings were the best expression of his ideas. I would urge every fan of Philip K. Dick to research and explore the work of René Magritte. The way their work speaks to each other is mutually enriching.

2. From Letters to James McKimmey a fellow American author, five years Dick’s senior: There were nine typewritten letters, all from Dick to Jim, from five to 12 pages long, dated from July 25, 1953, to early 1964.

Nick Buchanan is the author of two 500 page guides to Shakespeare plays - **What Happens in Shakespeare’s King Lear** and **What Happens in Shakespeare’s Macbeth** www.nickbuchanan.co.uk
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Philip K. Dick

(1928-1982)

VALIS



Me And PKD by Brent Houzenga

It's true. I'm a dickhead. I want to read to everything. I want to be an authority on the subject. I'm working on it, ya know, next to being a father, trying to make money as an artist, and all the other things life throws at you. Anyone want to give me a grant so I can

pursue this passion full time? (Or even part time...)

I kid, but I'm mostly serious. My obsession with Philip K Dick (PKD) is more than an obsession, just as my art practice is really so much more than an art practice. To understand my relationship with PKD you have to know my story. I can't really tell you why without telling you the whole story. So...

In 2006 I was about to graduate from Western Illinois University with my first art degree, of which my parents and immediate family were extremely proud (This is a joke). I was out for a jog one day and looked down into someone's trash to see two antique photo albums, one of them red with golden metal clasps. I opened them up to discover both of them were full of photographs from the 1890s. I tucked them under my arms and continued to run towards home. I felt instantly that I shouldn't have them. I took them to campus to show my professors and felt the same way walking around campus with them, as if having something this old was against the rules.

At home, sitting, looking through the photos, I felt a wave of euphoria, as if something had swept over me. Seeing these people, these photographs, from one hundred years ago sparked something inside of me. It made me realize how short our time on earth is in a very real way. I also felt a certain amount of empathy for these people. A hundred years has been an instant, and soon I too will be just a photograph, thrown out to waste. No one remembers me anymore and so my image no longer holds any value.

Short story long, I started painting these people. I still paint them. As I was getting started though, it seemed like the world responded to my insights. Many synchronistic and sometimes mystical and magical things started happening.

My first introduction to PKD was in the film *Waking Life* (still my favorite). The film's director, Richard Linklater, plays an unnamed character who explains an essay that PKD wrote about his experience writing *Flow My Tears*, *The Policeman Said* and the events that followed. I was either watching the film or telling my friend Gabe about it, maybe he just recommended it to me. Either way, he gave me three books, *Time Out Of Joint*, *Man In The High Castle*, and *The World Jones Made*.

In *Time Out Of Joint*, Raggle starts finding things he doesn't believe are from his time. This is the first synchronicity/similarity I found in PKD. When I found my photographs, I felt like somehow I had broken through time, perhaps I time traveled for those few moments, and brought these photos back with me. This is where my obsession started. I even had a show called *Time Out Of Joint*. That show and trip was full of spooky and what I call mystical experiences. For keeping this essay concise and on subject I will just say that I felt like the spirits from my photo albums were guiding me.

Shortly after I moved to New Orleans (which also felt like a mystical experience) I watched a documentary about PKD (I don't remember which). This was the first that I had ever heard of his VALIS experience. It struck me. He had this experience that changed his life, and spent the rest of his life working on it. That's kind of like my story. Similarly, when he sold his first story, from then on out, he was a writer, which is how I've always felt about my artwork. We both had decisive moments that solidified our life's work. I painted him immediately and thus began my real journey into PKD. I bought the *Exegesis* along with any other book I could find.

Dick often includes discussions about psychology and therapy in his work. One day I went to the bookstore to look for a new PKD book. I walked right in, went to the section, saw *Deus Irae*, picked it up and went to the counter. This was probably my fastest and most decisive bookstore trip ever. When I walked up to the counter there was a lady standing there talking to the teller about her new business. Conversationally I just chimed in "Oh, what's your business?" The woman told me she was about to open a private therapy practice and I immediately said, "Oh, I'm looking for a therapist." This is how I met my therapist, who I saw for over a year and it seems that in the reading I was doing at the time, *Deus Irae* or otherwise, Dick was often mentioning therapy or psychology in some way.

As I read I became furthermore enchanted, and with each reading, each book, something always stuck out

to me as being too close to home, almost too blatantly synchronistic. While I was reading *Scanner Darkly* I came to the passage about *through a glass darkly* and what St. Paul meant by that. Oddly enough, Arctor is having this discussion with the psychologists, and Dick goes off about seeing your reflection, and how that reflection is you, but it's reversed. Before mirrors you would see yourself in a polished piece of metal, or in a stream, and that reflection would be reversed and distorted. You can never really see yourself.

“Through a mirror...pulled through infinity... And that reflection that returns to you: it is you, it is your face, but it isn't... and they didn't have cameras back in those old days, and so that's the only way a person saw himself: backward. I have seen myself backward.”

There's more talk about photography, too. And this was, literally, moments before I left my house to go have my tin-type taken. For those of you who don't know, a tin-type is a photograph made by creating a direct positive image on a thin sheet of metal, a photographic process popular in the 1860s. Because it is a direct positive, this means that the image you take home is reversed. I left my house stunned in a very positive way. It may be hard to explain or get my point across, but I was filled, again with a strong sense of magic. Something is going on here.

One of the major themes in Dick's work that has always struck me is the idea of the everyman. A common man, doing common things, who somehow becomes entangled in these otherworldly experiences. I love to

paint these anonymous people from my photo albums because I feel like everyone is meant to shine. I don't know who these people are in these photos, so they could be anyone. They could be you, or me, they could be humble and honest, or they could be horrible. Either way. I don't tend to think about how they were in their lifetime, but more as a blank slate. If they and everyone else could just

see how beautiful we all can be. I've always thought of myself as the everyman, too. Am I incredibly talented or gifted? I don't know, but I know what I want to do and plan to work really hard on it. Like the everyman in Dick's stories, as I take every step, incredible circumstances begin to unfold.

You may know the story from *Waking Life*. It's about how PKD wrote *Flow My Tears* and then a few years later all of these things from his novel started to happen to him in real life. One part of that story has to do with the man he

meets at the gas station (in real life and in the book), and how there is this shared moment of empathy.

Two years ago I was gearing up to throw my first birthday party event for PKD (we've done this for the last two years, his 89th and 90th birthday). I, myself, was at the gas station, putting some air in my tire, and as I was going to leave I saw this man waving me down. Normally, I would say that I couldn't help, or sorry man I don't have any spare change, etc, but this man had a small baby with him. He asked if I would give him a ride. I thought about it for a second and then agreed. I was going in that direction anyway. On our ride he told me about his life,



and situation. The mother of his child had abandoned him. He was looking for work. We talked candidly on the ride, and I tried to offer him some advice the best I could. I felt for him. I really did, and our situations, in many respects, were not all that different. It didn't dawn on me until much later how similar this experience was, and leading up to the party we were about to throw for PKD.

