

Science Fiction Book Club

Interview with Andrew M. Butler and David Hyde July 2018

Andrew M. Butler is a British academic who teaches film, media and cultural studies at Canterbury Christ Church University. His thesis paper for his PhD was titled "Ontology and ethics in the writings of Philip K. Dick." He has also published "The Pocket essential Philip K. Dick". He is a former editor of Vector, the Critical Journal of the British Science Fiction Association and was membership secretary of the Science Fiction Foundation. He is a former Arthur C. Clarke Award judge and is now a member of the Serendip Foundation which administers the award.

David Hyde, a.k.a. Lord Running Clam, joined the Philip K. Dick Society in 1985 and contributed to its newsletter. When the PKDS was discontinued, he created For Dickheads Only in 1993, a zine that was active until 1997. Since then, his activities include many contributions to and editorial work for the fanzine PKD OTAKU. His book, PINK BEAM: A Philip K. Dick Companion, is a detailed publication history of PKD's novels and short stories. In 2010, David organized the 21st century's first Philip K. Dick Festival in Black Hawk, Colorado. Recently, in partnership with Henri Wintz at Wide Books, he has published two full-color bibliographies of the novels and short stories of Philip K. Dick. In early 2019 Wide Books will publish the French bibliography. On the 35th anniversary of Phil's passing in 2017 David held a memorial celebration for PKD fans in Ft. Morgan, Colorado, the final resting place of Phil and his twin sister Jane.

Kevin Kuhn: Any idea which of PKD's works he considered his best? Not most successful, but his personal favorite?

John Grayshaw: And what book did he consider his worst?

Andrew M. Butler: I'll take these two together, because I think it'll be symptomatic of many of the answers – or of my interpretation of possible answers. PKD tends to be sincere to the person he is talking to or writing to, and might have a different opinion ten minutes later. So, in one interview he agrees that *Martian Time-Slip* is his best book and horribly neglected, yet in another he agreed with the interviewer that it was over rated. He goes back to discussing *Ubik* a lot in the Exegesis, *Time Out of Joint* and *Man in the High Castle*, too. I suspect if you dug through Gregg Rickman's *PKD In His Own Words* you'd find low opinions of *Vulcan's Hammer*, *Dr Futurity* and *Our Friends from Frolix 8*.

Lord RC: At various times Dick mentioned several books among his favorites. But the one that immediately popped to mind was *A SCANNER DARKLY*. In a 1973 letter he says of the novel, "I believe nothing in fiction matches it in the hell it portrays." And, for me, *A SCANNER DARKLY* was the second PKD novel I read after *EYE IN THE SKY* blew my mind. It was like, Wow! This is the truth, this is our lives in the 70s. Phil also said: "I believe that it is a masterpiece... the only one I will ever write." But I think he wrote others too.

I suppose his own worst book would be DR. FUTURITY. This 1959 novel was an expansion of his 1953 short story "Time Pawn". He never said he didn't like the story and, indeed, defended the expansion against Editor Ted Wollheim's complaints. My estimation is that he only agreed to expand "Time Pawn" because he needed the money. He'd just broken up with second wife, Kleo, and moved in with third wife, Anne. He wanted to write about his new life (and did so in CONFESSIONS OF A CRAP ARTIST) not rehash and old story in which he'd lost interest. It's likely, too, that Ace Books editor Wollheim only offered Dick the "Time Pawn" expansion to maintain publishing contact as Ace had not published anything by Dick since THE VARIABLE MAN collection in 1957.

Michael Rowe: There are a number of his stories focusing on the simulation of humanity (replicants, whatever the vats did in Ubik. other stuff...). Was this a fascination with the "human condition" or something more elementary like finding the building block of what it is to be human or conscious or sentient?...Not that those are uncorrelated...

Andrew M. Butler: In a speech that he may have given in 1978 he identifies two themes, what is human and what is real? It's actually hard to keep them separate – in fact my PhD thesis in 25 words or less what "Given that we can't tell what is real, how should we treat other people?" I'd argue that he keeps trying to find out what it is to be human, by contrasting it with what might not be considered human – so aliens, machines, computers, supernatural beings, the disabled, the dead and so on. In the end, the definition of being human comes down to having empathy, so a talking taxi cab or a Ganymedian slime mold may turn out to be human as well. At the same time – see the end of *Now Wait For Last Year* – caring for the other can have a dreadful cost.

