

# ROLLING STONE

ON LOCATION WITH BERNARDINE DOHRN AND CO.  
UNDERGROUND WEATHER  
TAKE ONE

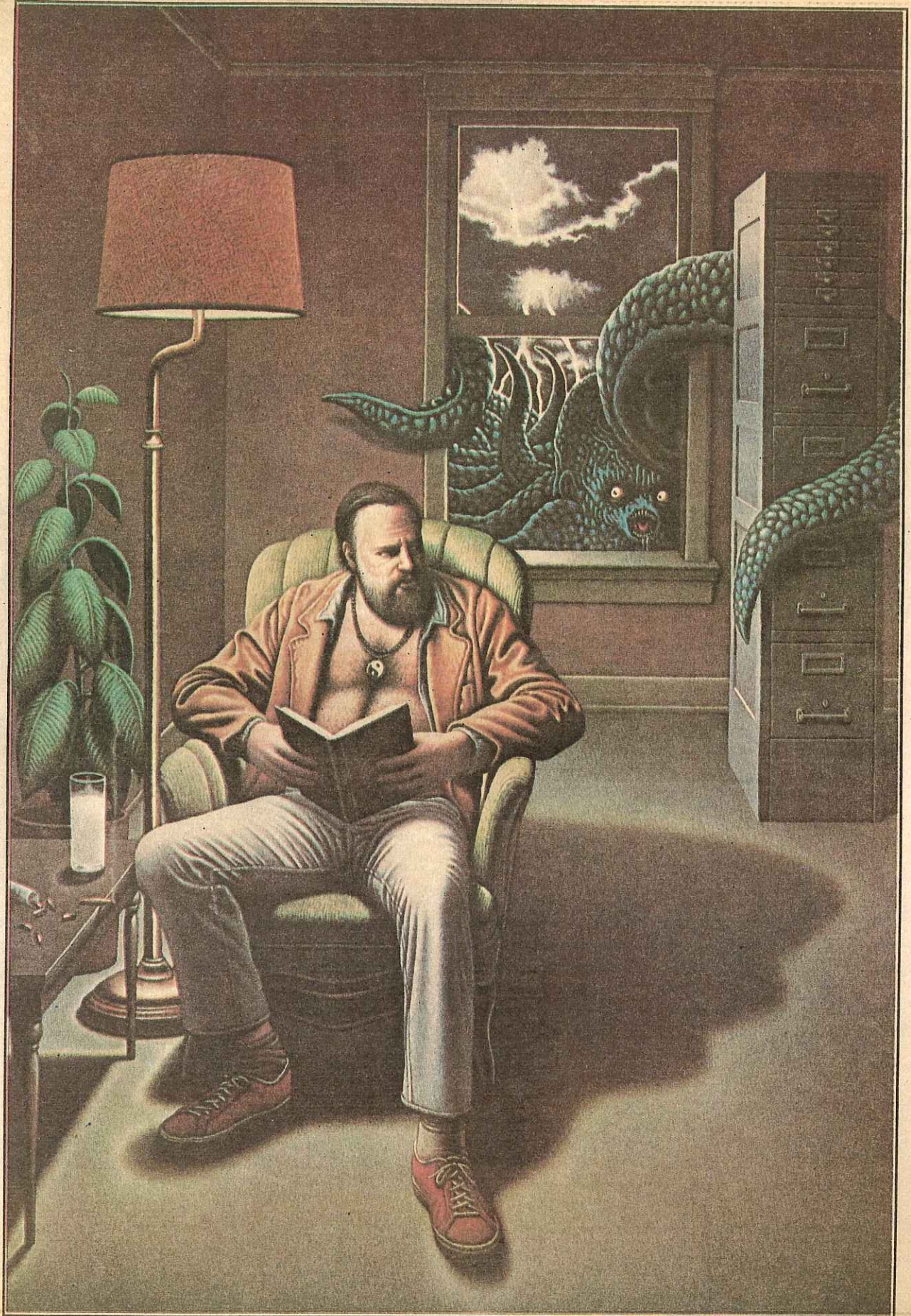
Rod Stewart  
and His  
New Pal  
Britt  
Ekland

The Most  
Brilliant  
Sci-Fi Mind  
on Any  
Planet:  
Philip K.  
Dick

Afternoon of  
the Living Dead:  
Flashing  
Back with  
Garcia and  
Friends





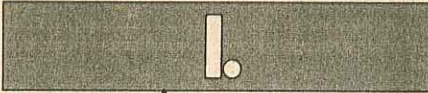




# The True Stories of PHILIP K. DICK

The Three Stigmata of  
MOBY-DICK  
The Five Break-Ins of  
DOCTOR DICK

**Burgling the Most Brilliant Sci-Fi Mind on Earth—It Is Earth, Isn't It?**  
By Paul Williams



November 17th, 1971. Philip K. Dick, a brilliant novelist well known in science fiction circles, unlocked the front door of his house in San Rafael, California, and turned on the living-room lights. His stereo was gone. The floor was covered with water and pieces of asbestos. The fireproof, 1100-pound asbestos-and-steel file cabinet that protected his precious manuscripts had been blown apart by powerful explosives.

"Thank God," he thought to himself. "Thank God! I guess I'm not crazy after all."

There's something about ordinary reality that causes it to go all shimmery in the presence of Philip K. Dick. Phil Dick is a science fiction writer, has been for 24 years, and the common theme that runs through all his stories is, "Things are seldom what they seem"—a line Phil repeated several times during my three-day stay at his house last year. He lives in Fullerton, Orange County, California, obviously the natural place for a brilliant writer to go after being driven out of semi-suburban San Rafael by forces beyond his comprehension. The new house is less than ten miles from Disneyland.

Philip K. Dick is unknown in America outside the science fiction subculture, but in Europe and especially France, he is widely regarded as one of the greatest living American novelists. Most of his 36 books are constantly in print in Germany, France and Britain, and Jean-Pierre Gorin, a respected French film director, is trying to raise money for a major Hollywood movie of a Phil Dick novel titled *Ubik*.

Perhaps Phil's vision of America is just too accurate to be fully appreciated here. But Dick fans believe it's a matter of timing. Most of them think Dick is now on the edge of a popularity surge similar to what happened to Kurt Vonnegut in the late Sixties. If so, a whirlwind of doubt, horror and laughter is stalking America, ready to blow off the pages of some of the most peculiar and loving books ever written in this country.

*"Oh Paul, it's so good to hear from you, my friend. Awful things happened to me since I saw you. Somebody just about got me back about a year ago; I came home and found my files blown open with plastic military explosives, windows smashed in, doorlocks smashed, everything of value gone, such as stereo, business records and canceled checks, correspondence and papers, rubble everywhere. . . I never was able to really live there afterward because of the loss and*

*Paul Williams, founder of 'Crawdaddy' and author of 'Das Energi' and 'Outlaw Blues,' has been corresponding with Philip K. Dick for over seven years. In a recent letter Dick admitted to Williams: "Ever since the police lost interest in me, there's been nothing to live for."*

*damage. I got threatening phone calls later saying the next time it'd be worse. Two County Sheriff's Department inspectors came out, a lot of photos were taken, investigation and like that—one arrest much later, of a Panther, with my gun stolen from my files that night: I had bought it to protect myself, knowing the hit was coming.*

*"I still don't know who or why exactly; I've heard many theories. In the wet rubble on the floors: big combat boot footprints. A bunch of guys made the hit. They worked fast and noisy. One informed theory: nearby Birchers, the Minutemen. It was a militarylike operation, what they call search and seize, I believe. The police informally said, 'We don't want a crusader here in Marin County. You better move away or you'll get a bullet in your back some night. Or worse.' I asked what the 'or worse' was and the police sergeant said, 'You wouldn't want to know.' I did what he suggested. I moved out of the county, all the way to Canada. I've never been back.*

*"There were a couple of hostile people operating around me at the time, but I thought they were undercover narcotics agents and handled them as such. Evidently I was wrong. This is a story I've never told, a story I'm afraid, even a year later, to tell. Someday I'll tell it, but my fear is enormous. I was told I wouldn't live to give my speech at Vancouver. 'If you don't,' I was told, 'someone posing as you will deliver it for you.' Just remembering back I start shaking. I really didn't expect to live to February, and told people so, but not why.*

*"I was shucked by deadly people playing a deadly game: I saw a lot of guns, explosives, silencers—they used blackmail on me, terror and psychological intimidation. It damn near worked. They threatened me with arrest and tried to set me up again and again on entrapment. Shit, Paul; I can't write about it any more, even to you. It was so fucking awful. They even tried to involve me in murder, conspiracy to commit murder, saying it was the only way I could save my own life. But I did get away. The fear remains, especially now, because by chance I've gotten hold of more information about this illegal secret paramilitary organization that was hounding me there in Marin County, and I think I know what it consisted of. Not Minutemen or Panthers either one. Paul, it is a neo-Nazi group."*

*(From a letter sent by Philip K. Dick to Paul Williams, November 11th, 1972.)*



Philip K. Dick has described his novels as books that "try to pierce the veil of what is only apparently real to find out what is really real." He is very good at creating

believable realities that then start coming unstuck. In *Time Out of Joint*, a Phil Dick novel published in 1959, the central character walks up to a soft drink stand in the middle of an ordinary day when suddenly the place vanishes before his eyes. All that's left where it used to be is a slip of paper with the words "soft drink stand" printed on it.