I could go on and on about the ways PKD's work has moved, touched, and infiltrated me. As I mentioned, every novel or story has had some tidbit that I had to stop and scratch my head. Is this really just a coincidence? Did he really just mention something that has happened to me? Many of you reading this have probably had similar experiences. They don't call it a cult following for nothing.

No matter the consequences, I hope we all can have our own Dickian experience. An experience in our lifetime that helps us decide what we want to do with our lives, an experience that shows us how and why to shine. An experience that confirms we are on the right path. Dick had his, and spent the rest of his life writing, then he had another one, and spent the rest of his life writing even more furiously. I'm positive he had countless others. We don't have much time. Do what you want to do with your life. Do it now. Perhaps in doing so, we can break free and find the true nature of reality or at least break through a couple layers.

References from waking life:

That's the one he wrote really fast. It just like flowed right out of him. He felt he was sort of channeling it, or something. But anyway, about four years after it was published, he was at this party, and he met this woman who had the same name as the woman character in the book. And she had a boyfriend with the same name as the boyfriend character in the book, and she was having an affair with this guy, the chief of police, and he had the same name as the chief of police in his book. So she's telling him all of this stuff from her life, and everything she's saying is right out of his book. So that's totally freaking him out, but, what can he do?

And then shortly after that, he was going to mail a letter, and he saw this kind of, um, you know, dangerous, shady looking guy standing by his car, but instead of avoiding

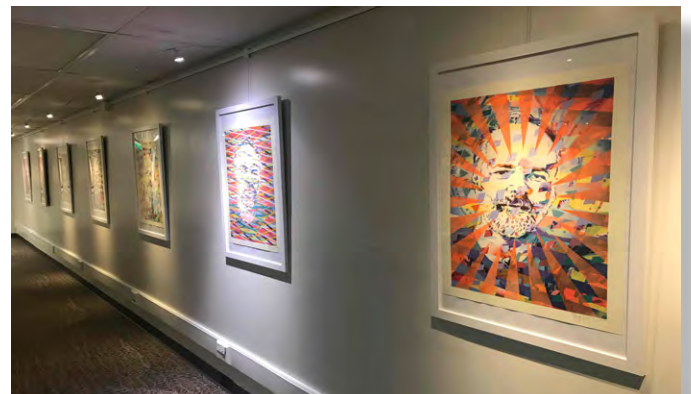
him, which he says he would have usually done, he just walked right up to him and said, "Can I help you?" And the guy said, "Yeah. I, I ran out of gas." So he pulls out his wallet, and he hands him some money, which he says he never would have done, and then he gets home and thinks, wait a second, this guy, you know, he can't get to a gas station, he's out of gas. So he gets back in his car, he goes and finds the guy, takes him to the gas station, and as he's pulling up at the gas station, he realizes, "Hey, this is in my book too. This exact station, this exact guy. Everything."

From wiki pedia:

In his undelivered speech "How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later," Dick

recounts how in describing an incident at the end of the book (end of chapter 27) to an Episcopalian priest, the priest noted its striking similarity to a scene in the [Acts of the Apostles](#) in the Bible. In Dick's book, the police chief, Felix Buckman, meets a black stranger at an all-night gas station, and uncharacteristically makes an emotional connection with him. After handing the stranger a drawing of a heart pierced by an arrow, Buckman flies away, but he quickly returns and hugs the stranger, and they strike up a friendly conversation. In Acts Chapter 8), the disciple Philip meets an [Ethiopian eunuch](#) (a black man) sitting in a chariot, to whom he explains a passage from the [Book of Isaiah](#), and then converts him to Christianity.^[7]

Dick further notes that eight years after writing the book, he himself uncharacteristically came to the aid of a black stranger who had run out of gas. After giving the man some money and then driving away, he returned to help the man reach a gas station. Dick was then struck by the similarity between this incident and that described in his book.^[7]



*Further examples of the work of Brent Houzenga as seen in the CACE Gallery
- PKD Festival 2019 (Fort Morgan, Colorado)*



THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE: TV Distortions and Novel Truths

by Lord RC

At the 2019 Philip K. Dick Festival in Fort Morgan, Colorado we had an interesting panel on THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, led by Ted Hand with Tessa Dick, Andrew M. Butler and Frank Hollander. This panel has been posted online in three parts by Henri Wintz (along with other videos of the festival). While watching these I decided to write the following essay about which I have been thinking for a few weeks. It is rough; to make it into a polished article will require much more immersion in PKD's novel. Perhaps later I shall return to this - LRC

Fans of Philip K. Dick have grumbled about the Amazon TV series THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE ever since it came out. There's something not quite right here we suspect but we are reluctant to look at what exactly that is. Let's assume in what follows familiarity with Dick's Hugo Award-winning novel among the readers of PKD OTAKU and take a look at the TV series.

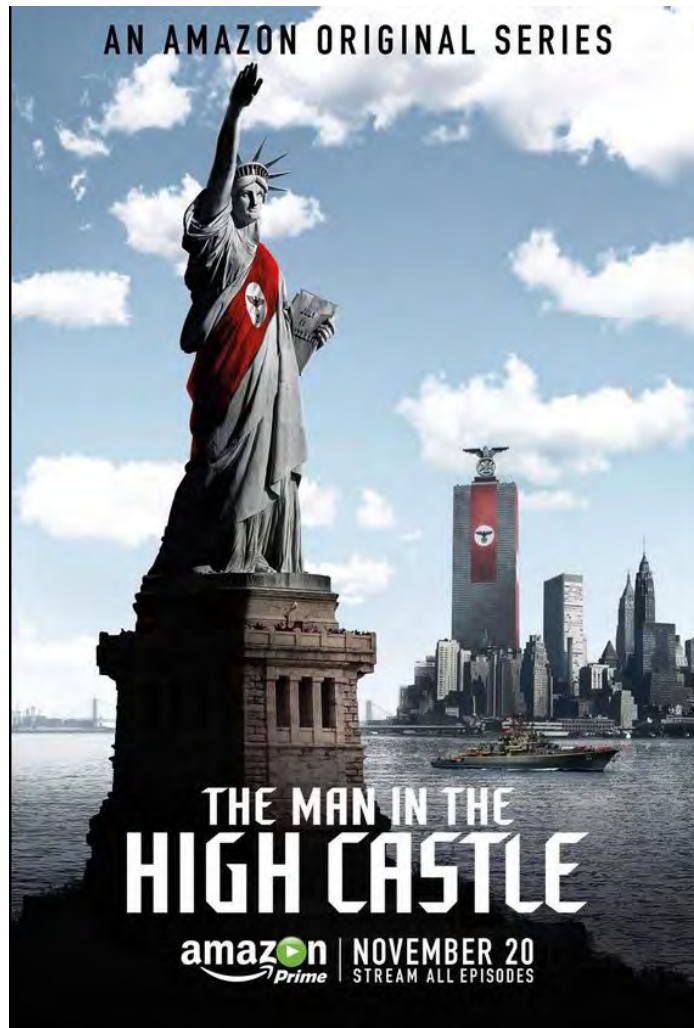
I actually don't have Amazon Prime on my TV but I recently found myself in a place where they did and, with nothing much better to do, I decided to turn on the series. I missed the pilot but binge-watched the first five episodes. For a TV show based on Dick's novel I thought the scenery was pretty awesome: there's something about swastikas, red-white-and-black flags and Nazi uniforms that perks the interest of anyone who looks forward to a good show where the fascist swine get their asses kicked from out