Lord RC: I think that his interest in androids, as in, famously DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP? should be combined with other aspects of the question 'What is Human?' For example, in his first science fiction novel, SOLAR LOTTERY, Dick contrives a character – Keith Pellig – who is externally human but is really a robot – it merely *looks* human. And then there is the guy with two heads in THE CRACK IN SPACE, and in this same novel the 'Bibs' – the unwanted masses of humanity in deep-sleep awaiting consciousness in some other, newer, better world but who, in actuality, are the source of spare parts for the ruling geriatric society that obtains in THE CRACK IN SPACE. And many more examples can be found of Dick dicing and slicing the human being. But, to answer the question: I'd say he was more interested, to use your term, Michael, in the building blocks of what it is to be human. He was always looking for the essence of humanity; that *one thing* that defines us as human. To get close to that you have to cut away a lot of inessentials – and this work must be done. As for the 'human condition' Dick saw this politically.

Michael Rowe: What would PKD's definition of "hero/heroine" be? And/Or Villain, for that matter

Andrew M. Butler: In the 1978 speech he writes “The authentic human being is one of us who instinctively knows what he should not do, and, in addition, he will balk at doing it. He will refuse to do it, even if this brings down dread consequences to him and to those whom he loves. This, to me, is the ultimately heroic trait of ordinary people; they say no to the tyrant and they calmly take the consequences of this resistance. Their deeds may be small, and almost always unnoticed, unmarked by history. Their names are not remembered, nor did these authentic humans expect their names to be remembered. I see their authenticity in an odd way: not in their willingness to perform great heroic deeds but in their quiet refusals. In essence, they cannot be compelled to be what they are not.” So heroics are small deeds of good will – Mr Tagomi in *The Man in the High Castle* refuses to deport a character he has never met to the Nazis, and this is one indication of his heroism. It’s certainly not about storming the dark tower to bring down the evil empire; it’s more subtle heroism than yet.

I’d struggle to think of any heroines in his work, aside from Angel Archer in *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*; Juliana Frink in *The Man in the High Castle*. PKD has a problem with female characters – which is hardly unique to PKD or sf or male writers in general. He has his harpies and his feisty young women – the dark-haired girl in a lot of his books – but typically it doesn’t end well for the protagonist.

The villains tend to be father figures – heads of corporations, those with power over others – who are greedy and self-absorbed. Anyone who doesn’t like cats is likely to be a villain. He also had a healthy dislike of Nixon.

Lord RC: Dick’s heroes are ordinary people bumbling through life as best they can in the face of alien and pressing circumstances. It is their response to these conditions of reality that is important to Dick. How they respond is a measure of their humanity. If with empathy, honesty and perseverance then they are heroes, if with uncaring, manipulative and selfish motives then they are villains.

Eva Sable: Did PKD ever seek treatment for his (apparent) schizophrenia or was he either convinced of the reality of his experiences, or fearful of negative impact on his ability to write?

Andrew M. Butler: I suspect he was in and out of therapy from an early age – he was in therapy for two years 1946-47 and again around 1962. There’s a therapist referred to as Dr Stone in VALIS, whom I assume is based on a real person PKD saw when in rehab in Canada. Asking if he was convinced of the reality of his experiences assumes that we can pin them down to a single narrative. I’m not convinced there are aliens in Alpha Centauri, scientists in Leningrad experimenting with telepathy, ghosts of Elijah or Bishop James Pike, or the figure of Sophia. We know he’d taken LSD and huge doses of vitamins, and Gregg Rickman theorizes temporal lobe

epilepsy and childhood sexual abuse. He'd spent ten years staying up all night to write whilst taking amphetamines, his fourth marriage had broken up, and I think there was enough to make anyone crumble at the edges. I also suspect, like William Blake, he was playing as much with some of his bizarre ideas as sincerely believing them.

Lord RC: This is no simple question to answer. Dick was under psychiatric observation, care and treatment all his life long. His first school, at age 3 or 4, was a modern – for 1931 – experimental nursery in Berkley, California. There young Phil was subjected to many psychological tests and practices. His mother, projecting her own anxieties on the boy, worried constantly about every childhood malady and, as a modern thinker, believed in the behaviouristic psychology of the day. He suffered from asthma which affected his childhood activities – not too many football games and running around for the young Phil. He often missed school with the tacit approval of his mom. As he grew up, medicines, psychiatrists and strange ailments dogged his life. As for specific treatment for schizophrenia, I do not know offhand. After his pink beam experiences of 1974 schizophrenic interpretations faded because he believed in the truth of what had happened to him. I don't think, in the aftermath of 1974, that he even considered that these experiences negatively affected his writing. His VALIS trilogy is seen by many as proof that his writing was better than ever.

Gary Denton: I have never heard about PKD's pets. What do we know about them? I assume he had a dog based on one of his famous stories.

Andrew M. Butler: I think it was cats all the way. There might have been a dog in his childhood, but it's cats he mentions in letters.