At the end of the book, after a series of (increasingly harrowing) similar incidents, we discover that our hero isn't living in 1959 at all, but in an imitation of 1959 built for his benefit in 1995 as a way of deluding him and thus overcoming his refusal to use his unique psychic powers in a global war. So, while our hero thinks he is solving 1959 newspaper puzzles for prize money, he is really locating the positions of 1995 enemy missiles.

It's all marvelous, terrifying fun, especially if you've ever suspected that the world is an unreal construct built solely to keep you from knowing who you really are. Which it is, of course. Paranoia is true perception. Phil Dick is on the side of the crazy people, which makes him, indeed, a writer for our times.

Dick's best-known novel is probably *The Man in the High Castle*, which won the Hugo Award for Best Science Fiction Novel of the Year in 1963. It's about an alternate universe in which Germany and Japan won World War II and divided up America. Japan gets California, of course, and the Japanese bureaucrats and businessmen who come to govern the area bring with them a book called *The I Ching* (which, in 1961 when *High Castle* was written, was unheard of in America except by Jungian scholars and students of Chinese literature. The people I know who were into the *I Ching* in the mid-Sixties and who were turning other people on to it all first heard of the book by reading Phil Dick's novel).

*The Man in the High Castle* is the sort of book—like Pynchon's *V.* or Borges's *Labyrinths*—that stuns the reader with its fineness: its accuracy in matters of the heart and of the mind that are rarely discussed in print. There is a quality of imagination here, the ability to breathe life into an entirely separate reality and the people who inhabit it that is awesome; *High Castle* is like a crazy mirror reflection of our own reality, subtly illuminating the world we live in by drawing our attention to the points where the two worlds differ.

In the world of *High Castle*, everyone is reading a new book—banned by both the German authorities in the eastern U.S. and the Japanese in the West—called *The Grasshopper Lies Heavy*, by Hawthorne Abendsen. Abendsen's book is about a world in which Roosevelt was not assassinated in 1933, and the United States and England won the second World War. . . .

The plot is complex and fascinating, but unlike most science fiction, this book is concerned with people as well as events. Dick's characters are extraordinary: Mr. Tagomi, the Japanese bureaucrat who freaks out when he realizes that evil is real, "It's actual like cement"; Frank Frink, the insecure gunsmith-turned-jeweler, a Jew hiding in San Francisco; Juliana Frink, Frank's



beautiful, schizoid ex-wife, now a judo instructor in the Rocky Mountain Free States. . . . We are caught up in each person's doubts, desires, his/her awareness of political and human realities.

Dick's characters are all ultimately small (that is, ordinary, believable) people made big by their stamina in the face of an uncertain world. Dick cares about the people in his books—true, he contrives horrible things to happen to them, but that is in some sense beyond his control; he is like a god condemned to watch his universes fall apart as fast as he creates them, with his poor beloved characters trapped inside—and ultimately we, the readers, empathize with the characters as much as the author does. We share their small triumphs and disappointments; we laugh at their absurd behavior because we recognize their anxieties as our own.

Philip K. Dick is 46 years old. I first met him in 1968 at the World Science Fiction Convention in Berkeley (the convention site changes each year; there's a "Worldcon" on the West Coast every four years, on the average). That was the year science fiction fandom belatedly discovered dope, and we all ran around the Claremont Hotel taking horse tranquilizers we thought were THC capsules. Phil was very clinical; he wanted to know how much each person had taken and what their symptoms were. Like most science fiction writers at conventions, he was wandering around looking moody and soaking up egoboo (an "SF" subculture word, short for "ego boost," whose meaning and usefulness should be evident). I gave him an article I'd written for a Boston newspaper that called him "the Herman Melville of the 20th century."

"When I saw Phil again, in San Rafael in early 1970, he told me he was in a writer's slump as the result of his doctor telling him to give up all amphetamines and psychedelic drugs or risk the collapse of his liver. All his books (more than 30 at that point) had been written on amphetamines, he explained, and he felt unable to write without them.

I was confused. I could believe that some of Phil's books were written on speed, but *all* of them? And had he really stopped writing? I assured him the muse would soon return, dexes or no dexes. But in fact, Phil didn't write a word—except for personal letters—for the next three years.

But, as I found out later, he hadn't yet stopped taking amphetamines.

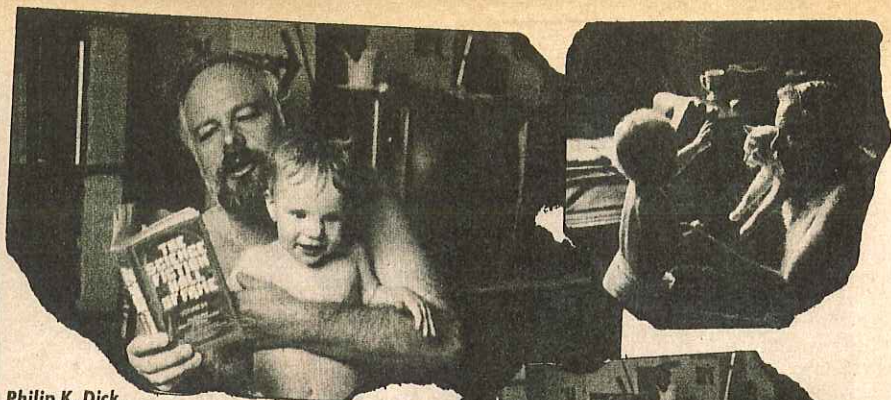
The relationship between Phil and drugs has always been a bizarre one. He wrote the classic LSD novel of all time, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, in 1963, two years before he took any psychedelic drugs. People who've read the novel (including Timothy Leary, an early Phil Dick fan) find this hard to believe, but I've talked to enough of Phil's friends to be satisfied that it's true. Phil often describes things best before he experiences them. It's a frightening talent when you think about it.



Shortly before Halloween 1974, I flew to California to interview Phil Dick. A short-hop commuter airline took me from L.A. to Orange County: I saw scrubby hills and denuded land, followed by endless rows of identical red roofs and blue backyard swimming pools. Inside the airplane was a sign: WELCOME ABOARD THE TIME MACHINE. It took me a moment to figure that one out. We landed in Fullerton at nightfall and I took a taxi to Cameo Lane.

Phil was asleep. His lady, Tessa, took my suitcase and introduced me to Christopher, their one-year-old son. Phil has sired three children by three different women; Chris is the first boy. Tessa B. Dick—Philip K. Dick's fifth wife—is diminutive, pretty and smart as a whip. She's 21 years old.

Phil woke up in a momentarily bad mood, then told me how happy he was to see me. We started talking right away—families, adventures, reminiscence. My immediate and lasting impression was that Phil had grown since I saw him last. It wasn't just the contrast



Philip K. Dick, son Chris and wife Tessa (facing page). "Tessa and I started out with conflicting realities. . . . But now we are shaping a joint one between us."

with Tessa; it was the way he carried himself—when he walks down the street people mistake him for a bouncer from the *barrio*. He seemed taller, more big boned. Like a friendly bear—not at all the image I had of him from San Rafael. Was this a change that reflected the experiences of the intervening years? Or something in Phil that changes from week to week?

Tessa bought some groceries and some cassettes and batteries for me. Occasionally while she was making dinner Phil would holler out, "Faster! Faster!" Tessa's inevitable reply: "I'll pound ya!" (raising her fist). Phil: "She beats me up, Paul. What can I do? I'm scared to death of her."

We drank cup after cup of coffee and talked of a thousand things. Phil's congressman is Charles Wiggins, the articulate, charming ex-Nixon defender on the House Judiciary Committee. Phil corresponded with Wiggins during the impeachment hearings. Wiggins listened to him, answering his letters personally and in detail, at one point saying he'd reconsidered and reversed himself on a constitutional issue subsequent to reading one of Phil's letters. Phil and I agreed that Wiggins's radio interview recantation the Monday they found the smoking pistol was one of the most moving moments in the whole Watergate drama.