the USA and back to wherever they came from. But that's about it. Despite the action, the dialogue, the scenery, Amazon's HIGH CASTLE takes the direct route to roll out a series based on, well, let's face it, the movie 'Red Dawn'. Substitute Nazis for Russians (though who can tell the difference these days), update the habitat and slot in characters from the cliché-box and you have a TV series full

of good guys and bad guys and their personal problems spinning into numerous subplots – another cliché.

The main plot of the series, as far as I saw it, is that there is a vibrant resistance to the Nazi occupation of the United States. A *maquis* of righteous middle-class Americans with their cellphones and stockpiles of weapons, hell-bent on overthrowing the Nazi occupation. Things blow up. Soldiers and rebels get shot and people are tortured. But life goes on in the USA pretty much as it did before 2017 and the ascent of Donald Trump. [And as an aside, we now know that pre-Trump was an alternate world, a fake history that has been derailed from its future by a science fiction character who can usefully be compared to Palmer Eldritch and The Mule in Isaac Asimov's *Foundation*

series. In Eldritch's world there is only Palmer Eldritch: all is contained in him. In *Foundation* The Mule is a mutant; something not prepared for in Hari Seldon's 'Future History'. Seldon's efforts to preserve civilization and shorten the coming 1000 year interregnum of barbarism that his theory of psycho-history foresees are derailed by this mental mutant who has a better way – his way. Further comparisons between a planned-out future, such as in *Foundation*, and the la-di-da liberal self-assurance that cultural globalism is the inevitable future of post-modern society that, until recently, i.e. before Trump, dominated



intellectual thought, and its destruction by said Trump can be deferred to a later time.]

To return to the Amazon series and its falseness or lack of fidelity to Philip K. Dick's THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE:

In Dick's novel America is occupied in the East by the Nazis and in the West by the Japanese. The Rocky Mountains form a buffer zone between the occupiers, albeit dominated by the Japanese. Most of the action occurs in Colorado and San Francisco. There is no direct participation in the narrative from the Nazi-held territories in the heretofore United States, nor in Germany. All is referred to only.

So, what's the situation in Colorado and California? Are there ardent revolutionaries determined to throw off the nasty Nipponese? Are there Red Dawn-like gangs of students gunning down the Asiatic oppressors? No, there are not. And this is a key to understanding the novel – and the Amazon series. There is no resistance to the occupation. Much as it pains me to realise it, in the novel we are a conquered nation. Have been for many years. Nazi fascists rule in the East and any initial opposition was destroyed in the war. Now, we can see by reference that the states occupied by the Nazis are dominated if not completely populated by White people. Blacks and racial minorities, if they are allowed to live at all, are slaves. Things are a little better under the minimally benign Japanese occupation.

Am I suggesting, then, that THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE is somehow concerned with race? I don't recall anyone else writing about this connection, although, once pointed out, it is obvious that a central part of the novel, if not the whole thing, is a comment on race relations, not only circa 1961 when Dick wrote the novel, but projected into the future as befits any competent science fiction writer. And that future is now.

Consider this: In Dick's novel we have a world, particularly the United States of America, which is dominated, ruled, owned, whatever you want to call it, by two 'races'. The white German Nazis and the (in today's terms) people of color as represented by the Japanese. [and as another aside, the very difficulty

of choosing the correct words to designate any 'race' points to a crisis in liberal thought brought on by the self-knowledge that my language – English, I cannot comment on others – is what is now sometimes called of Anglic or Nordic origin, meaning white. Thus inherently biased and precursive to such terms as 'racial minority' and 'people of color'. The search for a comfortable expression is ongoing and it is an important one for the future of 'race relations.' Remember, as Phil said, "The basic tool for the manipulation of reality is the manipulation of words. If you can control the meaning of words, you can control the people who must use them."]

And in this divided world, headed to a violent *Gottterdammerung* with knowledge of the Nazis "Operation Dandelion", we have the coming final battle between the whites and, to put it blandly, everyone else. And what's the likely outcome of this future war? Obviously, in Dick's novel, the Nazis will squash the Japanese in short order. Done and dusted to toss in a random malapropism.

And to get to the point, in THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE we have a parallel with our present United States of America in 2019. At this time we have the two fears of racism: that whites will rule and that non-whites will rule. These are both represented in HIGH CASTLE by the Nazis and the Japanese and paralleled today by the 'White supremacists' or 'white nationalists' or 'Neo-Nazis', etcetera on the one side and the 'minorities', 'people of color', 'ethnics', 'races', etcetera on the other side. In the novel both of these rule simultaneously. PKD concentrates on the Japanese-dominated side (I think he made it clear that in the Nazi side the domination was almost total) – where the fear of minority-domination is made real to the

conquered American whites. A realization of a changing status that is coming to the full consciousness of white people in the United States in 2019.

It's not easy to describe how I see the situation today in light of THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE. It's as if reality

has been twisted like a rubber band, turned on its head at one end ideologically. Whether this is a natural process or humanly motivated is a good question to ask. And how should the argument be phrased to yield a solution to

“Much as it pains me to realise it, in the novel we are a conquered nation.”

the problem the dichotomy represents? Its simple to say that white domination inevitably leads to everyone else's enslavement and destruction. But what is it simple to say about the other side? That equality among all people will benefit everyone? That's not what it means to racists and white supremacists! What it means to them is shown clearly in THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE in the important subplot involving the purveyor of American historical artifacts, Robert Childan, and the young Japanese couple Paul and Betty Kasoura whose patronage he seeks. Here we see the true nature of the relationship between the Japanese and the conquered Americans. Childan is impressed by everything Japanese, is aware of their notions of ancestral honor and racial integrity. He doesn't want to "lose face" in the presence of the seemingly enlightened Kasouras. He kowtows to the Japanese, wishes he were of equal status. But... he knows his 'place':

