



**Horselover Fat and The New Messiah**  
**by John Boonstra**  
**Hartford Advocate April 22, 1981, p. 24**

...I had the privilege of talking to Phil Dick by phone recently. We spoke about VALIS and its imminent sequel.

*In an interview in 1976, you indicated that VALIS had already been sold to Bantam Books. Yet it didn't appear until early this year. What caused the delay?*

Bantam held it up for awhile because they had a change in editorship. The version that has been published was written in 1978. I guess they had a backlog; they didn't print it right away.

But the real origin of the delay was the fact that I did, for the first time in my life, two completely different versions of the same book. The first version appears in the second as the movie they go see.

I wasn't satisfied with the first version. I wanted to do a book that was better than my previous novel, *A Scanner Darkly*, and even after Bantam had purchased VALIS and all that was required was that I type a final draft, I simply was not satisfied that I had done the best book I could do.

*In its published form VALIS seems as candid as autobiography, particularly when read in conjunction with Dream Makers, where you describe your encounter in 1974 with "a transcendently rational mind," a transformation central to VALIS. Does this "tutelary spirit" you mention continue to guide you?*

It hasn't spoken a word to me since I wrote the sequel to VALIS, which is called *The Divine Invasion* -- Simon & Schuster is bringing it out in May.

The voice that speaks to me, my priest -- I'm an Episcopalian -- is identified as *ruah*, which is the word that appears in the Old Testament for the Spirit of God. It speaks in the feminine voice and tends to express statements regarding the Messianic expectation.

It guided me for awhile. It has spoken to me sporadically since I was in high school. But I haven't heard from it since the sequel. I expect, though, that if a crisis arises it will say something again. It is very economical in what it says. It limits itself to a few very terse, succinct sentences.

I only hear the voice of the spirit when I'm falling asleep or waking up. I have to be very receptive to hear it. It's extremely faint. It sounds as though it's coming from millions of miles away.

*Two elements of your fiction which have given me great pleasure for many years are your respect for the individual at work in menial jobs that nevertheless demand competence, and your perception of the mutability and passion of human relationships.*

*What is your own work and personal background? I know you've been through a couple of marriages.*

At least. There's more. I hate to say how many. My work background: I was in the retail record business. I managed one of the largest record stores on the West Coast in the '50s and I worked at a radio repair shop when I was

(cont. p. 3)

**PKD OTAKU** is intended to be an ol' fashioned fanzine, and sometimes serconzine, devoted to an ongoing conversation about the fiction and non-fiction of Philip K. Dick. It's edited and published, almost monthly, by Patrick Clark, P.O. Box 2761, St. Paul, Minnesota 55102, USA. Individual issues are \$2.00, or by prior arrangement: for written or art contributions, letters of comment, traded publications and/or review copies. For further info, please email me at: [pclark@jjhill.org](mailto:pclark@jjhill.org).

Welcome to a new issue of *PKD Otaku* -- and a new look. If you like the appearance you have Frank Bertrand to thank. When I first began this zine I deliberately chose a severely utilitarian format. It seemed to me that the information was important, not the package. I wanted to get away from everything *except* the information. Also I wanted to make producing *Otaku* as simple as I could since it had to be squeezed into my regular life. But I have to admit that the result was a bit dull to look at. Frank gently urged me from the very beginning to do something about the format. He convinced me that a zine could be informative *and* also pleasant to look at. He did more than convince me; he designed the format itself. And that is what you are seeing here.

I have also considered how the various features which have appeared in the past ought to proceed in this and future issues. While there will still be single-feature issues, such as I have used to present Gerardo Accosta's detailed history of PKD in Spanish, most issues will present a variety of articles. My plan is that each issue contain something by Phil himself, a continuing set of original reviews of Phil's novels from the SF press, examinations of Phil's life and writings, riffs on reading the novels, translations, fiction, news and the like. Everyone is invited to send me material because *Otaku* can only continue with your help. If I run out of features -- and I have only a finite number of those remaining -- than this zine of necessity will grind to a halt. So, please, think about contributing.

The big news lately has been, of course, the new PKD film, *Minority Report* by Steven Spielberg. I saw the film as soon as it opened here in the States and, while I was not entirely happy with it, it is a decent flick. There was too much Spielberg and not enough PKD but that was to be expected. "Minority Report" is one of Phil's minor efforts. It has one good idea, the concept of "pre-crime" itself, which otherwise unfolds in one of Phil's pulp tales. The short story does suddenly rise to a sophisticated twist at the very end as Anderton realizes the true nature of the "minority" report but there wasn't enough there to form a motion picture. Spielberg's work takes the core idea and, despite trowelling on the special effects and overlaying the whole with treacle, preserves it and expands it. The whole thing could have been darker (and shorter!) but in the main is quite acceptable. The best thing to come out of the film, however, is a raft of stories and articles about Phil himself. Most of these have been pasted up at Jason Koorick's fabulous web site ([www.philipkdick.com](http://www.philipkdick.com)). A few others, such as two from the *New York Times*, you will find here, as well as random comments that appeared elsewhere in the press. I hope to have a much longer piece on *Minority Report* in the next issue of *Otaku*.

#### TOTAL SYSTEMS BREAKDOWN

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

Greg Tate "Minority Retorts" *The Village Voice*: July 3 - 9, 2002

in high school. I was used to essentially a family-type of work situation, in other words, where the boss is the father of the family.

As regards my personal background: an endless succession of divorces, all stemming from recklessly engaged-in and seized-upon marriages. I still have a good relationship with my ex-wives. In fact, my most recent ex-wife – there are so many that I have to list them numerically – and I are very, very close friends. I have three children. My youngest is seven, and she brings him over all the time.

But the reason all my marriages break up is I'm so autocratic when I'm writing. I become like Beethoven, you know? I become completely bellicose and defensive in guarding my privacy. It's very hard to live with me when I'm writing.