We talked about Phil's books. PKD: "I've got a little screen in my head, and the people walk around on it."

PW: "They're real."

PKD: "They're little, Paul, they're about that big. [laughter] I didn't realize it until I did the screenplay [for *Ubik*—Phil's first screenplay, completed in three weeks last year], where I had to visualize, and I realized I didn't have to 'cause I was, I didn't know any other way to do it. I got to where I was literally looking up, type type and look up. They move around, y'know, and I was going like this, looking up, typing, and saying, 'And there goes Joe out the door, slam!' With one character, I deduced he had a child 'cause I could see a tricycle in the driveway."

We talked about drugs and writing. Despite Harlan Ellison's introduction to a story of Phil's, "Faith of Our Fathers," which says that the story was written while Phil was on LSD, Phil has never written under the influence of psychedelic drugs ("I did try it once, but it came out all in Latin and Sanskrit!") and in fact has taken relatively few acid trips. The stunning, often hallucinogenic sense of reality expressed in Phil Dick's work can probably be attributed to Phil's internal chemistry rather than to any chemicals he's taken.

But then there's the strange story of his 18 years on amphetamines. . . .

PW: "You've said that every novel you've written, from the beginning in 1953 until a couple of years ago, was written on speed. Is that an exaggeration?"

PKD: "No, that's not an exaggeration, that's correct. *A Scanner Darkly* [Dick's most recent novel, as yet unpublished] was the first complete novel I had written without speed.

"See, I believed there was a direct connection between the amphetamines and the writing. I attributed my speed of writing, my high productivity and my

pushing myself to the amphetamines. I really used to think that if I didn't take 'em, I couldn't write.

"But when I wrote *Scanner*, I found myself doing exactly what I'd done when I'd taken amphetamines, that is, I would work incredibly long hours, eat very little. . . .

Tessa: "He used to go to bed at 2:30 and at 3:00 he'd say, 'I've got to write this down,' and get up and work another hour. And then get up at like 7:00 in the morning and just work all day."

PKD: "If you'd watched me, you would have thought I was taking speed, I guess. And then when I got toward the end, I was all dingy and screwed up, and I'd crash. It was just like withdrawal. And it'd been years since I'd taken any amphetamines.

"What we're talking about here really, which I didn't realize, is a work habit. It's a way of producing a novel. I don't make notes, so if I do a little each day, I'm gonna forget the continuity, I'm not gonna be able to pick it up again. The only way I can do it is just continue to work till it's done. Most of my books have been written in three to eight weeks, and I really have no other conception of how to write a novel. Just push through, like one great heroic push, a *tour de force*, it's a continual *tour de force*.

"So I stopped taking speed and it didn't make any difference, good or bad. I still got the side effects and I still got the charge. I even got hair-trigger anger, it's identical, it's so funny. . . .

"And this confirms a diagnosis I got once. They discovered something odd about me, and that was that when I took amphetamines my liver detoxified them and they never reached my brain! This was at Hoover Pavilion, Stanford Hospital, which has the best reputation for diagnosis on the West Coast. They said it's really odd to see somebody do that, take something which the tests showed never affected my brain."

PW: "Why were you at Hoover?"

PKD: "Well, I was thrown in there by my girlfriend, who thought I was a drug addict. I didn't mention that to you? It's another funny story, like my suicide stories.

"It was in 1971. I was living down there in Palo Alto with this completely burned out broad who had been shooting speed at one time, dropping acid, had been in a mental hospital—I lived down there, I was gonna move in with her and marry her and everything like that. And we were kind of quarreling. And one day she came home with her psychiatrist and they told me they were throwing me into the mental hospital because I was a drug addict and I should detoxify.

"I said, 'I'm going back to San Rafael.' And she says, 'No you're not, 'cause it's my car; your car is still up in San Rafael, we're 40 miles, 70 miles, whatever—there's





no way you can get back, you haven't got any money, so what the hell are you going to do? You're not going to stay here, I'll just throw you out the door otherwise.' And he says, 'You'd better do it, Phil; beat your drug habit.' He was protecting his patient, she was his patient and she couldn't stand the clash of us living together. They explained to me that I was so wired and spaced and strung out that I obviously would never make it back to San Rafael. . . well, when a psychiatrist tells you these things, it sounds real, it's like priests.

"So I went in there, it was really a nice hospital, and the next morning I met this pretty girl there and started telling her I was a great writer, which, well I'm not sure if that's an indication of being wired, strung out, spaced and all that, but I had my girlfriend bring in one of my novels, *Three Stigmata*, and I spent the whole day showing the girl this book and talking to her. Since I really didn't know what to do, I had never been detoxified before, I'd never been in a mental hospital, I just—she was an awful pretty girl, and I just sat and rapped with her. And the next morning the psychiatrist said, 'You're leaving.'

"And I said, 'But I'm supposed to be in here for like two weeks or three weeks or a month or so.' He says, 'No, you've been diagnosed, you're not a drug addict, there's nothing wrong with you.'

"The consensus, signed by the four doctors who'd administered the physical and psychological tests, was that the amphetamines were not affecting me physically, they were not actually reaching the neural tissue, but they were being excreted through the detoxifying process of the liver. Which they said would not be true if I were to shoot it—which I've never done—because then it would bypass the liver.

"They said I would probably continue to take amphetamines for whatever unknown reason it was that I took them, and when the time came that they no longer served a psychological purpose, I would drop them just like that. And so I did, just a few months later.

"I really felt good when I heard their concurrent diagnosis, that I wasn't an addict, that I took speed for some kind of strange reason, which I now think was protective coloration, you see what I mean? I was living in the drug subculture and, taking it, I blended. . . .

"We don't realize the extent to which we're influenced by our environment. Everybody else was taking some form of drugs, and I wouldn't have known how to behave if I didn't have something to take."

It didn't occur to your interviewer at the time to ask Phil Dick why he started taking amphetamines ten years before he got involved with any "drug subculture". . .

"I felt as if I'd been through a hurricane that night."

—Theodore Sturgeon, describing the first time he met Philip K. Dick

## IV.

The break-in at Philip K. Dick's former home in San Rafael, California, fascinates him to this day. He has a number of theories about what actually happened; during the three days I spent at his house we discussed at least eight different scenarios, explanations for the break-in, consistent with the known details. Each time Phil presented a new theory he did so with the passion of complete conviction—this was it, now he *finally* had figured it out! The discussions we had were exciting, invigorating; I was in awe of his ability to sift and resift the details of an event and constantly come up with new ideas of what really happened, new and different and always strangely convincing gestalt perceptions of the same reality, the same event. I began to realize that it was up to me to determine what was really real.

A biographical note: In 1948, the year I was born, Phil Dick dropped out of college (UC Berkeley) rather than participate in compulsory ROTC. (He was always ahead of his time.) He got a job in a record store. He started writing science fiction a year or two later and sold his first short story in December of 1951. By 1953 he was one of the most widely published short story writers in the field.

He's a Sagittarius, born on Beethoven's birthday, 1928. In a survey of science fiction writers conducted in 1963, he cited, as one of the important influences on his writing, "my own 'nervous breakdown,' which I experienced at 19 and then again at 24 and 33. Suffering of this sort educates your viewpoint, but at the expense of your creature-comfort principle; it may make you a better writer, but the cost is far too great."

The scariest novel Philip K. Dick ever wrote is *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, possibly a reflection of that third nervous breakdown. It's a book about drugs, at least partly inspired by an article Phil read (in '62 or '63) about the effects of LSD.

The novel takes place sometime in the early 21st century. The oceans are evaporating and the temperature in New York in May is 180° Fahrenheit. As the story opens, Barney Mayerson wakes up in a strange bed with a woman he doesn't recognize and immediately switches on his suitcase psychiatrist. The suitcase (an extension of a computer located in Barney's apartment building) explains the situation: She is Rondinella Fugate, Barney's new assistant at Perky Pat Layouts. She intends to get his job.

Barney's job is deciding what's going to be fashionable, so he can select items for ultraminiaturization. Perky Pat Layouts sells miniature environments, complete with every up-to-date accessory. These "layouts"

are purchased by devotees of the illegal drug Can-D—which is used primarily by colonists on Mars, a miserable planet we are trying to populate because Earth won't last much longer.

Leo Bulero, Barney's boss and the head of PPL, has a problem. The renegade industrialist Palmer Eldritch has just returned from ten years in another solar system, bringing with him some bizarre alien drug to compete with Can-D and put Perky Pat Layouts out of business.