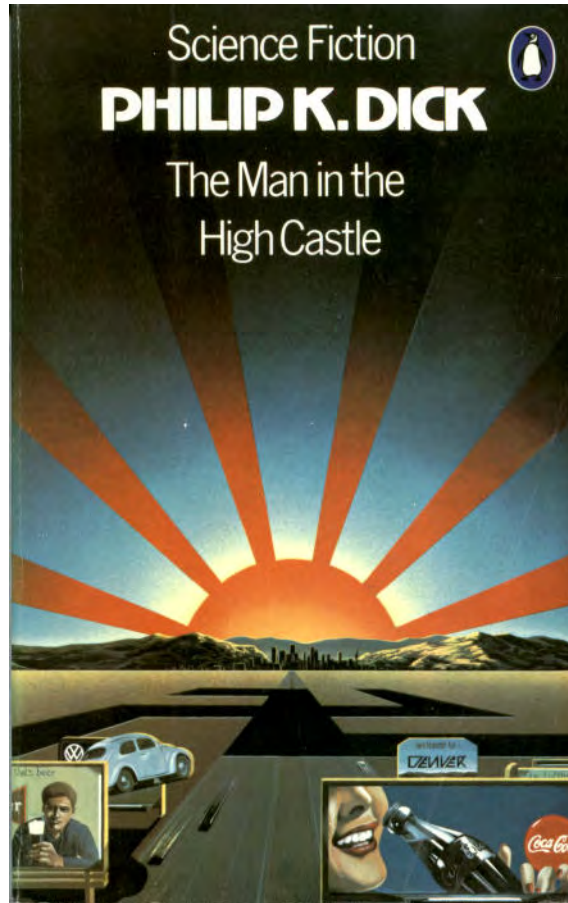
How do I appear? There is no deceiving anyone; I do not belong here. On this land that white men cleared and built one of their finest cities. I am an outsider in my own country. (TMITHC Ch. 7)

Is this not a clear statement of the fear of white people who don't want to be outsiders in what they consider is their own country? Once again Philip K. Dick gets to the center of the problem. But does he have a solution to racial questions?

There is much in the interactions between Childan and the Kasouras that shows aspects of a harmonious solution. And which also shows aspects of opposition.

In this scene in chapter 7 with Childan and the Kasouras there is a transformation in Childan who, on first meeting them, is all fawning subservience but who comes to feel that he is an oaf in the presence of the cultured Japanese

couple and he resents it. And in a later scene, after Childan has attempted to gift a piece of modern American (I almost said native American) jewelry to Betty Kasoura, he visits Paul Kasoura in his office and discovers that the jewelry was never presented to Betty. Instead Paul had shown it to fellow Japanese collectors of ancient American artifacts who laughed at it, this amorphous blob of polished metal in the setting of a pin. But Paul, even as he rejects the pin, admits it has something. Note in this excerpt the many things Paul Kasoura says about this pin:



"Yet... I have for several days now inspected it, and for no logical reason I feel a certain emotional fondness. Why is that? I may ask. I do not even now project into this blob, as in psychological German tests, my own psyche. I still see no shapes or forms. But it somehow partakes of Tao. You see?" He motioned Childan over. "It is balanced. The forces within this piece are stabilized. At rest. So to speak, this object has made its peace with the universe. It has separated from it and hence has managed to come to

homeostasis."

Childan nodded, studied the piece. But Paul had lost him.

"It does not have wabi," Paul said, "nor could it ever. But -" He touched the pin with his nail. "Robert, this object has wu."

[...] "To have no historicity, and also no artistic, esthetic worth, and yet to partake of some ethereal value – that is a marvel. Just precisely because this is a miserable, small, worthless-looking blob; that, Robert, contributes to its possessing wu. [...] Here, an artificer has put wu into an object, rather than merely witnessed the wu inherent in it." He glanced up. "Am I making myself clear?"

"Yes," Childan said.

"In other words, an entire new world is pointed to, by this. The name for it is neither art, for it has no form, nor religion. What is it? [...] You are right, Robert. It is

authentically a new thing on the face of the world."

To Childan's consternation and bewilderment Paul returns the pin to him and suggests that he consider mass-production of such items for dissemination as charms to the people of South America and the Orient. Money can be made. But..

After a time Childan said, "What about wu? Will that remain in the pieces?"

Paul said nothing.

But then Childan saw:

Of course. Whole affair a cruel dismissal of American efforts, taking place before his eyes.[...] Got me to agree, step by step, led me along the garden path to this conclusion: products of American hands good for nothing but to be models for junky good-luck charms.

[...]

[...] He's broken me, Childan almost said aloud [...] Humiliated me and my race. And I'm helpless. There's no avenging this; we are defeated and our defeats are like this, so tenuous, so delicate, that we're hardly able to perceive them. [...]

Childan expresses his humiliation to Paul and says

"I - am proud of this work. There can be no consideration of trashy good-luck charms. I reject."

He demands an apology and Paul gives it. They shake hands. An amicable solution to what was realized by Childan as a great insult. For to the sophisticated Paul Kasoura the Edfrank pin is trash. He's wrestled with the object, sees something in it, tries to find some worth but

finds only *wu* the embodiment of junk. But to Childan it is an authentic modern artifact made in America.

Thus is the gulf between minority aspirations to equality and the actuality of life as a minority shown by Dick in the interaction of Paul Kasoura and Robert Childan through this pin. No matter which race or national group is on top the lower group faces this problem. By turning it upside down and making whites the minority Dick brings the problem to the attention of the actual white majority. It is a restatement of the novel's premise that the Allies lost the Second World War to the Axis.

In this interchange PKD suggests that a way to racial integration is through a racial minorities' artistry. That is, that any minority group must be true to themselves and their valued traditions; assert their equality regardless of the costs in terms of the dominant race. No money for Robert Childan, but a sense of relief and calm:

He felt melancholy. Brief instant, as if I rose to the surface and saw

unencumbered.

The opposition to this racially assertive move as embodied in the Edfrank pin is subtle. It includes co-option, sell-out, corruption and greed. Paul Kasoura wraps Robert Childan up in words. Frames the conversation in Japanese terms unknown to him.

Expresses sympathy and appreciation of the pin as an item of trash as if trash as trash has some worth. No wonder that Childan, using all the courage he has, demands an apology!

Equality does not come easily, it must be achieved by



***"He's broken me...
Humiliated me and my
race. And I'm helpless."***

the assertion of worth. Of course, this is what non-white people have been doing all along. Now it is the turn of the whites to do so. The solution to such a minority status is not to kill and repress every non-white person and rest on the laurels of history but to assert the equality of all peoples and proudly be a part of a society of equals where the whole idea of 'race' is irrelevant. Keep in mind the image of the pin. It contains not *wabi* but *wu* – and is an instrument of *satori*, the realization of inner truth.

So, to finish off quickly because this is merely an essay – a tentative exploration into race relations in THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, and not a fully considered text, I'll return to the original question of why the Amazon TV series is false.