Lord RC: PKD was more of a cat person than a dog person. He writes often of cats in his stories and his young-adult sf novel NICK AND THE GLIMMUNG has a cat as the hero. There are several photos of him and cats. I became particularly interested in one of his cats: 'Pinky' who died in 1974 in the middle of PKD's pink-beam experiences. I wondered if he and Tessa, his final wife, had named the cat Pinky because of the strange events of 1974. Or, perhaps he was named, *prior* to these events and somehow presaged them... I had it all figured out: Pinky was responsible for all the 2/3-1974 events, he had subliminally inclined Phil's dreams towards pink beams merely because of his name. All the speculation, the EXEGESIS, even VALIS itself was inspired by Pinky the cat. But then I had the opportunity to ask Tessa about this and she said it was nothing so complicated, the cat's real name was Pinkerton and Pinky was just a diminutive! This kind of blew my idea out of the water and I had to give up on my plans for a giant statue of Pinky the Cat overlooking Fullerton, California, like Cristo Redentor dominating downtown Rio.

For anyone interested in the life and death of Pinky in 1974, then THE SELECTED LETTERS OF PHILIP K. DICK: 1974 (Underwood-Miller) is fascinating reading, but good luck finding a copy of

this now rare and expensive volume. Here's what PKD wrote about Pinky in a 1974 letter to Claudia Bush: "I miss him. But from my dreams I know he's okay. And the evening he died, while I was in the bathroom, I felt a firm hand on my shoulder; I was sure Tessa had come into the room behind me, and I turned to ask her why. No one was there. It was the touch of my friend, on his departure; he had paused a moment to say goodbye."

In this farewell from his cat Phil captures what it is to be human.

Gary Denton: How did he feel about Hollywood's late discovery of his stories considering his long years in poverty trying to earn a living?

Andrew M. Butler: Ambivalent, I'd say, and most of the films were after his death. In late 1974 the French director Jean-Pierre Gorin took an option on *Ubik* and Dick wrote a screenplay, but nothing came of it, John Lennon wanted to film *Three Stigmata* and there were various options – what became *Screamers* and *Total Recall* were under option and he'd done a treatment for *Do Androids Dream* way back in 1968. Initially he was hostile to *Blade Runner* because he wasn't involved and he wrote a nasty article about Ridley Scott; but the studio flew him up to the set and showed him footage and he was much happier. At the same time he was offered a chunk of money to suppress the novel of *Do Androids Dream* – possibly to write a novelization – but he wanted to write *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer*. He could have done both. Apparently he phoned James Blaylock at three in the morning and complained he couldn't think what to do with the money. Blaylock asked him what he really wanted and he said a cheese sandwich.

Lord RC: In his letters he was mostly positive about attention from Hollywood and excited about the production of *BLADE RUNNER*. He was feted, to a minor degree, by the producers of this movie and got to see some early scenes which he thought were great. He had some differences with Robert Jaffe's original script, though, and met with Jaffe who promised a rewrite while taking notes. Dick noticed that he wasn't *really* taking notes, just pretending to, and Dick realized that "there was a gulf between me and Hollywood." Of course, the script problems with *BLADE RUNNER* are well-known. For more on the movie I'd suggest Paul M. Sammon's "*FUTURE NOIR: The Making of BLADE RUNNER*". As for the financial angle, he was pleased with any extra money, but in refusing to write a movie novelization (and suppress *DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?*) he lost an estimated several hundred thousand dollars in book sales. A tie-in edition of *DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?* was issued in mass market paperback, retitled *BLADE RUNNER*, and sold well. But, he could've made more. Towards the end of his life money didn't seem so important to Philip K. Dick. His book sales, reprints, foreign sales were bringing in a comfortable income.

Gary Denton: How did he feel about the reception of his science fiction and his non-science fiction stories?

Andrew M. Butler: Only one of his non-sf books came out in his life time – *Confessions of a Crap Artist* from Paul Williams’s small press and then a UK edition. I think they sank without trace. There’s clearly been enough of an interest to bring all but one of them out, in various editions, but they’ve mainly been ignored critically. We prefer him in his sf box – but *Time Out of Joint* and *The Man in the High Castle* would have been impossible without those novels and elements were recycled. He was mostly flattered, judging by letters, but he suspect the Science Fiction Studies crowd – Peter Fitting and Fredric Jameson – were trying to recruit him to the KGB or kidnap him and he wrote to the FBI about them. Again, it’s hard to judge the sincerity. There’s one letter where he writes “Thanks, you’ve help me understand my novel for the first time” which could be read as sarcastic.