The way Can-D works is this:

You're in your hovel on Mars, see, and you chew Can-D, and it makes you believe you're back on Earth, living in a comfortable house with a pretty girlfriend, driving a fancy sports car. The girl is Perky Pat and you're Walt, unless you're female, in which case you're Pat of course. And the fine clothes and furniture and other possessions you both have are all ultraminatures you've purchased (with truffle skins) to put in your layout, which is a representation of the world you go to when you chew Can-D. Alter the layouts and alter the illusion world.

Some people believe that taking the drug actually transports you outside of time and space; it's not an illusion. A religious cult is forming around this idea.

There are a thousand plot complications and delicious tidbits of future history and culture in every chapter, but the most important thing in the early part of the novel is that Leo Bulero meets Palmer Eldritch in a hospital on the Moon and is dosed with a hit of the new drug Eldritch has brought back, Chew-Z.

Chew-Z is some trip. Leo finds himself sitting outdoors in a grassy place, next to a small girl playing with a yo-yo. He starts talking to her about his business problems. A monster phantom rat runs by. Dr. Smile, the suitcase psychiatrist, turns up in the grass; Leo immediately asks it to contact someone to get him out of this place. Then Leo is attacked by some sickening little creature ("The gluck had him by the ankle and it was trying to drink him; it had penetrated his flesh with tiny tubes like cilia"). He is rescued by Palmer Eldritch, who engages him in a conversation about the nature of the drug.

It turns out Eldritch was the little girl, and a part of him was also the gluck. Leo Bulero gets the idea right away, applies himself and manifests a gluck trap. Then he builds himself a flight of stairs leading into a luminous hoop in the sky, climbs the stairs and emerges in New York City, where he ducks out of the hot sun and takes a cab to his office. He tells his secretary to get Barney Mayerson. Barney comes in and can't explain why he didn't immediately try to rescue Leo when he got the message from Dr. Smile. . . . "Anyhow, you're back."

"Of course I'm back," says Bulero, "I built myself a stairway to here. Aren't you going to answer as to why you didn't do anything? I guess not. But as you say, you weren't needed. I've now got an idea of what this new Chew-Z substance is like. . . . The worst aspect is the solipsistic quality. With Can-D you undergo a valid interpersonal experience, in that the others in your hovel are. . . ." He paused irritably. "What is it, Miss Fugate? What are you staring at?" Roni Fugate murmured, "I'm sorry, Mr. Bulero, but there's a creature under your desk."

Bending, Leo peered under the desk.

A thing had squeezed itself between the base of the desk and the floor; its eyes regarded him greenly, un-winking.

It scuttled out and made for the door. It was even worse than the glucks. He got one good look at it.

Leo said, "Well, that's that. I'm sorry, Miss Fugate, but you might as well return to your office; no point in our discussing what actions to take toward the imminent appearance of Chew-Z on the market. Because I'm not talking to anyone; I'm sitting here blabbing away to myself."

Thus an arrow from the author's bow pierces the heart of our assumed reality. Leo does get back to Earth eventually, but he never quite comes down from his Chew-Z trip. And slowly everyone on Earth, and especially on Mars, starts looking like Palmer Eldritch—who has steel teeth, cold glass eyes inside metal eyelids



beautiful sci-fi



"If two people dream the same dream, it ceases to be an illusion." — Philip K. Dick

(a transplant after some business associates threw acid in his face) and an artificial arm with interchangeable hands. The people who get hooked on Chew-Z find Palmer Eldritch—who may not even be human, may be a host for some alien invader—every place they turn. Sometimes they even become Palmer Eldritch themselves. But Leo, who visited the future at the height of his Chew-Z trip and saw a monument erected on the spot where he killed Eldritch, fights on valiantly. The novel is a trip within a trip within a trip, "not a dream [according to the author] or even a hallucination; it is a state entered into by the characters . . . and their attempts to find their way back to 'sanity.'"

John Lennon once mentioned wanting to make a movie of *The Three Stigmata*. Jonathan Taplin, producer of *Mean Streets*, has gone Lennon one better and is negotiating to purchase the rights. When the book was translated into German, the title was changed to *LSD Astronauts*. *The Man in the High Castle* is a more human, more compassionate novel. But if you want to be picked up by the scruff of your neck and shaken like a limp rag, *Three Stigmata* is the book to do it to you. Phil claims it took him five years after he'd finished it to find the guts to read over what he had written.

V.

"Though I wrote the Gospels in this century, I should die in the gutter."

—Herman Melville, circa 1851 (while writing *Moby Dick*)

Writing science fiction is a hell of a way to make a living. Philip K. Dick ("The most consistently brilliant science fiction writer in the world"—John Brunner; "He has produced the most significant body of work of any science fiction writer"—Norman Spinrad) sold his most recent novel to a hardcover publisher for \$2500. Well, at least it's an improvement over the \$750 he received for *Time Out of Joint*. If Phil relied only on his current work as a source of income, he'd have to write four novels a year just to keep his head above water.

Catch him in a depressed mood and he'll tell you that his first novel, *Solar Lottery* (1955) was his biggest success, and it's been downhill ever since.

Donald Wollheim, Phil's editor at Ace Books when that house published *Solar Lottery*, explains that in 1955 there were fewer publishers and fewer books, so a science fiction paperback got better distribution and could sell 150,000 copies first time out—which is unheard of today except from the superstars, Heinlein, Clarke and Asimov. So *Solar Lottery*, an excellent novel which has been reissued several times by Ace, has now sold over 300,000 copies, and none of Phil's later novels except for *Man in the High Castle*—published as a thriller by Popular Library in 1963—has

even come close to that sales record. The success of science fiction publishing as a whole has made it harder for individual books.

And Wollheim, who was the only editor who would buy Phil's novels at the beginning of his career, is the only paperback editor who has been buying new books from Phil in the last few years—the other houses are all content to keep reissuing the Dick books they purchased years ago.

These reissues keep Dick in the public eye—the average paperback bookstore has between four and ten Phil Dick books on the SF shelves these days—but they seldom bring him any income. Paperback publishers—Ace is a prime offender—are just too skillful at seeing that their sales figures exactly match the author's original advance on royalties. No matter how long the book is out or how well it is received, it always seems to sell just \$1500 worth. And the royalty deals on books that were purchased back in the Fifties are tiny anyway. So even when the accounting is honest, not much money comes in.

Phil has an ace in the hole, however, which keeps his financial situation from being a tragic one, and that's his foreign success. He earns more than half his income these days from overseas rights, which is extraordinary when you realize how little money is usually involved in the sale of translation rights to a "genre" book. What's happening is that Phil has a lot of books in his catalog, he is popular in France, England, Germany, Japan, Italy, Poland, Holland, Portugal, Spain, Denmark and Sweden—and in certain countries his prestige and marketability are so great that publishers are bidding against each other for rights to his books. And foreign publishers do pay again when the books are reissued. It's just another case of honor being not without profit, save in one's own country.

I have always been fascinated by the thought of all the great books that were obscure failures during their authors' lifetimes. *Moby Dick* saw only one edition in its day, a few thousand copies, many of which were destroyed in a fire in the publisher's warehouse two years after publication. I regard Philip Dick as a major novelist; but it seems likely he would have no contemporary audience at all—hell, he might not even have ever been published—were it not for the existence of science fiction.

Science fiction is a self-perpetuating side street of modern literature which many people, myself included, believe has produced more great writing than most of the main streets. Science fiction books can generally be identified as books about future situations, space travel, time travel, worlds that have in some way evolved from our own, thanks to scientific progress or whatever. Often, as in many of Phil's novels, the situation has developed; what we see is our own civilization in a more advanced state of decay.

SF is self-perpetuating in the sense that it is almost always written by people who read science fiction when they were adolescents, enjoyed it, became aware of it as a special genre apart from literature as a whole and consciously became "science fiction writers," selling to magazines and book publishers who specialize in the stuff, writing for people who think of themselves as "science fiction readers."

When Phil Dick started writing, he sent stories to

both science fiction magazines and straight magazines. Only the science fiction was published. After a while he gave up on selling short fiction to non-SF markets, but he kept trying desperately to gain acceptance as a mainstream novelist. In 1954, around the same time that he wrote *Solar Lottery*, he wrote a 650-page novel called *Voices from the Street*, inspired, as *Solar Lottery* was, by the works of the French realists—Stendhal, Flaubert. In the next six years, he wrote at least ten more mainstream novels, none of which have ever been published until now. (*Confessions of a Crap Artist*, a funny, horribly accurate portrait of a life in California in the Fifties, has recently been published in a limited edition by a small press. The novel was written in 1959. Phil's agent, and then Phil himself after the agent gave up, had sent the book to almost every publisher in the business, without result.)