*You've indicated in a few places that many of the characters who appear in your fiction are thinly-disguised variations of people you've known personally.*

That is correct.

*What effect has this has on them?*

They hate my bloody guts! They'd like to rend me to shreds! I expect someday that they'll all fall on me and beat the crap out of me.

I find that you can only really develop characters based upon actual people. There is really no such thing as a character that springs, you know, *ex nihilo* like Athena from the brow of Zeus. The great prototype for this, of course, is James Joyce. Tendencies are extracted from actual people. The people aren't transferred intact. This is not journalism, this is fiction.

The most important thing of all is picking up speech patterns, picking up their cadence of actual spoken English. That's the main thing I'm looking for, their little mannerisms, their word choices.

*How do you compare VALIS to the rest of your work?*

I jettisoned the first version of *VALIS*, which was a very conventional book. I cast around for a model that would bring something new into science-fiction and it occurred to me to go all the way back to the *picaresque* novel and have my characters all be *picaresques* – rogues – and write as the *picaresque* novel was written, in the first person, write it in the vernacular, and use a rather loose plot.

I feel there is a tremendous relevance in the *picaresque* novel at this time. You are able to write about people such as Donleavy wrote about in *The Ginger Man* – that's a *picaresque* novel; so is *The Adventures of Augie March* of Saul Bellow. I see this as a protest form of the novel, a repudiation of the more structured bourgeois novel that has been so popular.

I do hope that *VALIS* will reach people outside the science-fiction ghetto. I did go back to a conventional science-fiction format in the sequel.

I'm reprocessing my own life. I had a very interesting 10 years. Starting in 1970 when my wife Nancy left me and went off with a Black Panther, much to my surprise and amazement. As a result of which I hit rock bottom. I mean, I just fell into the gutter, I just crashed into the streets in shock when this happened.

I was very bourgeois. I had a wife and a child, I was buying a house, I drove a Buick and wore a suit and tie and all those good things. All of a sudden my wife left me for a Black Panther and I wound up in the street with street-people. And after I climbed out of that – which was ultimately a death trip on my part – I thought, "Well, I've got some interesting first-hand material that I'd like to write about. I will recycle my own life in terms of a novel." Having done that in *A Scanner Darkly*, I was faced with what to do next. It took me a long time before I felt that I had what I wanted. And as I say, the basis of what I had was the *picaresque* novel. I was used to the companionship of rogues. It seemed natural to view people in that aspect.

Now, prior to that I tended to view people in terms of the artisan, which you pointed out

yourself. I worked for eight years in retail. I tended to view people in terms of “the TV repairman,” “the salesman,” and so forth. Then, later, as a result of my street experience, I tended to view people as essentially rogues. I mean unscrupulous rogues out to hustle you at any moment for any reason. I found them endlessly fascinating and I didn’t see people of this type adequately represented in fiction.

*The film VALIS inside the novel reminded me in its style of the film The Man Who Fell to Earth.*

You got it. You got it. That’s where the idea came. It’s like Madame Bovary going to see *Lucia* -- I remember that scene so well, how it crystallized all the nebulous things that were floating around in Madame Bovary’s mind. Now, that impressed me enormously.

I saw *The Man Who Fell to Earth* and thought it was one of the finest films – not just science-fiction films, but one of the finest films I had ever seen. I thought it was incredibly original, incredibly provocative, rich in ideas, beautiful in texture, glorious in its overall conception. It was enigmatic. In no way is the film *VALIS* the plot and theme of *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, but the idea occurred to me that a science-fiction film, if well done, could be as rich a source of knowledge and information as anything we normally derive our knowledge and information from. The film *tremendously* impressed me; I just loved it. My use of the film *VALIS* is my homage to *The Man Who Fell to Earth*. It was one of the greatest experiences of my life to see that.

*Do you want o say anything about the direction VALIS’ sequel will take?*

Yeah, yeah. *The Divine Invasion*, which was originally called *VALIS Regained*, is set in the future. It doesn’t begin where *VALIS* left off; there’s a hiatus of, oh, a couple hundred years. It starts out with the child born again, the child Sophia. The resolution is not in terms of the occult; it’s not even in terms of Christianity. It’s resolved in terms of Judaism.

I did a very detailed study of the Torah and the basic tenets of Judaism for it. I studied real hard. I did my homework. I’m not Jewish, so it was something I was not normally into. I have now gained this tremendous respect for Judaism, for the concept of the Torah – we’re not just talking about the Decalogue; the entire structure of the Torah is to me the greatest achievement of human beings in the world. I really would seriously consider converting to Judaism now that I’ve studied it. It just absolutely provided the resolution I wanted – it’s sane, it’s rational, it’s rooted deeply in reality.

*But what is reality?*

Reality is that which, when you stop believing in it, it doesn’t go away.  
I worked that out a long time ago.

### **Late night reflections from a weary sf reader on the eve of the World Cup final by Lord RC**

After an absence of several years I picked up *VALIS* again. This is not something you do lightly, for to enter Philip K. Dick’s world is to step into insanity. You better be prepared for it.

So, I first looked at the book itself; the familiar cover of the Ballantine paperback from 1981 with the spaceship shaped like a man on a cross beaming pink energy down from the sky. Look at the frontispiece, read the dedication to Russ Galen, Dick’s agent at the time. Turn the page to the definition of *VALIS*: (Acronym of Vast Active Living Intelligence System, from an American film): A perturbation in the reality field in which a spontaneous self-monitoring negentropic vortex is formed, tending progressively to subsume and incorporate its environment into arrangements of information. Characterized by quasi-consciousness, purpose, intelligence, growth and an armillary coherence. – *Great Soviet Dictionary, Sixth Edition, 1992.*

“A perturbation in the reality field...” Already, before the book has started, Philip K. Dick gives us an answer – for what is defined is, by definition, understood. He’s not asking what reality is any longer -- no more ‘What is reality?’ questions. *This* is reality what you hold in your hands, VALIS.