Lord RC: This question goes to the heart of how Dick thought of himself as a writer. Until after he wrote THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE he wanted to write The Great American Novel and it would be a mainstream novel, following the modern traditions. But when his agent in 1963 – just after PKD won the Hugo Award for THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE – returned all outstanding mainstream manuscripts as unsaleable, he had to re-assess. With HIGH CASTLE he thought he’d found a new way of writing, a hybrid between mainstream and science fiction that was successful, the Hugo Award proved it. But his next novel, WE CAN BUILD YOU, fell flat. It was an awkward hybrid. MARTIAN TIME-SLIP was much better but it was set on Mars. It was science fiction. With mainstream rejection he put more energy into his science fiction. He was a professional writer, he wrote what he could sell. He didn’t give up on his dream of mainstream acclaim and, in the end, it came true. But he had to redefine ‘mainstream’ to do it.

Richard Whyte: Who do you think burglarized his house in 1971?

Andrew M. Butler: It’s impossible to say, but my money is on drug users looking for valuables, but they stole some odd things. But then my neighbors stole my garbage bins and stuck it in their bath. I find it unlikely to be the secret services or the Black Panthers.

Lord RC: I’ve read the speculation: the FBI did it, the Black Panthers, Hells Angels, the police, Philip K. Dick himself. I still do not know who did the burglary and cannot hazard a guess.

Richard Whyte: Dick's mother seems to have had quite a strong and interesting character, and his relationship with her as an only child seems to have been both close and complicated. Do you think this relationship had any explicit influence on his fiction?

Andrew M. Butler: He wasn't quite an only child – his twin Jane died at a few weeks. I suspect you can see Dorothy in the older wives – but I would say he probably put his third wife Anne into those characters as well. She introduced him to Marxism and radicalism via her connections in Berkeley.

Lord RC: The immediate answer to this is yes, Dick's mother, Dorothy, was a big influence on his writing. She was not always a positive force for him and, in some ways, he blamed his mom for the death of his twin baby sister, Jane, from malnourishment. The motif of twins can be found in much of his writing as can be cold and emotionally distant women.

Tony DeSimone: I believe that Harlan Ellison claimed that PKD wrote the story "faith of our fathers" under the influence of LSD. I know PKD didn't have a habit of using LSD, so I always wondered if there was any truth to this claim.

Andrew M. Butler: He took it a few times, and a vision makes it into *A Maze of Death*. Ellison claims "Faith" was written under the influence, but as I recall Dick doesn't quite make the claim in his afterword to the story. In later editions he denies it. I think it was Ballard who said you can't write anything under the influence of LSD. It might inspire imagery (see *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*)

Lord RC: No, this claim is untrue. PKD says that he only ever wrote one thing on LSD and it came out in Latin and a tiny bit in Sanskrit. Ellison's comments can be found in his anthology *DANGEROUS VISIONS* and PKD's reply is in the same volume following his story "Faith of Our Fathers".

Ed Newsom: This may be too subjective to be a meaningful question, but do you think PKD's life changed for the better after his 2-3-74 experiences, as he claimed?

Andrew M. Butler: Very hard to tell. He wrote three or four great novels, and a bonkers one, but he wrote fewer novels. The market was changing – Arthur C. Clarke and Isaac Asimov got big advances for their novels in the early 1970s, and Dick moved away from Ace. He was getting international attention. His marriage still broke down and was less prolific in publishing – his energy went into the Exegesis.

Lord RC: I'd say yes. He got more involved in the business side of his writing, badgering Scott Meredith, his agent, for back royalties owed him by Ace Books and hounding Doubleday for their low payments and lack of support, particularly in relation to *FLOW MY TEARS*, *THE POLICEMAN SAID*. Money started to come in. The *BLADE RUNNER* movie option started to gel. Dramaturges from France came to visit wanting to make a movie of *UBIK*, and he was invited to speak at conventions in the USA, Canada, England and France. He actually overcame his fear of going anywhere and attended, as Guest of Honor with Roger Zelazny, the 1977 Science Fiction Festival in Metz, France. This may have all happened without divine intervention, though, as his

due for a lifelong career as a writer. But, certainly, as evinced by his 1974 letters, he took a more aggressive business stance that brought in money.

SFBC Member: I would have loved a sequel to the Man in the High Castle. I have heard that he attempted to write a sequel. My question would be: what were the obstacles that he faced while attempting to write a sequel?

Andrew M. Butler: VALIS sort of comes out of an attempt to do a sequel, and he'd sketched a couple of chapters in 1964. He didn't really do sequels and I think the problem is where to take the plot next. As it stands, it's a richly patterned novel (although the chronology is broken) and I think it would be hard to extend as most of the elements seem to pan out. I think it would have had to go darker and deal with a holocaust and concentration camps – partly where he goes in Lies, Inc. I can't see him finding a way to bring the Third Reich down – it's the wrong kind of heroics.