The science fiction world has always welcomed Phil, and perhaps it has brought out the best in him. Acceptance as a science fiction writer, and only as a science fiction writer, has forced Phil to put as much effort into creating environments as he puts into creating characters; since the essence of a Phil Dick novel is the dynamic, always changing relationship between the characters and their environment, perhaps the form forced on him by circumstance actually unleashed his genius. His mainstream novels concern ordinary people in an ordinary world. Ordinary people in an extraordinary world make much more interesting reading.

And ordinary people whose extraordinary qualities are revealed under the crushing pressures of their extraordinary environments are best of all. In these years of future shock, Phil Dick's kind of science fiction may be the only "realistic" literature.

It's still a damned hard way to earn a living.

In 1962, after *The Man in the High Castle* was published in hardcover and greeted with loud hurrahs, Phil wrote a novel called *Martian Time-Slip* that was just as good if not better. It's a novel about schizophrenia and contemporary life, autistic children, drugged housewives, power-crazed plumbers (on Mars) and the fragility of the systems of shared assumptions that hold human society together. The writing is humorous, painful, awesome in its effect on both mind and heart; the themes of the book anticipate R.D. Laing and many other gurus of the Sixties and Seventies; the quality of the prose, paragraph by paragraph, is exquisite. There are few modern novels to match it. But for the author, the book was, in his own words, "a crucial defeat."

It was a defeat because of what happened after he finished writing it: "With *High Castle*, and *Martian Time-Slip*, I thought I had bridged the gap between the experimental mainstream novel and science fiction. Suddenly I'd found a way to do everything I wanted to do as a writer. I had in mind a whole series of books, a vision of a new kind of science fiction progressing from those two novels. Then *Time-Slip* was rejected by Putnam's and every other hardcover publisher we sent it to. "My vision collapsed. I was crushed. I had made a miscalculation somewhere, and I didn't know where. The evaluation I had made of myself, of the marketplace, went poof! I reverted to a more primitive concept of my writing. The books that might have followed *Time-Slip* were gone."

*Martian Time-Slip* was eventually published by Ballantine as an original paperback in 1964. It has been out of print for seven years.

Phil did better with a series of novels, including three of his best, *Ubik*, *Three Stigmata* and *Now Wait for Last Year*, that were published in hardcover by Doubleday and later sold for paperback reprint for amounts as high as \$10,000 (the author gets half).

But Phil's hardcover novels have attracted less interest from paperback houses in recent years—partly because the earlier ones didn't sell all that well and partly because there is so much Dick material available already that science fiction readers can't absorb it all. If Phil Dick is to achieve further commercial success, it will have to be by somehow reaching the audience that is waiting for him out beyond the confines of the science fiction market.





"His book was read chiefly as a sea tale which had eccentric elements in it. The grandeur of its conception and execution was overlooked."

—Carl Van Doren, discussing the reception given to *Moby Dick* during Melville's lifetime.

## VI.

### FIRST THEORY OF THE BREAK-IN:

In the summer of 1974, Phil dislocated his shoulder and went into the hospital in Fullerton, California, to have it operated on. In the hospital, he met a guy who said he was a member of the Special Forces and had worked with the CIA. Phil told this guy about how his house had been broken into in 1971, file cabinet blown up, canceled checks taken, etc.

The Special Forces man asked him, "Did it ever occur to you it was the government that did it?"

Later he asked, "What kind of business are you in?" Phil replied: "I'm a writer." "Okay, well what kind of things do you write?" "Fiction, novels, science fiction."

"Well, I'll tell you what I would say," said the Special Forces man. "I would say that your house was hit because you wrote something that was true and you didn't realize it. Considering it was your files that were hit, papers that were missing, the kind of explosive, the general condition of the house and the kind of business you're in, I would guess it was the government trying to find out what you knew about something you had written about fictionally."

"I'll tell you one thing, though," Phil's hospital companion continued, "if I'm right, you'll never be able to figure it out. Evidently they didn't find anything to verify that you *knew* what you wrote about was true. So you'll never be able to discern which of the pieces . . . have you written very much?"

"Oh yeah, a hell of a lot."

"Well, how're you going to know? They obviously didn't find anything; if they had, you'd have been disappearing fast. . . ."

(There was a famous incident during World War II in which something like this actually happened. The FBI visited John Campbell, editor of *Astounding Science Fiction*, to grill him about a story he had just published—"Deadline," by Cleve Cartmill—that described the workings of an atom bomb in far-too-accurate detail. Campbell and Cartmill managed to convince the G-men that the story was based strictly on intelligent speculation, rather than stolen intelligence, and eventually the matter was dropped.)

(Phil was able to suggest two specific pieces of writing that might have attracted the government's attention: a novel called *The Penultimate Truth*, written in 1963, which describes "the hideous U.S. nerve gas weapon" and names a real company that does in fact make the stuff—no secret, but suppose the plot of the novel resembled an actual Top Secret Army scenario . . . and a short story called "Faith of Our Fathers," which is about a high government bureaucrat who accidentally fails to get his daily ration of hallucinogens and as a result perceives the Leader as he really is.)

(Would such innocent fiction bring down a commando attack on a writer's house? After Watergate—the Fielding break-in took place just two months before

the hit on Phil's house—and the CIA revelations, who knows?)

### SECOND THEORY OF THE BREAK IN:

On several occasions Phil described to me in considerable detail the events immediately before and after the '71 break-in; by and large his descriptions were consistent with each other to an impressive degree. (It was the conclusions reached that were inconsistent.)

His fourth wife, Nancy, had left him in 1970. Phil fought off depression by surrounding himself with people—mostly teenagers. Kids came to the house in Santa Venetia (a salt flats subdevelopment in the north part of San Rafael) to hang out, to listen to the Grateful Dead and play their guitars through Phil's huge Fender bass amps. Ordinary kids found Phil too weird for their tastes and split. The oddballs hung around. There were junkies, knife fights, every kind of craziness. Phil says that during that 18-month period he drove 11 people to the local mental hospital (drove them in his car—I assume that's what he meant). It's not that Phil enjoys suffering, exactly; he just has terrific empathy for anyone who's about to fall off the planet.

Shortly before the break-in, Stephanie, a girl living at the house, told Phil, "This house is going to be hit, I can feel them out there." Phil then saw some guy running away from the back door at 3:00 a.m. He bought a gun (secondhand, to avoid the waiting period) and got Stephanie out of the house. On November 17th he went out to get groceries. His car broke down. Four hours later he finally got back home—and discovered the break-in.

"You know what my feeling was? 'Thank God!' Because I had been saying, like Stephanie, I had been saying to the police and to my friends and to myself: 'I know I have enemies, I know they are going to hit this house, I know they are going to blow it apart.' I'd bought a gun for that reason, to protect myself, and my friends said, 'He's bought the gun to kill himself; he's crazy.'"

Phil called the cops and they arrived about a half-hour later. The files had been blown open, some papers had been taken—correspondence and checks. Further exploration determined that the whole house had been searched—closets, dresser drawers—and every single canceled check in the house had been taken ("over 20 years' worth—that took quite a bit of time, finding them all"). The expensive stereo system was gone as was Phil's gun, but other valuables, such as amethyst jewelry that was in the file, were skipped altogether. The refrigerator door was left open.

PW: "Obviously there are aspects of this—the checks, the skipped valuables—that don't fit in with a simple robbery. Suppose it was somebody who was angry at you, having a feud with you in some way. . . .?"

PKD: "This is what I assumed it was, this is what my friends assumed. There were so many feuds going on in my circle that my friends who looked at it thought it was other friends of mine who had done it. This was of course a possibility, a grudge—and it had a grudge quality about it, just in that it was so disruptive. . . ."

### THIRD THEORY OF THE BREAK-IN:

PKD: "The first thing that made me think that there might be more to it, was when I took the list of what was stolen into the police department the next morning, as the officers had requested. The people at the police department refused the list, telling me there'd been no burglary the night before! The log book showed nothing. I told the girl at the desk that they were wrong and they should send somebody out to investigate again. Several days went by and nobody came out so I called in, and they told me again that there had been no robbery there."

"I told them they would have to send somebody out again, that it was not a robbery, it was more severe than a robbery, it was more in the nature of a search-and-seize operation."

"At that point two police inspectors (as opposed to the officers who were there before) instantly came out and one of them accused me of having done it myself. After looking about, he smiled and asked me why I'd done it. And then I got really sore. He said, 'Why did

you scatter the asbestos all around? Why did you do that?' And I just saw red. I said, 'I wasn't insured, why would I do a thing like this, you guys are really crazy, first you tell me you've got no record of a robbery. . . .'"