This is what you face when you decide to, once again, read this most complex of Philip K. Dick’s novels. Answers to questions you don’t really want to ask.

It starts with definition and insanity. Gloria’s insanity. When Horselover Fat asks her, are you cured? She replies, yes. Yet she’s insane; and yet she’s cured! How can this be? Welcome to reality, smiles PKD and turns on the screws.

Two types of insanity: the bizarre and the rational. The paint-yourself-purple kind and the Gloria kind. Or the Horselover Fat kind. For, of course, Horselover Fat is insane. He says so himself. Gloria had flipped him over. From this point on, the very start of the novel, we’re dealing with insanity. Philip K. Dick is writing about it. But that doesn’t mean he, himself is insane. It only means that there are levels here that we should be aware of. After all, the *real* PKD might’ve been insane when he wrote the novel. VALIS might be the product of insanity...

But I don’t think so. PKD is a writer and in VALIS, as I inferred, he writes about reality as never before. And though I know in my heart that this is true, that VALIS is truth, the rationalization of it is not so easy. What is reality? I must ask myself that as, the ‘Great Soviet Dictionary, Sixth Edition of 1992’, notwithstanding, we have no real definition. Is the real the world of VALIS with its pink beams and visions, its patent divergence from the common experience?

I’d say yes and no.

No because things aren’t accepted. We all, not just Horselover Fat alone, have our personal experiences, our own little worlds, equally as strange as those of Horselover Fat, but the minute we attempt to impose our vision of reality on others, even merely by telling them about it, we get labeled as insane. If you see reality different than the consensus then you are labeled insane.

So why is PKD writing about an insane person? Perhaps because he, himself is insane? He states as much: Horselover Fat is insane and Philip K. Dick is Horselover Fat writing in the third person to gain much-needed objectivity.

VALIS, then, the monologue of a madman. PKD buttonholing the world, stretching up from his place in the science fiction gutter to clutch at passersby and mumble his unconvincing rant, “Hey, mister... Listen... They’re out there...”

But if that were the case VALIS would be unreadable. Yet it is not. By many people it’s considered one of his best novels.

This puts us in another Phildickian dilemma. If a book by a madman is generally considered a masterpiece, even a work of genius, then how can it, as the product of insanity, be sane? Well it cannot; either that or we’re all insane; which may be the case, may be one of the points PKD is making with this novel.

This is putting it starkly. If PKD intended VALIS as a brutal reminder of a nihilist existence – which is where logic and rationalization always end up – then it would have been a bleaker story. Nihilism, in its ultimate conclusion, results in suicide – a la Gloria – or its refutation – a la Horselover Fat. Nothingness or being.

But, thinking about it, PKD faced the void, even tried suicide, and in the end turned to God. In VALIS he writes of questioning God and every question results in an endless regression at the end of which is God alone. To face emptiness and live is to find God, to have hope. There is no alternative: God or death. To be alive and have no faith means that you are false to your beliefs. The only good nihilist is a dead one.

So, PKD, a reformed nihilist for he attempted suicide himself and failed, believes in a hopeful reality, and in VALIS he expresses what it is. It is insanity, but sometimes, as he said, insanity is an appropriate response to reality. Which simply means that reality itself is insane. And, hence, insanity *is* an appropriate response to reality: it’s movement towards the sane.

And what is it of Horselover Fat’s experiences that we, as outsiders, as readers, would consider insane? Naturally, they would be the very ones that, for Fat, are appropriate responses to reality. The visions of ancient Rome and the expectation that Jesus would return at any time,

the pink beam filling him with vivifying information, the sense of the true god breaking through the occlusion of the demi-urge and, also, the practical knowledge concerning his son's hernia and dealings with his agent. All these things were positive for Horselover Fat personally, no matter if the rest of the world sees them as delusional.

But it goes a little deeper than that. Dick is a writer, he ties us up with equivocation, literally has us dithering between reality and madness, seemingly saying they are one and the same. He knows what he's doing as this condition is, after all, the common lot. We all except for fanatics have no firm ground on which to decide. Logic leads nowhere and faith is, well, lacking. So PKD writes of the truth, not in an ultimate sense but on a human scale, the scale of the ordinary man who has dreams and sometimes visions and strange experiences which he cannot explain and which, if he did explain, would decide him as a madman.

PKD, then, writes of the *koinos kosmos*, the shared world, which is insane, and the *idios kosmos*, the personal world: the appropriate response to the madness of the shared world for each of us individually.

The tale of Horselover Fat is, like most of PKD's novels, the story of Everyman. We are all insane to start with – guilty before we act. The only things keeping us from the loony bin are our responses to the omnipresent insanity of the world. Or, more particularly, how those responses are seen by our fellows. If we have little response and are callous and brutal then to our arbiters of reality, the trick-cyclists, we exhibit 'flattening-of –affect' and are but one step away from the asylum. And if we go to the other extreme and jump like startled rabbits at the slightest provocation, then again we are close to needing care if only for our own protection.

It's a matter of degree. To be sane means to be normal, in the middle. This is what we all agree on, consensus reality. Rationalized insanity. Don't question it else, like Fat, you end up insane.

Satellites and demi-urges, fish signs and pink beams. For Horselover Fat these work. For each of us something works. I think for Philip K. Dick to live is to have hope.

## **Eating disorder PKD By John Fairchild**

In "The Story to End All Stories..." Phil has a character eating God, which, by definition, you can't do.

Then in "Novelty Act" the (supposed) leader of the country asks our two main characters if they have had breakfast:

"We ate, Mrs. Thibodeaux," Al said. "Thanks."

*We ate Mrs. Thibodeaux*, Ian thought crazily. Isn't it actually the other way around? Doesn't she, sitting here in her blue-cotton pants and shirt, doesn't she devour *us*?