Lord RC: I think that a major obstacle to Dick's writing a sequel to THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE was his reluctance to face the horror of the Nazi mindset: to do a good job of writing he would have to become deeply involved in something a normal mind would shy away from. If you look further into the matter of a proposed sequel you'll find this was a central concern to Dick.

Ed Newsom: The evenings PKD played host to Powers, Blaylock, Jeter and others make me want to have been there. Are there any tape recordings from that time?

Andrew M. Butler: There could well be – I have a vague memory the PKDS released some.

Lord RC: I know of no tapes of these meetings. It's possible there are some out there but one would think they would have surfaced by now.

John Grayshaw: PKD named his daughter Isolde after the Wagner opera. Was he really a big opera fan? I thought he liked rock music?

Andrew M. Butler: He's quoting lots of opera through the novel – Parsifal in VALIS and Bach at various points. See also *The Divine Invasions*. His biographies used to claim he broadcast a classical music program on a radio station, but I don't think there's any evidence for that as he was suffering from agoraphobia at the time and not leaving the house.

Lord RC: Phil was a lover of classical music and of rock music. He worked in a record store and his knowledge of the best recordings of various classical compositions was deep. I'm no aficionado of classical music myself, but I have the impression that he had a fine discrimination in this area. For sure, he had a good stereo system.

John Grayshaw: What is PKD's estate worth now?

Andrew M. Butler: It must be worth millions – Electric Shepherd Productions is his son and daughters and are selling rights at a lot of money, the Amazons series of *Man in the High Castle* and the anthology show must be bringing in a lot per episode. I can't say much of it captures the feel of the books – unlike say Cronenberg's *Videodrome* and *eXistenZ*.

Lord RC: I imagine it is a lot. Worldwide gross from the PKD-based movies alone is over \$3B. Book sales must be billions more. I've never thought much about it figuring that was his family's business.

John Grayshaw: Why do you think PKD is more popular now 36 years after his death than he ever was before?

Andrew M. Butler: He used to be a cult figure, occasionally popping up in mainstream venues. But there are so many people admitting him as an influence that it's easier to stumble across the name and there have been consistent attempts to keep him in print from the same publishers in the US and the UK – Vintage and Gollancz. Back in the day, it was really hard to track down some of the obscure novels, pre Internet. I don't even think I knew *Nick and the Glimmung* had been published when I found a copy. But in an era where we can talk to our fridge, where our mobile phones can be listening to us, where real news looks more outrageous than satire he seems to have captured the Zeitgeist – but that felt true in 1990s. Paranoia seems to be a rational reaction. I think there's a Gregg Rickman interview (I hope I'm not imagining this) where PKD reflects on seeing Nixon as that antichrist and then Reagan came along. Nixon almost seemed like light relief. Rereading that in the era of George W. Bush gave me pause for thought. Where Trump fits into that lineage I'd leave for you to decide – but Dick did imagine a Black president as I recall, in *The Crack in Space* (which may have been the first one I read).

Lord RC: Philip K. Dick is a Great Writer, capital letters, one of those few who pop up now and then. In English literature these names come to mind as Dick's true peers: Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dickens. Now these are all ancient English writers, they lived in England. In America who is on their level? Perhaps Poe, possibly Hunter S. Thompson. I can think of no others offhand and this early in the morning. To me it's a matter of progress. America, and all nations, abound with great writers. We can consider Twain, Steinbeck, Fitzgerald, Bellow, Kerouac, and many, many others. These writers capture an Age, explore the depths of human feeling, reveal angst of extraordinary power. But they did not really *change* anything. Chaucer saved the English language, Shakespeare made it flow, Dickens evoked the Truth and Philip K. Dick... did what? What did he do that I could even put him in this august company? Well, quite simply, he turned it all into science fiction. Often we hear people say, We live in Phildickian

times. It's a PKD Universe we live in now. Spoken (written) with a sort of vague dread of something unknown about to happen. Geniuses are always ahead of their time. As we move into the doldrums of the 21st century Philip K. Dick is coming into his own. Like in his novel THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH we are characters caught in a world that will have to consider Dick's life and writing an integral part of itself.

I could go on. But the real reason for Phil's success is he has great fans 😊

John Grayshaw: PKD said in a 1980 interview "I've lost interest in writing non-sf. Their time has passed. They're essentially fossils. When I'm dead and lying in the marble orchards, I won't stop my heirs from digging them up and publishing them." Has all of his non-sci-fi been released?