PW (later in the interview): "About the theory that you did it yourself. . . ."

PKD: "I couldn't have done it. But some people thought I did."

PW: "What was their theory, why. . . .?"

PKD: "To cover my tracks, to cover my real activities. Which were so sinister that it was worth doing, I had to cover them up. . . ."

PW: "Or to prove that your paranoia had been true all along?"

PKD: "I suppose so."

### FOURTH THEORY OF THE BREAK-IN:

PKD: "See, the case was officially cracked by the inspector who had said he was in charge. He used that expression, 'I cracked the case.'"

PW: "He decided that there really was a burglary and that somebody really did do it?"

PKD: "Yeah; it came from the house behind. He showed how he knew. All the important points of entry were in the rear. And there were boards missing in the fence. And I had noticed that the house behind was empty that night, which was unusual."

"There was a black family living in the house behind who I was friendly with. And the guy caught with the gun—they caught a guy with my gun, they said—was a black guy. He was arrested by another police agency. . . ."

PW: "Did they ask you to file charges or anything?"

PKD: "On the contrary. That's when the curtain of silence fell. They just asked me to tell them the serial number and length of the barrel. Later, I wrote and asked if the man had come to trial, and if so, what the results were, if any of the other stuff had been recovered. I never got an answer."

"After a week or so, the family moved back into the house behind me, and later I saw the guy who'd been arrested with the gun drive up and park there and talk to them. He did know them, he was in the area. And the black lady on the other side of the street identified his car to me as the car she'd seen parked in front of the house that night."

PW: "Was this neighborhood more black than white?"

PKD: "It was becoming black, and a lot of the blacks were militant, very militant. I found out they'd driven out the white people who had owned my house before me. At knife-point. And they were generally driving the whites out, to a certain extent—but they'd always treated me very well."

"But the theory that my house was hit by black terrorists trying to drive me out of the neighborhood—but that doesn't account for the most mysterious thing of all. This was at the time of the Angela Davis trial. These people, the militant blacks, were hated by the police in San Rafael. I cannot see why, if these people were involved, the police would show no interest in pursuing this burglary, would refuse even to answer repeated written questions as to whether there had been a trial."

"One guy I know suggested that the robbery was done by the authorities, hoping to find evidence that I had direct links with black militants. So I could be tried for being part of the Angela Davis Communist hippie black thing, you see? They were looking for incriminating evidence, letters from well-known radicals, canceled checks connecting me with militant groups."

"There were a lot of people coming and going from the house, and I was an intellectual, a writer, involved with all these street people. . . . The authorities could never really be sure what I was doing until they got into my house and got a look at my files."

"While I was in Canada the following winter, all my remaining business papers disappeared from that house, everything that had been overlooked before."

"And one more thing, a story another girl told me, how true it is I don't know: She said that the inspectors came to her and wanted to suborn [Cont. on 88]



[Cont. from 86] contempt of court. In recent years, however, a number of factors, including the government's notable lack of success in obtaining convictions from grand jury indictments of Movement people, the spirited resistance of the target community of activists and a number of unfavorable court decisions, like the prohibition on warrantless wiretaps, has created a lull in grand jury activity.

In the last few months, however, it has begun to look like this lull may be over. In addition to the Weatherfilm case, grand juries have been convened in Lexington, Kentucky, and New Haven, Connecticut, in connection with the Justice Department's pursuit of underground fugitives. Several people have gone to jail rather than talk. Jill Raymond, a feminist who refused to talk to a grand jury about women wanted by the FBI, has been in jail in Lexington since March of this year.

A new wrinkle in the grand jury game has appeared recently in New York City, where a state grand jury convened by Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau subpoenaed 12 people, including three lawyers, whose major offense seems to have been their presence in the courtroom when contraband material was allegedly found in the possession of the defendants, members of the Black Liberation Army. This case is distinguished by the dragnet subpoenaing of courtroom spectators (a challenge to the right to an open trial) and by the use of a popular local DA with a liberal reputation and a strong local constituency to do the dirty work of the FBI.

Michael Kennedy characterized the new grand jury strategy of the Ford Justice Department this way: "They are basically doing the same type of things, only they aren't doing them in as formalized a way as they did under Mardian. They are also more subtle. They don't want to go after high profile people such as Haskell, de Antonio and Lampson, who have a political base, not only ideologically, but also in terms of support people who will not collaborate, will make a big stink about it, embarrass the Justice Department and make more martyrs. They're really worried about that now. In the past when they were terribly arrogant, they were ready to take on just about anybody. Now the way they do it is to go to these small areas, such as Lexington and New Haven, and try to find alleged Weather support personnel without a base of political support, isolate them and try to get them to turn or throw them in jail for

contempt if they don't collaborate." In terms of this strategy, the subpoenas for de Antonio, Lampson and Wexler were clearly a mistake.

Although the use of grand juries against the Movement has been very destructive, Frank Donner, director of the ACLU Project on Political Surveillance, sees it as an expression of desperation. "The bureau is floundering about," he said. "They have a kind of American innocence. They don't have the kind of feel, for example, that the Czarist secret police had for the nihilists. There's no convergence between the areas in which the hunted live and sustain themselves and the areas of the police world. There are no FBI experts who were formerly Movement people and have any feel for the Movement. And, consequently, they're starting from scratch.

"It's pure guesswork," Donner continued. "What would you do? I suppose you could go to the wig shop and say, 'Who did you sell wigs to last week?'"

"That's where the grand jury becomes useful, because pur-

the other. They'd like nothing better than to take one of these middle-class people and really give it to them, in the hopes that that would force the whole support structure to crumble. They don't have the competence to catch the Weather Underground, so they've got to use this blunderbuss, the grand jury."

So far, the "support group" of the support group — the Hollywood stars who sprang to the filmmakers' defense—have shown no signs of wavering. Haskell Wexler was cautiously optimistic: "People are still sensitive enough to the way things are to know that if they come out to sign a public statement like this in our defense, the possibility exists of some kind of pressure being exerted against them. It did take a certain amount of courage. I don't think it was just because people learned the lessons of the Fifties. I think they learned the lessons of the younger people who showed that defiance of the establishment isn't always death to those who defy. Sometimes you can come out and you can win."

**'The FBI is floundering... so they use this blunderbuss, the grand jury.'**

suit of a fugitive is something quite complex, particularly when he lives in an alien habitat, has the kind of self-protective camouflage the Weather Underground has, who can make do with what they have or have some way of getting it. And have an overground support system.

"So, if you're the bureau, you attack the support network, or a group that is related in some way by ideology or sympathy or parenthood to your target, and just go after it blind. All of American intelligence is based on the principle that they got from the Pinkertons in the 19th century, of the outer ring and the inner ring. The technique is, you go from the aboveground to the underground, from the support to the fugitives.

"That's what's happening with Lampson, de Antonio and Wexler in Los Angeles. The government says, 'We're really not interested in those people's film on the Weather Underground, we're interested in apprehending the fugitives.' And that's true. But they'd like to damage the outer ring at the same time. One is a cover for

Hayden insisted he had never accepted the Weather analysis of the American political situation, and still doesn't. "The original theory of Weatherman," he argued, "was that we were in a situation of virtual fascism, because of Nixon's policies and because of popular opinion being adjusted to these policies. And therefore, the only recourse, in their view, was resistance against this closed system. That's proven, I think, to be a fear that did not unfold. The democratic process came through.

"We're not living under a police state, precisely because people can be reached by political methods, by organizing, by education and so on. So what's the sense of blowing up? If you're doing political work of a legal nature and you're identified with Weather politics, aren't you bringing grand jury and police heat down on you? The dilemma of those who politically support the Weather Underground is, how can they advocate both legal and illegal activity simultaneously without bringing enormous strains and contradictions to an organization?"

Hayden's optimism may be premature. It remains to be seen whether events of the last few years can be parlayed into any significant social change through electoral politics. Many of those who are identified with Weather politics would probably agree that the Weather analysis which predicted the imminence of fascism was incorrect. But they would argue that the breathing space we now enjoy was created by just those kinds of extra legal protests and resistance Hayden disparages. "We are up against the ruling class," they say in *Prairie Fire*, "and it makes no sense to ask them to reform themselves."

And what of the film now? Work was resumed after a brief interval pending assessment of the government's intentions. It is scheduled for a November 7th release.

We asked de Antonio what he anticipates. "Obviously, the main political aim is to get the film made," he replied. "What can the government do now but subpoena us again or come with a search warrant to get the film. We've gone through all this with our lawyers, and we're prepared for any eventuality."

With mock indignation, he went on: "They'd be creamed if they came and took it. If the government were to destroy the footage, we would be outraged! This film is private property. I mean, are we living under capitalism or not?"