It is false because it doesn't face the fact of the novel

that the United States is a conquered nation. It no longer exists. There is no valiant American revolution against either the Germans or the Japanese. Could the writers of the TV series adaptation of HIGH CASTLE make that the center of their show as it is in Dick's novel? Admittedly a much harder task than just slotting in the expected heroes and villains and cranking out a bastardized re-run of every uprising movie from *Red Dawn* through *Independence Day* and on to *Independence Day 2* with Nazis instead of Russians and aliens from out of space.

And there is more in Dick's novel than this aspect of race relations. It deals with the authentic human, Armageddon, conflicting realities and the meaning of words. Be careful what you say.

– Lord RC, September 2019



The Man in the High Castle Design by Nick Buchanan - available as a T Shirt, Poster, Print, Sticker, etc.
Go to www.Redbubble.com and search for Paligap (to find a wide range of PKD related designs)

The PKD Tarot

by Ted Hand

PKD Tarot has been a labor of love these past five years since I began the collaboration with artist Christopher Wilkey. I'm grateful for Christopher's efforts making these 80 illustrations happen along with the layout, I Ching integrations and some spreads and games, as well as to David Hyde and Henri Wintz of Wide Books for handling the publishing. The first version of PKD Tarot was a list of attributions for the Major Arcana back in the days of Livejournal when I was still college aged and getting heavy into the study of

esotericism--largely inspired by my reading of Philip K. Dick and his contemporaries Robert Anton Wilson and Terence McKenna. It struck me that Palmer Eldritch could be The Devil and Black Iron Prison, The Tower. Subsequently, I went down a rabbit hole of a few years of grad school in religious studies and medieval philosophy, specializing in the intersections of Renaissance Magic, Alchemy and Kabbalah which informed a corner of PKD's Exegesis, especially his interest in Bruno, Paracelsus and Boehme. One of my discoveries was that PKD was reading Frances Yates, confirmed via Erik Davis, and Pamela Jackson who remembered a reference to one of his friends laying a copy of Rosicrucian Enlightenment on PKD (I believe it was Jeter). Since there is a SFnal take on "hermetic alchemy" in the appendix to VALIS

I figured there were grounds for doing a PKD Tarot.

In my work on Dick's religious experiences and research, which I blog about at pkdreligion.blogspot.com, I hope to explain to PKD-heads and scholars of religion alike the legitimacy of his interest in mysticism, heresy, and various

esoteric traditions. It seems clear that Dick had a valid religious experience of some kind, and although he had his eccentricities and loved to make stuff up, there is a core of serious engagement with the religious traditions that he studies. PKD Tarot is intended to make available the esoteric symbols and theological systems that Dick, a highly original

and creative religious thinker, invented. These ideas have had an influence on the contemporary "occulture" in ways that are difficult to measure, particularly in popularizing the concept of gnosticism.

We took a few liberties in converting the Tarot into the stories and ideas of PKD, including adding a couple cards to the traditional

number of seventy-eight. But I don't consider this too great a sin against "Tarot Tradition" because the tradition so-called was made up out of whole cloth by 18-19th century French

occultists. The true origins of the Tarot cards and images lie a few centuries back in the Renaissance as a game, not a system of fortune telling, divination, or theurgy. Eliphas Levi may have been the first to correlate the twenty-two Major Arcana with the twenty-two Hebrew



All PKD Tarot Card Designs by Christopher Wilkey

All PKD Tarot Card Designs by Christopher Wilkey

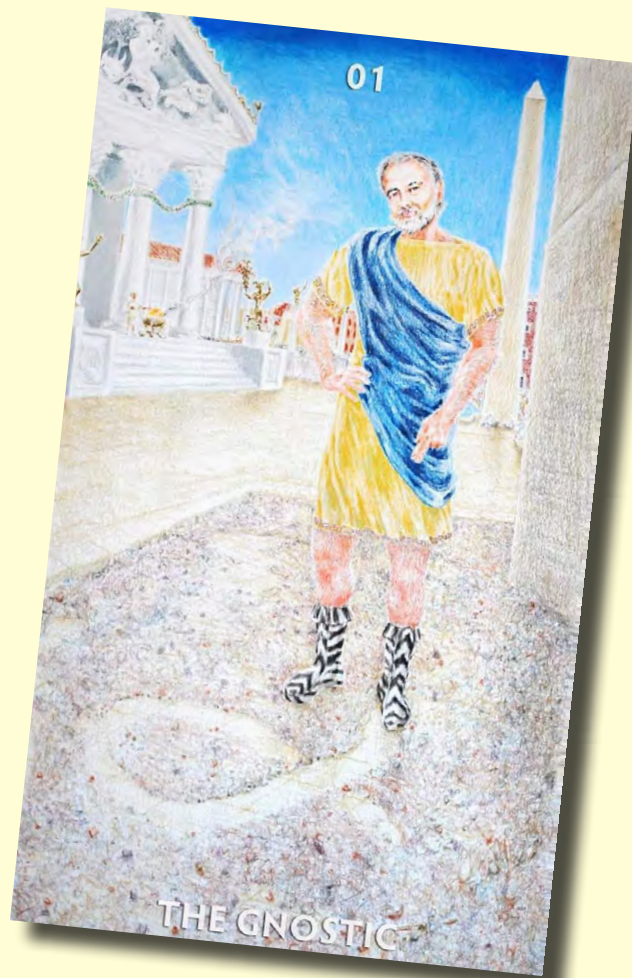


Boss, Wife, Dark-Haired Girl and Worker-Drone. And there is no doubt much to be discovered in comparing the PKD stories represented in the 1-10 “pip” cards for resonances with traditional Tarot symbolism and attributions.

One way to begin an interpretation of a reading is to think of the four suits as representing the powers of the soul: wand for will, cups for intuitive understanding, swords for intellect, and disks for grounding. The court cards each represent the intersection of two elements, representing fire in water and earth in air and so on. A preponderance of Trump cards in a reading can represent forces outside of the control of the querent. And if you’re not familiar with the story symbolized by the card, you can continue seeking insight from the Tarot reading by reading the story.

letters, opening the doors to a whole host of Kabbalistic attributions, and we have to some degree followed in this tradition by structuring our deck around the Aleister Crowley and Golden Dawn versions of that basic structure. We do not claim any sort of occult authority, paranormal efficacy, or gnostic mystery behind the cards.

My other contribution beyond the design and attributions was a series of oracular sentences to go with each card, which present a sort of theory of Dick’s anti-capitalist gnosticism. This reinterprets the Tarot archetypes as a series of gnostic messages, as in the Hymn of the Pearl, which can help to liberate the user of the deck from the android programming of our consumerist dystopia. In another sense I felt while writing them that I was “channeling” PKD. We have left the user in suspense as to any specific instructions as to use the cards, inviting them to investigate the correspondences and make connections themselves before we rush to publish with an authoritative take. At the moment of writing this Otaku piece I’m not sure if I even have straight the elemental attributions of the court cards, which we changed from the traditional King, Queen, Princess and Page to reflect more Dickian archetypes as





All PKD Tarot Card Designs by Christopher Wilkey

Ted Hand kindly provided us with an example of a reading he did for a client:

In my three-card Tarot spread the card in the middle is known as the signficator and represents your current situation. The card on the left can represent the past, your unconscious influences, or your environment. The card on the right can represent what’s on your mind, your obstacles or challenges, future outcomes or guidance.