Andrew M. Butler: I think so, aside from *The Earthshaker* of which two chapters survive. There are a few synopses. Possibly fragments of abandoned novels.

Lord RC: With the exception of a few lost early manuscripts and a complete transcript of his EXEGESIS I'd say yes.

John Grayshaw: How did it work when Zelazny and Dick wrote together? Who did what?

Andrew M. Butler: As far as I know, they did it by exchanging letters over a period of about eight years. Dick started it, but claimed he didn't know about Christianity to finish it and asked the editor Ted White to collaborate (which is odd, because he dislike White's editing of "Abe Lincoln, Simulacrum," the magazine version of *We Can Build You* and sent Penguin White's picture to use as an author photo for *The Man in the High Castle*). Zelazny found the manuscript and offered to help. There are bits based on Dick short stories – "The Big C"?

Lord RC: It was complicated, it wasn't easy and it took forever to write DEUS IRAE. Briefly: Dick wrote an outline for DEUS IRAE, immediately got stuck, asked for guidance from Ted White who passed the problem to Roger Zelazny, who was willing to help out with the theology. But progress was sporadic for years and it was only with pressure from Doubleday that Zelazny did his part in 1975 and Dick added a final chapter and sent the book off to be published.

John Grayshaw: Did PKD really believe he talked to supernatural beings? And that he had memories from a past life? What other beliefs did he have that were "strange"?

Andrew M. Butler: On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays... I really don't know – Blake believed that he saw angels and spirits, and religious writers do. You could imagine him holding court with impressionable younger writers, spinning them a yarn... I think he was open to the possibility of the alien or the supernatural, but ten minutes later would come up with a rational explanation.

John Grayshaw: Andrew, why did you do your PhD on PKD?

Andrew M. Butler: I guess I didn't want to do a proper job yet. I wanted to do a PhD and Dick was the sf writer who impressed me most. I wanted to understand how he worked the way he did on me as a reader, but my initial idea was to explore his depiction of the underdog, children and addicts. There was a supervisor at Hull who could work with me – Rowlie Wymer – and somewhere along the way I stumbled on the work of Martin Buber on the I-Thou/I-It relation. Roger Luckhurst suggested, via Rowlie, that I look at Emmanuel Lévinas, indeed he might have said Buber, but Dick does cite Buber. For me Lévinas, a Jewish critic of Heidegger, was perfect for exploring what is human and what is real themes. In many ways it was career suicide – at the time English departments either had their sf expert and didn't need a second one or didn't have one and so wouldn't want one. Eventually I moved into cultural studies, media studies and film studies. These days sf PhDs have become professors. Not that I'm bitter...

John Grayshaw: What did PKD's wives say about living with him? Why did he get divorced so many times?

Andrew M. Butler: I think we know next to nothing of his first wife, he was very young, but three of the later ones have written biographies, which I either haven't read or read years ago. I get the feeling it was very binary – he was writing and wanted to be left alone, or not writing and wanting attention. Anne had a successful business and was out earning him, which I think troubled him. Nancy gets represented as a drug addict and supposedly left him for a Black Panther – she said she left him because of his drugs and that he was paranoid that he was mad, even though she felt he wasn't mad. One of the 1970s girlfriends suggests he was physically abusive, which is hard to take.

Lord RC: I've tried not to involve myself in the Dick family life. He had five wives, this only means that he was attracted to women and they to him.

John Grayshaw: What are some of your favorite PKD novels and/or stories and why?

Andrew M. Butler: Impossible to pick one. I have a soft spot for *Martian Time-Slip*, which I read early and took fifteen years to track down a copy of and *A Scanner Darkly* is the most moving. I recently reread *VALIS* and I was surprised how much it held up despite its heavy handed learning. I also found it a funnier book than I remember.

Lord RC: Aha! A softball question. My favorite PKD novels are: THE UNTELEPORTED MAN, A SCANNER DARKLY and EYE IN THE SKY. I love THE UNTELEPORTED MAN because its crazy and hilarious at the same time and challenges every bound of one's imagination. EYE IN THE SKY is the first PKD novel I read and it utterly blew my mind. With A SCANNER DARKLY I realized how truly awesome a writer was PKD. I felt as if he wrote this novel as I would've wrote it, he wrote

it for me. Which meant I didn't have to, and rather than write fiction myself I turned my literary endeavors to an appreciation of Philip K. Dick, a task I've been at, now, for thirty-odd years.

John Grayshaw: PKD said about science fiction, "And this creates a very strange feeling in a certain kind of person-a feeling that he is reading about reality, but he is disjointed from it only in temporal terms. It's like all science fiction occurs in alternate future universes, so it could actually happen someday." Did PKD believe that he was creating realities in his writing?