Then continuing on in the same vein, we find "Rautavaara's Case" with its reverse Eucharist. I won't attempt a discussion of this because I have yet to get a handle on it.

So what we have here is a writer connecting power and eating. Sutin makes almost no mention of Phil's reluctance/inability to eat in public but Rickman offers several examples of Phil being unwilling/unable to eat even with close friends when he was younger. It seems to have gone away or gotten better as Phil aged.

Rickman also points out ch. 3 in *Time Out of Joint* where Phil starts free-associating and winds up ruminating on swallowing, sex, eating and homosexuality.

Now, I don't pretend to have a take on any of this-- I just came across a couple of these short stories and just noticed the similarities. As a matter of fact, if someone thinks they can explain the psychological basis of "Rautavaara's Case," I'd like to hear it. If there are any classical

studies connecting eating and power that can throw some light on what Phil may have had going on, it would be useful to read about that, also.

**“Introduction” to the Waterstone edition of *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldrich*  
by Fay Weldon:**

The works of Philip K. Dick hid for many years between the lurid covers of sci-fi corner, despised by most, loved by a few. Now, posthumously, rightly, you find him out on the literary shelf. The life of P.K. Dick, born 1928, Chicago, died 1982, California, bears cheerful witness to the notion that genius will out, if only at the end. He made little money in his lifetime, wrote day and night to pay the rent, and kept awake on amphetamines. He made no concessions to anyone on this planet. His novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (what kind of title is *that?*) became the film *Blade Runner*. *We Can Remember it For You Wholesale* (or *that?*) became the film *Total Recall*. Even the present does not let good writers sleep: it exhumes them for film, while shortening their titles. This particular novel, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldrich*, was, they say, written in two sleepless weeks, in white heat.

See Dick as the William Blake of Northern California; a see-er of angels and evils, a visionary driven mad, according to his fans, by his own visions; mad to begin with or because of drugs, according to his detractors. He was not, his fans insist, writing science fiction so much as wildly plotted fictional exercises on the nature of God and/or reality, which took him into alternative universes, some of which were in the future, some merely parallel. To understand properly what I am saying, you will need to read *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldrich*.

Apart from all this, Dick is the most imaginative, wittiest, shrewdest of writers, so exhilarated by his own inventions he can hardly keep his feet on the ground, his words on paper.

*The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldrich* was written in 1964. Like Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and Orwell's *1984* (1949), it turns out to be prophetic. The society it proposes seems fanciful at the time of writing, but times catch up fast. As we have Sky TV and our daily dose of shared fiction, P.K. Dick's colonists have Perky Pat. We have spy satellites, virtual reality headsets, genetically engineered geep we milk for medicine, mice with human ears, a changing climate; we alter our worlds with drugs legal and illegal. Our hold on reality is fragile. True, we're not yet colonizing the planets, but we make do with the Internet: the transmission of ideas, if not bodies, over space, through time. So what's new?

Dick sends his characters walking through his now not-so-futuristic world, wrestling with sin and guilt, in search of expiation; the figure of Palmer Eldrich flickering in and out of reality, rather as God does in Francis Thompson's 1893 poem, 'The Hound of Heaven'. (Thompson, by the way, was a recovered opium addict.)

I fled Him, down the nights and down the days;  
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;  
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways of my own mind:  
And in the midst of tears, I hid from Him, and under  
    running laughter.

The sense of running laughter, I think, is what we get from Philip K. Dick; it underlies his narrative, his descriptions of minds and worlds at the end of their tether, and makes the intolerable wholly and enthrallingly livable.

June 1996

## Book Reviews from the SF Press

### ***Solar Lottery***

**P. Schuyler Miller: *Astounding Science Fiction* November 1955, p. 151**

Here's another demonstration that you get a whale of a lot for your money from Ace. "Solar Lottery" is in the van Vogt tradition, taking a man with a mission, involving him hopelessly in a society built on a novel concept of science or philosophy, and allowing all sorts of unseen forces to prowl and putter behind the scenes. This time the gimmick is not non-Aristotelian semantics but von Neumann's Theory of Games, which the author has built up as the mainspring of a Twenty-third Century planetary lottery whose one winner, the Quizmaster, is dictator of mankind until an assassin cuts him down or the "bottle" – never quite explained – twitches someone else in his place. Outside the Game, those who have special skills useful to the manufacturing combines may sell themselves into absolute serfdom, while those who have only manual skills are "unclassified" and hopeless.

Ted Benteley, freed from his classified serfdom by a quirk which is never explained, sells himself in fealty to the Quizmaster, Reese Verick, only to learn too late that Verick has been deposed by the bottle. The new Quizmaster is the leader of a strange cult, and Verick promptly hatches a bizarre plot to drive an unhuman assassin past Cartwright's telepathic corps of guards and regain mastery. But Cartwright, too, has his schemes – and in the background is the mystery of the Flaming Disc at the edge of Space. There's everything in it but the Lensmen, and it tends to grow confusing in spots, but worse is being published for ten times the price

### ***The World Jones Made***

**P. Schuyler Miller: *Astounding Science Fiction* September 1956, p. 158**

Here's another Ace bargain. Since Ace now ignores the little matter of magazine credits, I can't be sure, but I believe the Dick novel is an original and the [Margaret] St. Clair yarn a reprint, probably from one of the Standard magazines.

Jones is a man who can look just one year into the future, and who with that power builds up a highly disturbing society. He is a mutant of a seemingly mild kind, in a post-atomic-war in which mutants of more overt kinds are no rarity – but his effects on the world of his time are far from mild. And in true van Vogtian manner, the author – can he *be* van Vogt in disguise? -- mixes in a colony of utterly strange mutants and an amoebic invasion from the depths of space. It is fascinating, tumultuous, and a bit disorganized, but fun from start to finish.