Your signficator card is the **Wife of Wands** a “court card” representing the watery part of fire. It could refer to a woman in your life who is fiery, willful and passionate, or it could refer to a feminine aspect of your own personality with those qualities. **The oracular sentence for Wife of Wands is** *“A good spouse can push us out of our comfort zone when we need it, but we must be careful not to resent their efforts to dispel our cherished illusions.”*

Behind you is **Joe Chip**, possibly representing a time in your life when you were in need of a gnostic message from outside the state of half-life that you were inhabiting. You were in need of some kind of Ubik spray and perhaps you have already figured out how to get the cap off and put your fingers around the nozzle. **The oracular sentence for Joe chip is** *“Remember that there is a coin to operate every door.”*

Your challenge is reconciling with the android bounty hunter aspect of your personality, as represented by **Deckard the Worker-drone of Swords**, or earthy part of air. The sword destroys thoughts or idea-complexes just as Deckard hunts and retires the androids. Mindfulness, as well as humor, is a constant struggle with the robotic parts of our consciousness. **The oracular sentence for Worker-Drone of Swords is** *“The control system leaves to the worker only the consciousness and freedom needed to do the job.”*

So I’m seeing progress from a more “stuck” state in which you were getting hung up, in a sort of sleepy trance, to a process of waking up and becoming more alive and vital. There are still some automatic habits that need to be integrated but you are well on your way to discovering your inner fire.

**Ted Hand is offering
3 Card PKD Tarot readings by email,
\$10 via Paypal or Venmo
to ted.hand@gmail.com**



PKD TAROT

THE FOOLS JOURNEY OF PHILIP K. DICK

80-Card Tarot Deck with Games and I Ching

<https://wide-books.com/pkd-tarot-the-fools-journey-of-philip-k-dick.html>

The Deck

This 3.5" x 7.5" deck comes with four rule cards for two I Ching inspired card games and an eight-sided folding booklet about tarot as Gnostic Allegory, with beginning exercises contrasting tarot to the I Ching, and the 2-3-74 Tarot Spread. All in a blank fold-and-tuck box.

Ordering Information

We are in the process of doing a new print run of the deck and are inviting you to **preorder the deck**. The print run will be dependent on the number of preorders we get. Preordering will guarantee that a copy is be printed for you.

Unfortunately, because our website is not ecommerce enabled, we can only take orders via PayPal. Please send a payment via PayPal to **hwintz@pkdickbooks.com**. It is important to set up your PayPal account with your mailing address (where you want to deck to be shipped), this will ensure that the deck will get to you.

We anticipate that the deck will be ready for shipping by mid-September.

The Deck is priced at \$40.

Shipping charges:

Domestic (US): \$4.00 for 1 or 2 decks
 Canada/Mexico: \$20 for 1 or 2 decks
 Rest of the world: \$25 for 1 or 2 decks

If you have **questions**, please contact Henri Wintz@pkdickbooks.com.

Get your own PKD Tarot Reading!

PKD Tarot reading Designer **Ted Hand** is offering a three card PKD Tarot reading for \$10 over your choice of email or Skype, payable via Paypal or Venmo. Ted has been researching esoteric traditions for two decades, inspired by his reading of PKD, and also offers Tarot coaching services if you want support with learning how to read the cards yourself and placing your practice in historical and spiritual context. Reach him at ted.hand@gmail.com or on Twitter @t3dy.

The PKD Tarot

Unlock the Fool's Journey and its relationship to the novels, characters, short fiction and other writings by Philip K. Dick. PKD scholar Ted Hand and tarot artist **Christopher Wilkey** have brought together a new vision of tarot and the great works of Philip K. Dick. It is an original concept of tarot that looks into both the past and the future at the same time.

Ideal for advanced students of tarot as well as novices to the *I Ching* (or Book of Changes), this 80 card tarot deck takes the seeker through an initiation into the life and writings of one of the greatest writers of recent times. Explore alternate realities and the nature of what it is to be human.

Taking cues from Aleister Crowley and other Golden Dawn inspired traditions, this deck puts forward some of the possible relations between tarot and the hexagrams of the *I Ching*, including two card games designed to help introduce readers to the symbols of which access that ancient volume.

The **"Maze of Death"** domino-type game familiarizes players with the trigrams of which *I Ching* hexagrams are composed.

The **"Ubik"** card game has Eastern and Western House modes that have players either hoping to avoid accumulating entropy or trying to capture all the energy you can from the deck and other players to be the last standing at the end of the game!



Dickheads in the Boneyard: The Misadventures of Horselover Fat at the 2019 Philip K. Dick Festival in Fort Morgan, CO. (Part 1)

by Charles C. Mitchell

Horselover Fat has been telepathically communicating with a Ganymedeian slime-mold named Lord Running Clam for quite some time now.

The two of them, along with the guys at Wide-Books, have recently pulled off a successful and memorable Philip K. Dick Festival in Fort Morgan Colorado. My girlfriend Kat and I had the honor of driving Fat the nineteen-plus hours from Mississippi, to be guest at the Festival. We used the pilgrimage as a chance to sample bits of America that would have otherwise gone unnoticed to us.

Fat spent most of the car ride peering out the window, while Kat and I took turns driving. We crossed the swamps and bayous of Louisiana and popped through the bubble of humidity that encompasses the tree-covered soup of the American south-east. We were in tumbleweed Texas when we drove through a massive swarm of grasshoppers. Fat made a joke about grasshoppers laying heavy, after several collided with our windshield. Despite getting the reference, neither of us laughed. We pressed on; straining to see through the dense horde of insects.

In the moonlight of New Mexico, we could finely make out the tiny silhouettes of mountains. As we ascended into the shapes on the horizon, a noticeable pressure change took place. Mother nature shoved more atmosphere into our

ears than we were used to. The Siouxsie and the Banshees album that Kat had blaring through the speaker system became distorted and echoed around in our heads. “A new reality,” said the muffled voice of Fat in the backseat.

After a nap and some coffee, the sun came out and we joined several tourists in ogling the beautiful rock formations at the Garden of the Gods park in Colorado Springs. This marked one of those rare occasions where Fat could be seen smiling and taking selfies. “Look over here! A wild hair,” said Fat pointing at an adorable little creature just a few feet away from the three of us. “Finely, a wild hair somewhere other than my ass.”