Andrew M. Butler: It sounds a little like quantum theory? Multiverse stuff. The best sf does make you look at the real world in a different way. I know myself that I've had the experience of looking for a light switch that wasn't there but I swear was once – and last year I was convinced a whole building had been moved in Winchester.

Lord RC: PKD is famously quoted as saying something like "He who controls the meaning of words controls the meaning of reality." I don't think he was creating realities, except in a conventional sf sense, but revealing aspects of one reality. When you read a Dick story and are caught up in the action you have a sense of discovery, or *almost* discovery because Phil, as a writer, never tells you anything until the end of the story. In some stories he doesn't end the sensation and you're left hanging, wanting to read the next chapter, the next book.

John Grayshaw: PKD said, "you can't write anything when you're on acid. I did one page once while on an acid trip, but it was in Latin. Whole damn thing was in Latin and a little tiny bit in Sanskrit, and there's not much market for that." Does this page survive in some sort of archives?

Andrew M. Butler: I don't know. It might have been in the Fullerton papers; I've lost track of where they ended up. I'm not aware of it being reprinted.

Lord RC: I think not

John Grayshaw: PKD said when he was in rehab they found out he was a writer they put him do work doing PR work for them. Is that true?

Andrew M. Butler: He claims this in an interview, but he was only there for three weeks as far as I can see. It didn't give him much time.

Lord RC: I think he wrote words to that affect somewhere but don't know where. This would most likely be when he was in Canada

John Grayshaw: PKD was talking about his Vancouver speech and said, "I tried to define the real person, because there are people among us who are biologically human, but who are androids in the metaphoric sense...human beings are becoming dehumanized. As I wrote the

speech I sensed in it the need for people who were human to reinforce other people's humanness. And because of this it would be necessary to rebel against an inhuman or android society." Would PKD say we are becoming more inhuman in the last 40 years?

Andrew M. Butler: We've gone both ways – if you think of the immense amount of money raised by charity for aid and so forth, air miles being donated to help refugees, we care about more people. But there's also the increasing resentment of others getting something for nothing, of pulling up drawbridges. It feels like the biggest political polarization since Vietnam. A lot of people would say we're more alienated because of social media, but it means I can have friends all over the world.

Lord RC: The evidence of our increasing inhumanity abounds. I'm sure PKD would've noticed it and likely wrote about it in his stories. But the thing is, his writing, being science fiction, is, in a way, outside of time, what he wrote about the human condition in his lifetime is applicable now. The more things change, the more they stay the same, the Empire never ended.

John Grayshaw: Why do you think PKD's books were selling better in foreign countries than in the US in his lifetime?

Andrew M. Butler: In Europe we'd had a tradition of so-called mainstream writers producing the odd sf or utopian fiction, Wells and Verne, most obviously, but also Forster and Conrad and Huxley. Victor Gollancz as a left wing publisher was very open to utopian and dystopian fiction, with the fiction magazine market dying out by the Second World War. It's easier to take something seriously in a hardback than a magazine on cheap paper with a garish cover. We had plenty of garish paperbacks, mind. The New Wave of sf in Britain, which became more interested in pop art than mad scientists, championed his work too. Quatermass, on TV, had been a huge hit. In France there was an embrace of the "tacky" – I think in a reaction to the privations of the Nazi occupation and a wish to take the pulp seriously by younger readers in reaction against staid forebears. In the US, Bradbury and Vonnegut apart, I think sf stayed in pulp magazines for longer, so it was harder to take seriously. But there were academics in the US from the mid-1960s writing about sf.

Lord RC: I'm not sure that that is true. But his early foreign sales were spurred by the international science fiction community: the 50s, 60s and 70s were a Golden Age for science fiction. The best and most sf was coming out of the USA. Much of it was translated into many languages. The translations were good. Quality will show. Later, of course, fans worldwide, by their PKD-inspired activities, increased Dick's popularity.

John Grayshaw: Did PKD really only pretend to be writing the Man in the High Castle at first? When did it change to really writing? Why had PKD given up writing at this time?

Andrew M. Butler: He wanted to be a serious novelist, but he was getting low advances from publishers and his mainstream novels had all been rejected. With a family to look after, and a wife bringing in more money, it seems like he took an economic decision. But he didn't like the work, so tried to use the excuse of writing a book as a way out. In pretending to write a book, he then started writing it. Or that's what he told Paul Williams. I think he was addicted to writing.