### ***The Man Who Japed***

**Anthony Boucher: *Fantasy & Science Fiction* April 1957, p. 83**

Philip K. Dick has published 3 paperback-original novels in 19 months. The first (SOLAR LOTTERY) was more than satisfactory; but the others show too many signs of haste in derivative notions and inadequately developed themes. THE MAN WHO JAPES (Ace 35 cents) studies a society of 2114 in which Morec – Moral Reclamation, not unsuggestive of today's Moral Rearmament – has Taken Over after atomic devastation; and though the details are largely excellent, the story-line is good old Pohl-Kornbluth Taking Over plot, complete with rebel hero who sees the Shallowness of It All. The rebel himself is unusual in concept – a man with a sportive (in tow meanings) sense of humor in a grimly sobersided world; but aside from one wonderful climactic scene, Mr. Dick keeps telling us about humor rather than showing us any examples.

**P. Schuyler Miller: *Astounding Science Fiction* August 1957, p. 141-2**

Ace is rather uneven in the quality of its original science-fiction novels, with or without accompanying reprints but this is one of their best. It adds one more bit of evidence that Philip K. Dick is coming along fast as a master of the sociological twist....

"The Man Who Japed" is a bit less shocking in its picture of a future than the author's "Solar Lottery," but for my money it is better developed and more believable. Allen Purcell, director of a small agency that is selling packaged productions to the Entertainment and Propaganda wing of Morec – Moral Reclamation – government, is also the man whose jape consisted of beheading the statue of Major Streiter, father of the whole distorted mess. He is, of course, promptly in trouble not only with Morec but with the bosomy front for the Mental Health Report, and the vicious Cohorts who consider themselves Streiter's elect heirs. Purcell's final, devastating jape is beautifully logical.

***The Cosmic Puppets***

**P. Schuyler Miller: *Astounding Science Fiction* June 1958, p. 145-46**

I'm giving the reprint of Andre Norton's good adventure yarn [*Sargasso of Space*] top billing in this Ace Double, because it's science fiction, and of the best kind, whereas Philip K. Dick's story has gone all the way over into fantasy this time – even if it did appear in *Satellite* in 1956.

Dick follows his hero, Ted Barton, into the little Virginia hill-town of Millgate, where he was born and brought up. But Millgate has completely changed. Landmarks are gone – people are different – the town's history, as revealed in the files of the local paper, is unlike the events he remembers. Ghostly figures walk in and out of the walls and furniture, and there are two exceedingly peculiar children who are carrying on a nasty war of their own which somehow stands for a more important conflict behind the scenes. Ted finds he can't get out again – he is shown two god-things looming over the valley – and he begins to spy traces of *his* Millgate hidden in and under the mirage. "Eye in the Sky" I'd let in as SF; this I won't.

***The Man in the High Castle***

**S.E. Cotts: *Amazing* February 1963, pp. 119-120**

In *The Man in the High Castle*, science fiction writer Philip Dick shows us a much broader canvas than the ones he has worked on previously. This book is bound to interest many, many people and will, just as surely, be a source of lively discussion among them. Though it can be viewed in many different ways, there can be no argument about its persuasiveness. At first description it may not seem original (it is one of the "What if..." plots which are a mainstay of science fiction), but the handling of the story, the wealth of psychological detail and the rightness of his characterizations all prove Mr. Dick is very much his own man. In an area where the mediocre reigns far too often, the fresh touch shines like a veritable jewel.

World War II has ended, but not in the way we know. The Allies have gone down to defeat, and the USA is mainly under enemy control. The Pacific States are ruled by the Japanese while the eastern portion of the country is under German domination. Once their victory is established, the real differences in aims, goals and methods between them which had been hidden under the surface of their common desire for America's downfall, bobbed to the surface again and reasserted themselves. The Germans brought to their eastern states the same efficient ruthlessness that they had used in their war efforts. The Japanese became tolerant, paternalistic and fascinated by our culture. This in itself would have been enough for a solid story, as Mr. Dick steadily develops, detail by detail, these two different ways of life, their subtle conflicts with each other, mutual attempts to adjust between conquerors and conquered.

But there is still a further plot. An infamous novel, *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, by Hawthorne Abendsen, is the sensation of this postwar world. Abendsen, who is the man in the high castle from the title, has written a book about a mythical world – one in which Italy betrayed

the Axis powers, in which Franklin D. Roosevelt wasn't assassinated and the Allies won the war. Naturally the Germans have banned the book in their sector, not being able, even in fictionalized form, to entertain the idea of defeat. The Japanese, however, fascinated as they are, hypnotized almost by many aspects of the people they rule, do tolerate the novel.

After allowing time for building up a clear picture of the setting and the main characters, Mr. Dick changes his focus slightly and starts to show how the idea of Abendsen's existence and his novel start to work in the thoughts and actions of some of the main characters, involving them in a course of action that adds an added dimension of suspense to an already solid achievement.

### ***Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?***

**M. John Harrison: *New Worlds* Number 190 (May 1969), p. 59**

Philip K. Dick's latest novel, **Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?** (Rapp & Whiting, 21s), is a broth of ideas. Shortly after WW III, man becomes increasingly artificially stimulated while android robots become less distinguishable from the real thing; Earth is a dreary place, fallout impelling its remaining inhabitants to wear lead codpieces or to emigrate to the colony worlds; and as a counter-attraction, the colonies are nothing, so inimical that even the androids don't want to be there. Rick Decard's job is to hunt and eliminate renegade androids, and the book concerns his most difficult operation, against six new models with ultra-sophisticated brains.

Dick is preoccupied largely with the crumbling man/machine terminator: the androids have programmed emotions – while Decard's wife sets her 'mood organ' for "a six hour self-accusatory depression"; the androids are fractionally less intelligent, but the human race has its radiation-induced rejects, the 'specials'. The problem is symbolized in the test given to suspect androids, which is in itself becoming unreliable, and in the artificial animals (thus the title) that are replacing Earth's dying fauna.