A few hours later, we made it to our Denver Hotel. Kat and I got settled in, while Fat walked to the nearest marijuana dispensary. He quickly returned with a gram of hash oil, two joints, and a THC-infused chocolate bar. Kat ate a fifth of the powerful little chocolate bar when I was in the shower. After getting dressed, I found her watching tv with her eyes closed, or, at least, I thought they were closed. “Are you awake?” I asked. Kat and Fat both burst into laughter. “Well I suppose I’ll do the driving when we pick up Andrew from the airport.”

Andrew M. Butler, author of the pocket essential Philip K. Dick, flew all the way from England and landed in the backseat next to Fat. As we drove off from Denver International, I pointed out the airport mascot, Blucifer;

the giant pale-blue red-eyed extremely anatomically correct horse statue that killed its creator. Andrew pointed at a blue porta-potty on the other side of the rode and asked, “Is that a TARDIS!?” We all laughed. With the sun going down, a blue hue was cast onto the mountains on the landscape. “Is everything here blue?” joked Andrew. “Are we actually in West Virginia?”

Classic Doctor Who Tardis abused and appropriated by Nick Buchanan

Full swing into Fort Morgan and everything PKD related, and Fat was saying, "It's safe to say that the first Fort Morgan festival back in 2017 was more sentimental than the latter because it marked Tessa Dicks first visit to Phil's grave on the 35th anniversary of his death, and because William Sarill was able to say his peace at his old friends headstone. However, this Philip K. Dick Festival, and the census seems to agree, is much more of a schedule-packed blast." I couldn't agree with him more. This festival showcases original art from Brent Houzenga, the premiere of a PKD themed tarot deck, a quiz show, a play, a hands-on show-and-tell, live folk-rock music from Dan Allan, a fan-fair and even a movie. "Don't just go down the festival itinerary. Anyone can look that up," said Fat, when I told him I was working on a review. "Right, just the highlights then...or is it the journey?" Fat smiled. "Just tell them they had to be here." I eyed him crossly. "But there were a lot of great Dickheads that couldn't make the festival, for various reasons. You know that." Fat paused and with sincerity finely said, "Tell them we missed them."

At the Riverside Cemetery, where Philip K. Dick's corpse rests next to his dark-haired twin sister, the musician Redwing Blackbird parked his white hearse and started setting up a small generator and his sound equipment. Along with effects pedals and speakers, he pulled out a fog-machine, some lasers, and a few headless mannequins. Kat and I stood with dreampunk-writer Cliff Jones discussing the strange setup. Fat excitedly approached us holding up a large white binder. "Patrick Clark just gifted me a giant book of Philip K. Dick related conspiracies!" said a nearly out of breath Fat. Glancing at the cover, I read the title aloud, "The Palm Tree Garden." Fat handed the book over to show it off and I flipped right to the contents page, and again read aloud, "Philip K. Dick and the Illuminati, Confessions of a VALIS Contacted, The Return of Horselover Fat... You're right. A giant book on Philip K. Dick related conspiracies is exactly what this is. May I borrow it?"

Just before the music started, a giant slug-like tube of slime slid up to the microphone and a gruff, yet ecstatic, voice with a slight English accent boomed through the cemetery; "Thank you all for being here! I've just spoke to Phil and to honor his life and the communities formed

from it, he has encouraged us to dance on his grave!" The crowd clapped, the Ganymedeian Slime-Mold slid back into a circle of festival attendees, and Redwing Blackbird began his performance, sending a wave of catchy goth synth pop through the sea of Dickheads and headstones. As Fat and I made our way over to greet the extraterrestrial, I asked "What are those spikes on his back?" Before I got a straight answer, we made it to the circle of Dickheads containing the slime-mold. "Hey Lord Running Clam, I was nervous about the mystery play, but after fumbling beaming-in Sean earlier, I think I can handle anything," said Fat confidently. (The musicologist, Sean Nye, was able to make a festival appearance from New York via networking and a projector. Unfortunately, the magic of his presentation was lost due to a bad audio connection, but his enthusiasm and love of Philip K. Dick was clear.) "No worries," said Lord Running Clam, "We'll just run through the play after tomorrows showing of Total Recall." I interjected, "What are those spikes on your back for?" Looking amused, Lord Running Clam said, "What are they for? They're for us. Take one." Confused, I looked to Fat who was already removing one of the slime covered spikes. "They're joints!" cried Horselover Fat. "The slime comes right off," said the Ganymedeian, "Go on, take one. Hell, take two!"

At The Cables Bar, Kat and I flipped through our new deck of The Fool's Journey of Philip K. Dick over dinner. I leaned to my right and caught Ted Hand's attention. "You and Chris did a great job on these, Ted. The incorporation of the I Ching is right up my ally." Between bites of food and sips of alcohol, a buzz of Phil-related conversations took over the building. At one point, I found Fat getting schooled in pool by the charismatic David Hyde and the talented New Orleans based artist, Brent Houzenga. "Great shot, Fat, but you sank one of mine," said Dave in a gruff voice. Brent began setting up his shot as I pondered the familiarity of the voice I'd just heard. It sounded exactly like the Ganymedeian's voice. "Dave, you wouldn't happen to be from one of Jupiter's moons, would you?" Brent took his shot while Fat burst into laughter. "You haven't been smoking Lord Running Clams weed, have you?" said Dave in a slight English accent. "That slime is stronger than ChewZ."

...To be continued in PKD Otaku #41



Oakland Tribune

EXCLUSIVE ASSOCIATED PRESS... WIREPHOTO... WIDE WORLD... UNITED PRESS

Two Letters in the Oakland Tribune Sourced by Frank Hollander

I discovered these two published letters to the editor of the Oakland Tribune, which I don't believe are known previously in Dick fandom.

The first, from **July 6, 1945**, is in response to a July 3 letter from one Sam Brown of Oakland, urging removal of "Kraut music in public parks especially on national holidays," lest future Hitlers be inspired. Mr. Brown anticipated that "slobbering hyphenators" (that is, Americans whose loyalties are suspect anyway, see "Hyphenated American" in Wikipedia) would "yell that music is art and that art is music." On cue, our young hero Philip, high school student, German music enthusiast, German language scholar, and future High Castle writer, gave his response.

KRAUT MUSIC

To Editor Tribune:

I would like to say something in reply to the letter sent to the Forum by Sam Brown.

First, of all, there is a difference between patriotism and attacking "Kraut" music. During the last war, if you will remember, hamburgers were called "Liberty steaks," and German dogs were given American names, and other worthwhile and necessary ventures were undertaken to further the war effort. Fortunately, in this war, there has been very little of such frantic, stupid hysterics. The war is too tragic and important for things of that sort. And yet, there are always a certain number of people who go off the deep end and cry "Kraut" this and "Kraut" that, ignoring the true issues at stake,

Didn't you think it was silly when you heard that the Nazis had forbidden the playing of Polish compositions composers because they were "non-Aryan" and "anti-German"? I fail to see the difference between this and what you suggest we do – ban all music by German composers.