## DICK

[Cont. from 50] testimony from her, asked her to perjure herself, to say I'd committed a crime, and if she didn't, they would stick her for the burglary."

### FIFTH THEORY OF THE BREAK-IN:

This theory has strange parallels with Phil's forthcoming novel, *A Scanner Darkly*. *Scanner* is a portrait of the drug subculture, probably the best that's ever been written, full of very black humor and painfully real human beings. These people are burning their brains out, without realizing it, on a fictional drug. In the opening chapter there's a guy taking 50 showers a day trying to wash the imaginary bugs off his body.

The novel is about a narc who is assigned to cover himself. In this slightly future situation, narcs wear electronic scanners when they give their reports, so their superiors, who could be Mob infiltrators, don't know their real identities. Thus a man can easily be assigned to report on his own activities. What happens to our narc is he's taking the drug (nicknamed "death") so as to blend in with everyone else, and it's rotting his brain. Eventually he no longer knows that the person he's reporting on is himself—and he gets more and more fascinated, more and more suspicious . . .

As for the theory: Phil heard, back at the time that our story takes place, that a military disorientation drug had been stolen from the Army and was being used in street dope under the name "mello jello." The drug incapacitated people without their realizing it; it bonded in their cellular tissue (says Phil); and the Army wanted, not to make a bust, but to get their compound back.

And there was a guy hanging around Phil's house, a truly sinister character, who told Phil he secretly represented a health organization trying to track down the source and spread of a spirochete back from Vietnam that induced rapid tertiary syphilis. The symptoms he described resembled the cumulative effects of "mello jello."

Phil had plenty of reason, he says, to wonder about this guy — for example, when he was very stoned he asked Phil, "Would you believe I ever looked like this?" and showed him a picture. The picture was on an Air Force ID card. And when he and Phil were stopped by the police one day, the cops took one look at the guy and said, "You're Army, aren't you?" "Yes," he said, and the cops split. [Cont. on 91]



[Cont. from 88]

Theory: The guy was a military intelligence agent looking for users of "mello jello." The house was hit by a branch of the military, trying to get information that would help them get their drugs back.

Looking over my notes, I realize I could go on and on. The local heroin rehab center assured Phil that the break-in was unmistakably the work of the Terra Linda Minutemen ("They try to make it look like it was left-wingers that did it, they score two things with one hit"). One lawyer was convinced—notice how it's never Phil who dreams up these theories?—that the house was hit by religious fanatics searching for occult documents that the late Bishop James Pike might have given Phil (in one of his books, Phil mentioned his friendship with Bishop Pike and thanked Pike for "a wealth of theological material" which Pike had made available to him).

But the main thing is not, "What could have happened?" The main thing is, "What did happen?" Isn't it? I'm not too sure anymore.

Saturday morning, three days after my arrival in Fullerton (during which time Phil and I left the house only once, to visit, at my request, the university library that houses the Philip K. Dick collection), I packed my tapes and my papers, thanked Tessa for her cooking, said goodbye to Phil and Christopher and got back into the "time machine," Golden Air West Flight 344 to Los Angeles.

I was on my way to Marin County, to the city of San Rafael, to search for a perspective of my own.

VII.

In San Rafael I went to the offices of the local daily newspaper, the *Independent-Journal*. It took me two hours to find the item I wanted: one line, from the summary of residential burglaries reported by Marin and Sonoma law enforcement agencies the previous week. "Santa Venetia. Wednesday. Personal possessions valued at \$600 taken November 18th from the home of Philip Kindred Dick on Hacienda Way."

There was one oddity about this item, perhaps meaningless—it was in the November 29th paper, whereas all the other November 18th burglaries were reported in the summary printed a week earlier, November 22nd. Could this be corroboration of Phil's story about the police saying it never happened? Maybe this report was added to the following week's list and back-dated, only after the police decided to list the break-in as a

real event after all. Or maybe it was a simple clerical error . . .

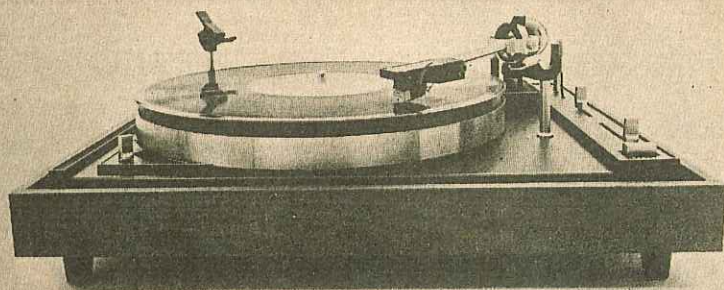
I talked with two people who were around the house before and after the break-in. Both had seen the file cabinet and the rest of the house after the hit; both described the scene to me in some detail without ever contradicting any significant aspect of what Phil had told me. They both knew Phil, of course, but didn't know each other. Loren Cavit had been by the house a number of times; she invited Phil to speak to her high school class after reading a story of his in a textbook. Tom Schmidt, also in his young 20s, had lived in Phil's house in 1970 and was a frequent visitor the following year. When I called Tom and explained what I was doing, he started to answer some of my questions over the phone, then stopped. "This may sound funny, but there were a lot of strange things going on around that house, and uh, this phone call would fit right in . . ." I suggested he call Phil and check me out. He did and the next day we talked over a cafeteria lunch at the Marin County Civic Center, scene of the courtroom shootout that failed to free George Jackson and made a temporary fugitive of Angela Davis.

Tom thought Phil was "living in a fantasy world," but "he's entitled to go overboard in areas—it's part of his survival." What he saw of the house after the break-in made him believe that whoever it was, "they were looking for more than just something to sell." And he added that there had been at least two burglaries of Phil's house, possibly inside jobs, certainly motivated only by the cash value of the objects taken, prior to the November 17th break-in.

Loren Cavit said the file cabinet looked like it had been pried, but also said it looked burnt and there were burn marks on the walls. And, "It must have been someone who knew when Phil would be out of the house, because he seldom was." I introduced her to a couple who also knew Phil, and all three agreed it was probably people who were in the house, around the scene, who did it.

The night after the break-in, Phil stayed at the house of another science fiction writer, Avram Davidson. Avram said Phil professed himself to be "absolutely baffled" at who could have done it; at the same time he seemed "intrinsically undisturbed, marveling at the efficiency of the job."

I talked with people about the break-in not so much in hopes of "cracking the case" (I make an unconvincing California detective—unable to drive a car—taking [Cont. on 93]



"It's a good turntable by itself, and as an added bonus it also stacks records."

*Creem*, MARCH 1975

In the old days, a serious audio enthusiast wouldn't touch anything but a manual turntable. He felt he had no choice.

That anything with automatic features simply didn't perform. But as *Sound* magazine says in its August 1975 issue:

"In recent years . . . the quality of the automatic turntable has risen dramatically. And the performance of the B.I.C. 960 certainly substantiates our belief that a serious music lover can attain extremely high quality in an automatic unit just as in the best manuals."



In a Sept. 1975 test report, *Radio & Electronics* agrees, noting that B.I.C.:

"might well be considered a top-performing manual turntable in its price category."

*Modern Hi-Fi and Music* (Aug./Sept. 1975) reports:

"wow and flutter of 0.03% at 33 $\frac{1}{3}$  rpm and rumble less than -65db; specifications which are more typical of a good manual than most automatics."

And because they're *not* imported (B.I.C. turntables are built entirely in the U.S.) the price of this performance comes as a pleasant surprise.

If you're serious enough about your system to spend \$100 or more on a turntable, a B.I.C. 940, 960, or 980 has what you want and more of it—all three are multiple-play manual turntables sharing the same quality features and high performance.

See if your high-fidelity dealer doesn't agree. He has literature with all the details. Or write to B.I.C. ("bee-eye-see") c/o British Industries Co., Westbury, N.Y. 11590.



[Cont. from 91] notes I can't read later) but in hopes of seeing the damn thing from a different viewpoint. What I found was that the break-in seemed no less mysterious, but a lot less exciting, when seen through eyes other than Phil's. And I realized that it didn't really matter to me who broke into Philip Dick's house three years ago, or why. What I was really asking was a literary question, a theological question: How real is Phil Dick's sense of reality, and to what extent does it intersect with other ordinary people's, with my own?

My last stop, after saying goodbye to Tom Schmidt, was the second floor of the Civic Center, below the cafeteria, above the courthouse: the Marin County Sheriff's Department. I asked at the front desk for the police report on this particular burglary. They wouldn't show it to me and sent me to someone else. Each person told me he couldn't or wouldn't give me approval to check out the records and shunted me to his superior when I persisted. Eventually a Captain Teague, the man in charge, agreed to help me out; he dug among the microfilm files himself for about ten minutes, then answered my questions while looking at the report under the magnifier. I couldn't see the report myself.