The book is beautifully constructed, yet disappointing. Dick develops his thesis quietly – until a climax in which the reader can no longer avoid its implications – and without too much of the rationalization that dogs the genre. His satire is often very funny indeed, and his side details – the empathic religion, the robot lover that no bounty hunter could bear to kill, the delightful prospect of two androids pulling the legs off an electric spider to see how many it can do without – are engaging. But his plot is weak and a little trivial, his characters are standard constructions, and his style makes the book difficult to read.

### ***Ubik***

**Ron Goulart: *Venture Science Fiction* November 1969, p. 105**

Although he plots with a fairly rigid formula, most of Phil Dick's books are impossible to summarize or explain. They are enjoyable events, like Marx Bros. Movies and Lenny Bruce monologues, and this is one of the better ones. Dick does pretty well with short stories, too, and Ace has issued a fat collection of them titled *The Preserving Machine*.

### ***Galactic Pot-Healer***

**P. Schuyler Miller: *Analog* March 1970, p. 168**

No, Waldo... Mr. Dick is not urging a "pot" centered society upon us. The pots that Joe Fernwright "heals" are the things that grandma used to call "crocks" when she made pickle in them, and Aunt Sophie called "vahses" when she used them for bouquets, and archeologists use to support vast hypotheses of human and cultural flux. Joe just fixes pots – better than new – in a crazy future Welfare State. Then a vastly ancient shape-changing monster from far, far, far beyond anywhere hires him and a shipload of other specialists to raise a pagan temple out of the sea on a bizarre world.

The whole thing is fascinating in a surrealistic sort of way, but never as believable as – for instance – Samuel Delaney or Avram Davidson would make it. The pot healer and other technicians never get a chance to do their stuff, so there is never any logic to their having been selected. They do serve another purpose, but that seems to be pure luck. If there is deep significance anywhere, I missed it.

## **Valis**

### **Baird Searles: *Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine* March 1981, p. 16**

And speaking of superstitions and theology, there's Philip K. Dick's new novel, *Valis*. Now if there's one thing I dislike more than people telling me their dreams, it's people telling me their drug experiences, particularly the religious ones. I disliked *Valis* a whole lot.

It's written in the first person by a narrator who editorializes a great deal and tells us a lot more than we (or at least I) want to know about a character named Horselover Fat. Early on, we are informed that the narrator and Horselover Fat are one and the same, and it is being written in this way to give "much needed objectivity." Later the narrator refers to several of his (the narrator's) books, such as *The Man in the High Castle* and *A Scanner Darkly*. Make of this what you will.

Horselover Fat has an encounter with God a la St. Paul about which he is writing an endless exegesis, of which we are told all too much. God may, in fact, be an alien or may be Horselover Fat from the far future (as opposed to the near past; Horselover comes across as one of those embarrassing hippies left over from two decades ago). Her (they?) encounter a child, daughter of a jet-set rock singer, who may be a computer terminal, or God, or the Wisdom of the World, or... There are lots of quotes from Schopenhauer, Xenophanes, Wordsworth et al., not to mention an eight-page appendix of yet more quotes. Need I go on?

This all may be one big boring joke or it may be meant seriously; it doesn't matter much. *Valis* is embarrassingly, datedly hip, cute, and infinitely tedious, so far as I'm concerned. A major danger to science fiction these days is in its becoming the new mysticism, what with flying saucers, gods' chariots, Bermuda Triangle and all. Writers such as Mr. Dick are not helping matters.

With *Minority Report*, Spielberg means to enjoy himself while doing justice to Dick's paranoid vision of big government overstepping itself. But being the bright-eyed boy he is, Spielberg can never travel all the way with Dick, an incorrigible pessimist who gave his readers no quarter. Dick pursued the black heart of the corporate state to its unlovely conclusion -- in the short story, when things go awry, it's through an unintended consequence of the system, and we're forced to consider the most un-American proposition that the individual may have to sacrifice himself for the system to survive. The old-fashioned humanist in Spielberg will go along with this just so far before he starts restoring both the individual and the system to their better selves. *Minority Report* is, finally, a celebration of the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness. About the fate of the first two Dick had his own morbid ideas: He saw little in life to celebrate, and few possibilities for liberty. As to the third, for the often-divorced, frequently ill, periodically doped and perennially anxious Dick, happiness was always a foreign country -- which is why his story ends with a dry, cynical chuckle. Spielberg must redeem his heroes -- which is why his movie ends with family ties.

Ella Taylor "Pre-Cognitive Dissonance" *LA Weekly*. June 21 - 27, 2002

**Philip K. Dick's Mind-Bending, Film-Inspiring Journeys**  
**by David Edelstein**  
***New York Times*, June 16, 2002**

To call Philip K. Dick, whose 1954 story "The Minority Report" is the basis for the new Steven Spielberg movie, a science-fiction writer is to underscore the inadequacy of the label. Dick, who died of a stroke in 1982 at 53, was fascinated by the scientific future largely as a vehicle for examining his own anxieties, longings and unstable perceptions. It would be more accurate to call him one of the most valiant psychological explorers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Written before "Eye in the Sky," the hallucinatory 1957 novel that Dick considered his breakthrough, "The Minority Report" begins with the premise that a private corporation has found the means to harness the talents of "precognitives" - men and women who can see murders before they happen, thus enabling the police to arrest people for crimes that have yet to be committed. In different ways, both the story and the film finally hinge on the impact that knowing the future will have on that future, and whether a person must act in the manner foretold or has the capacity to exercise free will. Mr. Spielberg's movie takes - predictably but not uninterestingly - the more humanistic, inspirational view.

Thinking about these ideas can make your head hurt, which is true of virtually all of Dick's 36 novels and more than 100 short stories: mind-bending was almost his religion. Calling himself a "fictionalizing philosopher," he began with an assumption that causality is a shared delusion and that even concepts like space and time have a limited basis in reality.