– Philip Dick

Oakland Tribune, July 6, 1944, n.p.

The second, from **February 21, 1952**, appears to be in response to Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas's recent publicity for a book called *Strange Lands and Friendly People*, as well as earlier statements to the press that he would not run now or ever for President or Vice President. Douglas was one of several justices appointed by FDR, and is known to history mainly as a civil libertarian and very long-serving member of the court. But he also is a significant footnote in the 1944 election, supposedly losing out to Harry S Truman to be FDR's Vice President, as well as in the 1948 election, when he briefly campaigned to oust the unpopular President Truman as the Democratic nominee. Given that history, it was natural for his supporters to wish for his entry into the 1952 campaign.

Anti-Military

Editor: unless we elect William O. Douglas President this country will surely continue to drift toward militarism and uniformity of thought. Only Justice Douglas seems to realize that our military outlook is fast destroying our liberty and economy. We must see that he is nominated and elected, or America may become another Spain. Governments all over the world are gaining in diabolical powers; with a great liberal President this trend might be reversed....

– Philip K. Dick

Berkeley

Oakland Tribune, February 21, 1952, n.p.



Photo (cropped) courtesy of Anne Dick

A Letter in Amazing Stories

Sourced by Patrick Clark

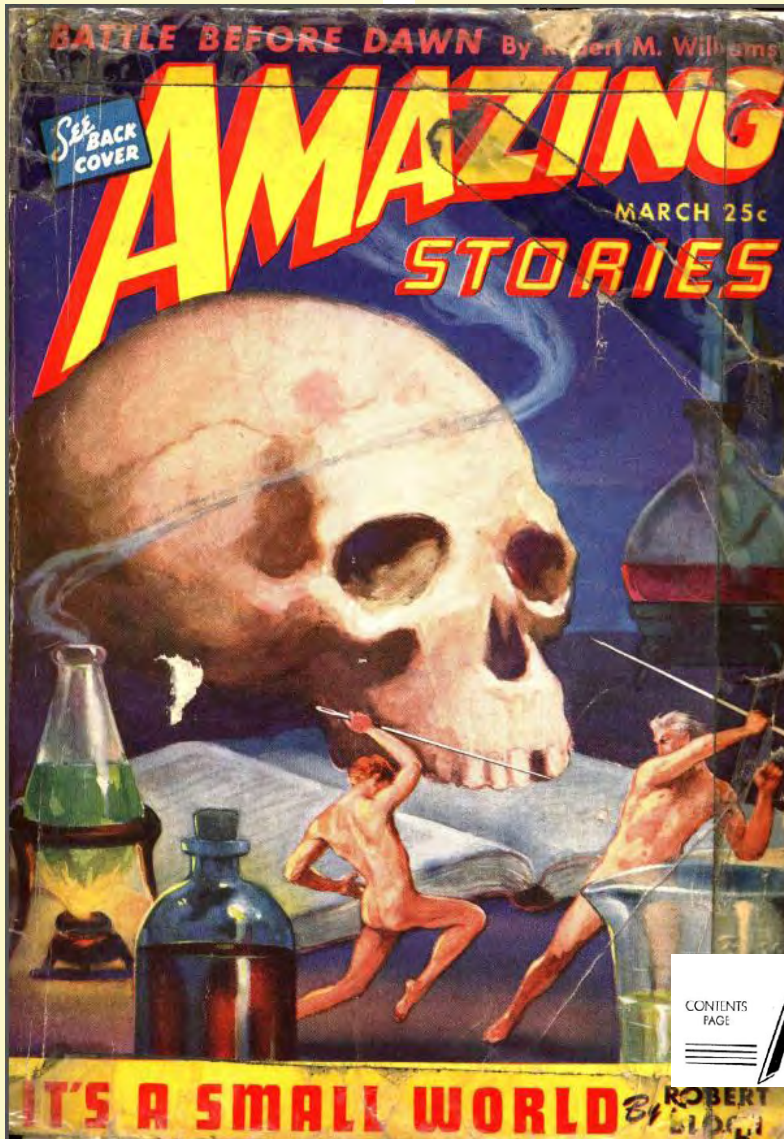
Following in Frank's footsteps, here is another letter from young PKD to the March 1944 issue of *Amazing Stories* taking issue with the content of their January edition.

HE STANDS ALONE

Sirs:

Upon removing the envelope from this letter you will find a neatly wrapped and prepared brickbat; the first one off the assembly-line. Frankly, I have been reading *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic Adventures* since the year one, and this is the first edition that I have come across which doesn't come up to par. First of all; one realizes that poor material published is not the fault of the editor. We all realize that most of your best men have gone to war. But my chief gripe is that one of the usually fine authors has gone on the rocks. "Intruders from the Stars" by Ross Rocklynne is not so good. Rather crudely written, unconvincing, and reads as if it was shortened from a much longer draft.

Next on the list: "Master of the Living Dead," by Ed Earl Repp. This would have been all right, but somehow the story leaves a bad taste in the mouth: there's something a little disgusting about the plot.



"The Mad Robot" by William P. McGivern is about the best in the January issue. This author is always good, this story was pleasant and interesting. But one thing: it was kinda obvious that Ho Agar would turn out to be responsible for the trouble.

"Island of Eternal Storm" by Berkeley Livingston. Nice plot, no crude description, well writ ten; that idea of life and death reversed is something to think about.

"Phantom City of Luna" by Costello, I think everyone likes time travel stories.

"The Needle Points To Death" by Gerald Vance. The plot was so-so, but amazingly well written, and showed great promise.

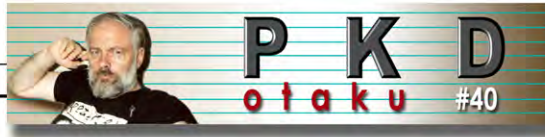
In spite of the knocks dealt out the magazine is still a buy for a quarter. The covers arc years ahead of any other publication, fine drawing and colors. What about getting some of Hans Bok's art? He's good.

Philip K. Dick
1411 Arch St.
Berkeley, Calif.

You are actually the only reader who did not rave about Rocklynne's yarn. More of Williams is coming up. New artists, if good, are always welcome.—Ed.

Source: *Amazing Stories* March 1944, pp. 205-206 Philip K. Dick





**Fans who attended the
Philip K. Dick 2019 Festival
would like to say a big
Thank You
to the people of Fort Morgan
and Morgan County, Colorado.
We really appreciated your great
support and hospitality.**

**Special thanks to Emily,
Chandra, Brian, Suzanna,
Debbie, Lindsey, Matt, Alvina,
and Francisco!**





Philip K. Dick Grave - Fort Morgan, Colorado - photo courtesy of Frank Hollander