There was a metal cabinet, the police report said, that had been drilled or pried—the homeowner said it had been blown open but it looked to the reporting officer like it had been pried. A gun was taken. A stereo system was reported missing. The file indicated that there had been a previous burglary "not reported, but heard about indirectly." There was no information on further developments: "We didn't have any suspects." I asked about the guy supposedly arrested with the gun—Captain Teague said that would be a different case, not necessarily cross-referenced here.

That was all. I went downstairs and waited for my bus.

## VIII

"It's just like something from a Philip K. Dick novel."

—from a "Talk of the Town" piece in *The New Yorker*, August 5th, 1974, describing a World Football League game on Randall's Island

Where is reality? If what I found in Marin County is the sane and sober version—some stuff was taken, maybe people he knew did it—then I must say I prefer the crazy version, it's got a lot more life to it.

What is really going on? Phil Dick's reality intersects with

mine in a lot of places, that is what attracts me to his books. He doesn't see things in dull probabilities. He sees all the sparkling—and terrifying—possibilities, the complex living and breathing and changing reality that other authors shy away from.

Phil wrote a book called *Ubik* which is enjoying a sort of cult popularity in France among young Marxist intellectuals and other French tastemakers; it's a book about people who find reality regressing all around them, collapsing into its former self, so that 1985 automobiles become 1939 Willys-Knights and fresh packs of cigarettes become ancient and stale in an instant. Messages directed at these people start appearing everywhere in their environment, on the backs of matchbooks, in TV ads, on restroom walls—messages from a former boss who recently died. Only, he claims *they're* dead. They live in a comic projection of the present into the future (Joe Chip can't get out of his apartment because it takes a nickel to open the door, and he never has one) which unfortunately is deteriorating into a horrifying projection of the present into the past, the place where life used to be but is no more.

Phil wrote *Ubik* in 1966, but writing the screenplay—for the movie that will either never happen or else make Phil's name a household word—has pulled Phil back into *Ubik* reality, he says, even to the point that he started dreaming scenes from *Ubik*... six months before he even knew he was going to be writing the screenplay.

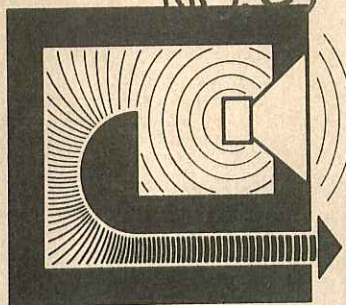
"Did you know that *Ubik* is true," he asked me in a letter, "and we're in a sort of cave, like Plato said, and they're showing us endless funky films? And now and then reality breaks through, from our friend who was here once and then died, but has turned back? Remind me to expound on this when you get here."

Another quote, out of context, from an unpublished collection of letters called *The Dark-Haired Girl*:

"Tessa and I started out with conflicting realities, found that when each of us really tested the other's, it collapsed. But now, instead of mutually destroying each other's realities, we are shaping a joint one between us. If two people dream the same dream it ceases to be an illusion; the basic test that distinguishes reality from hallucination is the *consensus gentium*, that one other or several others see it too.

"This is the *idios kosmos*, the private dream, contrasted to the shared dream of us all, the *koinos kosmos*. [Cont. on 94]

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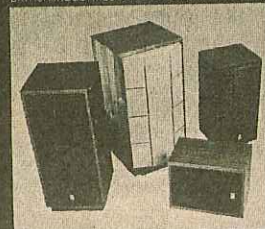
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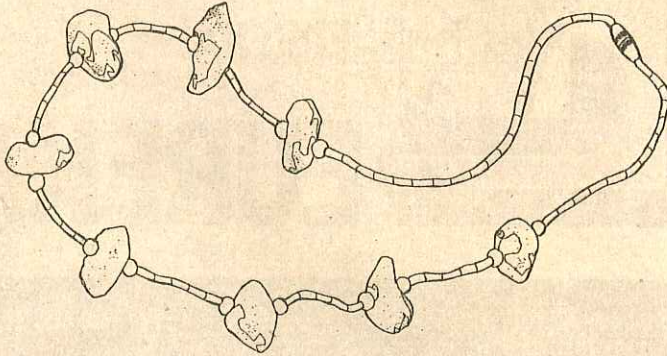
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[Cont. from 93] What is new in our time is that we are beginning to see the plastic, trembling quality of the *koinos kosmos*—which scares us, its insubstantiality—and the more-than-mere-vapor quality of the hallucination. Like SF, a third reality is formed halfway between.”

The books are the clue, and I keep mentioning different ones because no one Phil Dick book has the answer. Reading these books is an ongoing experience, a lifetime occupation—I got hooked back in 1967 and have averaged six Dick novels a year ever since. Some of the novels are better than others, but it's hard to rate them: Everyone I know has different favorites. Sometimes a Dick book that meant nothing to me the first time I read it will completely destroy me the second time.

I am destroyed in that my sense of reality has been heightened to the breaking point; it is a very pleasurable and rewarding experience. The man who writes the books is destroyed in a different way:

“What matters to me is the writing, the act of manufacturing the novel, because while I am doing it, at that particular moment, I am in the world I'm writing about. It is real to me, completely and utterly. Then, when I'm finished and have to stop, withdraw from that world forever—that destroys me. The men and women have ceased talking. They no longer move. I'm alone.”

While other authors kill off their characters, Phil struggles to keep his alive, usually in the face of horrible conditions that he, as author, has created. This is no mere chess game, however; Phil believes in the horrors, he sees them. The same conditions prevail in his own life and he struggles against them with a well-developed sense of humor that in no way belies the intensity of what he's experiencing. When he was in Vancouver, after he left San Rafael and before he moved to Fullerton, he tried to commit suicide. He swallowed 700 milligrams of potassium bromide—but he also wrote the phone number of a suicide center in huge letters on a piece of cardboard, just in case he might change his mind. “Fortunately the last number was a one and I could just barely dial it. . . .”

If two people dream the same dream, it ceases to be an illusion. Philip K. Dick's books and life are ultimately affirmative; they strengthen our sense of what is really real. They also feed our doubts about everything else.

In the next decade or so, Phil's multiplex view of the world—his ability to see and deal with five contradictory

realities at once—may become a prerequisite to sane survival. More than one person has pointed out that reality—for all of us—is becoming more like a Phil Dick novel all the time.

In Hollywood and New York, four different filmmakers are trying to make movies from Phil Dick novels (in addition to the two already mentioned, Jay Cox has optioned *Time Out of Joint*, and Herb Jaffe is working on *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*). In Europe there are rumors—no doubt premature—that Phil will be nominated for a Nobel Prize. And in Fullerton, Tessa is making coffee and Phil is waiting for the mail, anxiously, expectantly.

The world's most consistently brilliant science fiction writer is trying to figure out how he's going to make it through another day.

### BOOKS BY PHILIP K. DICK

- Solar Lottery*, 1955
- A Handful of Darkness* (short stories), 1955.
- The World Jones Made*, 1956.
- The Man Who Japed*, 1956.
- Eye in the Sky*, 1957.
- The Cosmic Puppets*, 1957.
- The Variable Man* (5 short novels), 1957.
- Time Out of Joint*, 1959.
- Dr. Futurity*, 1960.
- Vulcan's Hammer*, 1960.
- The Man in the High Castle*, 1962.
- The Game-Players of Titan*, 1963.
- Martian Time-Slip*, 1964.
- The Simulacra*, 1964.
- Clans of the Alphane Moon*, 1964.
- The Penultimate Truth*, 1964.
- The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, 1965.
- Dr. Bloodmoney, or How We Got Along after the Bomb*, 1965.
- Now Wait for Last Year*, 1966.
- The Crack in Space*, 1966.
- The Unteleported Man*, 1966.
- Counter-Clock World*, 1967.
- The Zap Gun*, 1967.
- The Ganymede Takeover* (with Ray Nelson), 1967.
- Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, 1968.
- The Preserving Machine* (short stories), 1969.
- Galactic Pot-Healer*, 1969.
- Ubik*, 1969.
- Our Friends from Frolix 8*, 1970.
- A Maze of Death*, 1971.
- We Can Build You*, 1972.
- The Book of Philip K. Dick* (short stories), 1973.
- Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*, 1974.
- Confessions of a Crap Artist*, 1975.
- A Scanner Darkly*, forthcoming.
- Deus Irae* (with Roger Zelazny), forthcoming.