Dick lived in fear that he was schizophrenic, but at his best he managed to make the condition seem universal. Memories are inherently questionable, identities mutable and signs of entropy everywhere. He was suspicious of the government and sympathetic to the counterculture, especially to those who used drugs to pierce the veil - although he would ultimately chronicle, in "A Scanner Darkly," the ways in which addictive substances themselves became a kind of lethal totalitarian force. In his final and most feverish decade, Dick struggled to chart the influence of a metaphysical realm beyond the sensory world. Works like "Valis" (1981) left some readers questioning his sanity and others - the most passionate cultists - more agog than ever at his spiritual and intellectual audacity.

These are not issues with which big-budget genre movies often grapple. But Dick's works are nothing if not "high concept," and his entertaining premises have found their way to Hollywood, although in somewhat diluted form.

Many people regard the 1982 "Blade Runner," directed by Ridley Scott, as a masterpiece, and Dick, who saw the film shortly before he died, admired its elaborate vision of a corroded future cityscape. But there is no getting around the fact that the movie misses almost entirely the psychological complexity of its source, Dick's 1968 novel "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?," one of his most tantalizing explorations of the human capacity for empathy.

The bleary gumshoe hero of the film (played by Harrison Ford) has little connection to the book's unhappily married drudge, who mechanically executes "replicants" as a means to afford animals (now rare and expensive) for display in his front yard. The movie only fleetingly touches on one of Dick's most beloved motifs: the way humans are becoming increasingly mechanical while machines are evolving to meet them halfway. Dick envisioned scenarios in which the computers would bleed and people rust - a notion that would be evoked more by Mr. Spielberg in "A.I." (2001) than in "Minority Report."

Little beyond a gimmick - the hero's memories are wholly fabricated - and a bead of sweat survived the translation of Dick's story "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale" into the big-budget Arnold Schwarzenegger bone-cruncher "Total Recall" (1990). The modest B-movie "Screamers" (1995), based on Dick's story "Second Variety," is a more faithful and satisfying interplanetary shoot-'em-up - but this is hardly Dick at his most Dickian.

In many respects, Dick's influence emerges more clearly in films that have no direct connection to his books. "The Truman Show," with its simulated small town, is right out of the 1958 novel "Time Out of Joint." So are "The Thirteenth Floor" and "Dark City," movies set in what turn out to be computer-generated universes. David Cronenberg's "Existenz" has similar,

pervasive Dickian elements, as does a better Schwarzenegger thriller, "The Sixth Day," in which the hero ultimately discovers that he's a clone.

Several critics have noted that "Memento" (2000), with its temporally challenged hero, owes more than a passing debt to a number of backward-traveling Dick novels and stories - although the immaculate palette of its director, Christopher Nolan, is hardly reminiscent of Dick's sprawling, rough-hewn prose.

As the critic Alexander Starr noted in Slate, the most Dickian of the non-Dick movies is certainly "The Matrix" (1999), written and directed by the Wachowski brothers, in which the heroes discover that the world they thought was real has in fact been generated by a malevolent force and that humans exist solely to provide nourishment for hungry machines. As in Dick's rollicking transfiguration saga "Ubik" (1969), the Wachowskis take the elements of cruddy pulp fiction and twist them into something transcendently mind-blowing.

The good news from Hollywood is that Dick is hot again. The director Richard Linklater, whose animated 2001 gabfest "Waking Life" was partly inspired by Dick's philosophical writings, is set to direct the drug masterpiece "A Scanner Darkly" - about a narcotics agent whose brain hemispheres stop communicating and who ends up spying on himself - for the executive producers Steven Soderbergh and George Clooney.

In the meantime, "Minority Report" (opening Friday) stands as the most fluid and conventionally exciting of all the Philip K. Dick adaptations, even if the last 20 minutes, which play more like a stock whodunit, feel somewhat flat and tidy: the reality to which the characters finally return is too cozily real.

But Dick might have liked it anyway: about movies he was a realist. After Ridley Scott was quoted as saying that he had found "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" too difficult to read, Dick obtained a copy of the "Blade Runner" script and expressed somewhat ironic approval. "It was terrific," he wrote. "It bore no relation to the book. Oddly, in some ways it was better. What my story will become is one titanic lurid collision of androids being blown up, androids killing humans, general confusion and murder, all very exciting to watch. Makes my book seem dull by comparison."

He added, "As a writer, though, I'd like to see some of my ideas, not just special effects of my ideas, used."

The Philip K. Dick short story that Spielberg's film is based on was "dark" in a different way. Written in 1956, the story was an effort to move beyond the high-Cold War era of sci-fi--its world conflicts, referred to in passing, are Anglo-Chinese--yet it can't escape the rampant paranoia of that period. Despite Dick's cult reputation, his writing is impersonal and unmannered, a lot like that of any pulp writer of the time, and to the extent that there's anything personal in his work, it's in his obsessive themes of replication and simulation. His work is about the dialectic of progress, and his plots often involve well-meaning crusaders who can't do anything to fend off the rising tides of dehumanization because they've already bought into the ideology of progress... Without editorializing, in his usual straightforward argot, Dick seems to expect us to see the problems with the Precrime idea--its denial of free will, its invasions of privacy, its technologizing of identity--and to notice that the good guys are as deeply implicated in these problems as the bad guys. To drive the point home, Dick ends the story with one of his characteristic fake happy endings, where the characters escape to a place we're meant to understand no longer really exists, reminding us of the root meaning of the word utopia: nowhere.