Lord RC: Basically, 1960 was the end of the line for PKD's mainstream novels. Despite his efforts with *CONFESSIONS OF A CRAP ARTIST* (1959), *THE MAN WHOSE TEETH WERE ALL EXACTLY ALIKE* (1960) and *HUMPTY DUMPTY IN OAKLAND* (1960), the only novels he sold were expansions: *Dr FUTURITY* and *VULCAN'S HAMMER*. He almost gave up writing and, at a loss in 1961, he started to help Anne with her jewelry business. But he was unhappy doing this and told Anne he was working on a book and skulked off to a little cabin they had up the road. His 'hovel' as he called it. Here, while playing with the *I Ching* and reading about Zen Buddhism, one day, the name "Mr. Tagomi" came to him and he wrote it down – and immediately started writing *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*. He's written about this on a few occasions and in slightly different ways. He does say that he started *HIGH CASTLE* to get out of polishing Anne's jewelry.

John Grayshaw: PKD said he wrote about people he had met that deserved to be immortalized. Who were some of the people he wrote about?

Andrew M. Butler: His wives, sister and mother, certainly, but also the drug users, hippies and so forth he met around his houses and in rehab. These people were often seen as the dregs of society, but he saw them as noble.

Lord RC: The only ones I can think of are the people in *A SCANNER DARKLY*

John Grayshaw: PKD talked about how he didn't control his characters, how they wrote their own stories and how he didn't want to manipulate them or put his ideas in their mouths. Was PKD's writing a form of method acting? In other words, he became his characters?

Andrew M. Butler: Funnily enough, he speaks about method acting when he was in rehab, pretending to be a junkie. You could argue that his unconscious is being given free rein. Certainly in all the books of the 1970s there are characters who are PKD.

Lord RC: I dunno. As a writer PKD can be observed in many ways. Sometimes I see his characters all as aspects of himself, at other times they are science fiction stock characters that he brings to life in unique fashion. I wouldn't say he was a method actor writer as this implies the assumption of roles but doesn't encompass the effortless switching between multiple roles - all roles – in a narrative, which is what writers do without thinking about it. For his *UBIK* screenplay, he tells Paul Williams of *Rolling Stone* that he sees his characters as tiny figures on a

screen. But this, I suppose, was Phil's idea of how to write a screenplay not something that would be practical for a fast writer like him.

John Grayshaw: Was PKD ever successful in his lifetime? Did he ever have enough money to live comfortably?

Andrew M. Butler: Only during the last year of his life, I suspect. He was getting about \$1,500 a novel, producing six novels a year. In the 1950s he claimed to be eating horsemeat and in the 1960s he was on food stamps. But presumably drugs cost money too as did therapy.

Lord RC: He was comfortable for the last few years of his life. He'd bought his apartment when it turned condo and was able to donate money to various charitable causes – surely a mark of financial unconcern.

John Grayshaw: PKD said that a lot of the women in his novels were the same woman. Who were the women based on? Was she a real woman or just PKD's ideal woman?

Andrew M. Butler: Possibly both at once. There are his imagined versions of Jane, his twin, versions of his mother and his wives. There's two main types, a younger, dark haired girl, with big breasts, a sparky, seductive figure – we'd perhaps call it a Manic Pixie Dream Girl these days – and the older, resentful woman, a harpy or bitch figure. A few of his female characters transcend this, but he doesn't have a good record – nor do many male writers of the period. Sometimes it's payback, sometimes it's fantasy.

Lord RC: She was the dark-haired girl. The feminine ideal for PKD. Love at first sight. Five wives. Kinda like a PKD haiku...

John Grayshaw: Other than writing, what did PKD enjoy doing? What were his hobbies?

Andrew M. Butler: Drinking, snuff, shooting the breeze, listening to rock and classical music. I don't get the feeling he did much else.

Lord RC: As a youth he had a stamp collection and I think he kept it up somewhat in later years. He collected science fiction magazines and *Unknown* and *Weird Tales*. Listening to music on impressive 1970s-style stereo systems must've been one of his joys as his knowledge of classical music was deep and he loved the acid rock of the time.

John Grayshaw: What is PKD's legacy? Will PKD be remembered in another 50 years? And why?

Andrew M. Butler: He showed us that fantasy can be used to explore philosophical ideas, and doesn't have to just be power fantasies – although he has his moments of those. He's inspired other novelists, musicians, artists, poets and filmmakers, and I can't see that stopping. We

could do with a film that gets him rather than a wrong man plot illuminated by special effects, but big budgets are against that. I'd like to see his non-sf embraced more, but there's much resistance.

Lord RC: In 50 years I see Dick's influence being greater than ever. Our world is not moving away from a Phildickian future but deeper into it. His legacy will always be his stories which are timeless, speaking to the essence of humanity as they do. Philip K. Dick will continue to inspire a legion of fans to creative efforts which will, in turn, shape the future.