James Morrison "Kubrick Envy" *The Independent Weekly* July 3, 2002

**This Generation Needs a Paranoid's Paranoid**  
**By Brent Staples**  
***New York Times* July 19, 2002 p. A16**

The distance between the world we live in and the world depicted in science fiction has narrowed dramatically in recent years. Novels that once seemed futuristic because they featured pocket computers, palm-sized phones and genetically enhanced people have become dated -- artifacts from a recent past. Minuscule by tradition, the science fiction market has contracted further, making it even more difficult for writers to find an audience.

The most dramatic exception is Philip K. Dick, a wildly original, amphetamine-addled genius who was married five times and found time to write 36 novels and 130 short stories in a 30-year career that, despite his productivity, kept him nearly broke for most of his life. Twenty years after his death, Mr. Dick has gained literary respectability and is one of the hottest properties in Hollywood.

Mr. Dick's books and stories were mainly out of print and seemed destined for oblivion when he died in 1982. Now his short stories have been collected in a five-volume set published by Citadel Press that shows the evolution of his ideas. Vintage Books is embarked on a mammoth effort that will bring more than 30 of his books into print, slickly packaged to appeal to readers who would never be caught dead with an old-fashioned pulp novel.

Mr. Dick's fortunes began to change just after his death when one of his more popular books appeared as the cult film "Blade Runner," a classically Dickian tale of a cold-blooded police state that enslaves man-made human beings -- called "replicants" -- and murders them when they attempt to go free. Since "Blade Runner," Mr. Dick's work has been the basis of five movies, with three others in development.

His writing stands apart from much of science fiction because it is driven more by characters and ideas than by technology. His best work recalls the intellectual puzzles of Jorge Luis Borges, particularly "The Circular Ruins," in which Borges's central character discovers that he is a figment of someone's imagination.

The engine that makes Mr. Dick's stories go is a pervasive and finely articulated paranoia about government, technology, personal relationships -- and the nature of reality itself. His books are often based on the eerie premise that workaday reality is actually a projection, produced by drug-induced hallucinations or manipulated by omnipresent and sinister powers-that-be. It's a generous, all-encompassing paranoia for a post-"X-Files" America in which institutions like the C.I.A. and F.B.I. seem too inept to oppose the kind of threat we feel around us. In Philip Dick's world, reality itself can be the culprit, and his current popularity suggests a willingness by readers to embrace the premise that nothing is ever what it seems to be -- and that free will matters little as we make our way through life.

Mr. Dick's paranoid style is displayed quite nicely in the two films based on his work that were released this year. In "Minority Report," Tom Cruise plays a cop who works for a crooked "precrime" bureau that uses clairvoyants to anticipate murders, then arrests the would-be criminals before they commit them. The movie ends with the guilty fingered and the innocent exonerated, and everyone living happily ever after. In the Dick story, however, the corrupt precrime enterprise grinds on and on with its wrongs undetected.

Hollywood is crazy for Mr. Dick's plots, but much less fond of his bleak conclusions. The most faithful film rendering of a Dick story to date, which also appeared this year, is "Impostor," which stars Gary Sinise

as a government scientist who is charged with being an alien, replicant suicide bomber who has killed the real scientist and taken his place. The good doctor is firmly convinced of his innocence until reality undergoes a violent, Dickian shift, and the world comes apart. The studio is said to have been quite upset about the dark ending.

Philip K. Dick came by his paranoia and suspicion quite naturally. His parents were an unhappy, mismatched couple who somehow allowed his twin sister, Jane, to starve to death shortly after birth. Baby Philip would clearly have followed suit had not a visiting doctor rescued him at the last minute. The constant references to doubles in Mr. Dick's stories flow from his self-confessed fixation on his missing twin, who wasted away in a "normal" middle-class home

where neither parent seemed to notice that something was terribly wrong with the children.

The soulless androids that populate many of his stories are the fictional replicants of his distant, government-issue parents -- a disengaged mother and a germ-phobic father whose fear of disease kept young Philip imprisoned in his crib at a time when most small children are crawling and learning to walk.

A bizarre childhood produced a peculiar adult. Mr. Dick suffered depression and agoraphobia, a fear of public places. He became addicted to amphetamines, which lifted his depression but deepened his paranoia. Stoked up on drugs, he would write for days on end, projecting his phobias and fixations onto paper.

The deepening interest in Mr. Dick makes it inevitable that there will be a movie about his life -- pitchmen are probably describing it as "A Beautiful Mind on Speed." He expected posthumous fame and was suspicious of it. In one of his novels a character named Philip Dick is imprisoned by a sinister government agency and told that his books will be written and published under his name even in the event of his death. Philip K. Dick craved literary recognition. But had fame arrived in his lifetime, one gets the feeling that he would have seen it, as he saw just about everything, as part of some sinister plot.

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### **Health, Swabble, Life by Perry Kinman**

A. J. Spectowsky's book, as you probably already know, is part of the 'How I' trilogy imbedded in Phil's greater works. Often overlooked this cannon is of great importance to the common tire regroover, whose work will become more important after the recent Firestone events.

First in the series is 'How I Tranquilized Myself by Drinking Onion Juice' found in TRUTH/1-1. 1964. If your health is your life then this certainly is living. A natural selection process based on sound nutrition leads to enlightenment, right in your own home, by your own hand.

Next to appear was 'How I Made my own Swabble out of Conventional Household Objects in my Basement During my Spare Time.' Written under the pen-name Eng it came to us through COUNTER-CLOCK/2-1 circa 1967. After your health what could be more important than a Swabble. Everyone needs a Swabble. And not just any Swabble but one originating from ones own efforts and worldly possessions right from the comforts of ones own home. MMMmmmm.

Finally, in 1970, Spectowsky completed the series with what some consider the most important work of all, 'How I Rose From the Dead in My Spare Time and So Can You.' Hidden in MAZE/1-2 this work has gone virtually un-noticed until recently. After life what? Death. Then after death, life again of course. Bringing one back to the issue of health again. Back to the beginning of the cycle. Health, Swabble, Life again. Health, Swabble, Life again. The eternal cycle.