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## **Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said** Philip K. Dick

Jason Tavener woke up one morning to find himself completely unknown. The night before he had been the top-rated television star with millions of devoted watchers. The next day he was just an unidentified walking object, whose face nobody recognised, of whom no one had heard, and without the I.D. papers required in that near future.

When he finally found a man who would agree to counterfeiting such cards for him, that man turned out to be a police informer. And then Taverner found out not only what it was like to be a nobody but also to be hunted by the whole apparatus of society.

It was obvious that in some way Taverner had become the pea in in some sort of cosmic shell game - but how? And why?

Philip K. Dick takes the reader on a walking tour of solipsism's scariest margin in his latest novel about the age we are already half into.

## **Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said Details**

Date : Published November 8th 2001 by Gollancz (first published 1974)

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# From Reader Review Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said for online ebook

## Richard says

This is a somewhat typical Philip K. Dick novel, albeit not quite as good as I expected.

PDK is mostly famous for the movies that have been made from his novels. His books are a bit obscure, even among many Science Fiction fans, and for a good reason: he's not a very good storyteller.

Now, scifi fans are frequently a tolerant bunch. Among them are fans that will tolerate abysmal writing because the author nails the science (typically physics). Others couldn't care less about hard science, but want to see interesting projections of the technology our grandchildren will get to play with (or be oppressed by).

But PDK doesn't do well at the visionary technology thing: this book was written in 1974, and he had folks who were fifty years old and had been genetically bred to be superior humans; he had nuclear weapons the size of sesame seeds that could be secretly planted on people and detonated remotely to assassinate them; he had rocket cars and interplanetary travel... but he also was still using phonograph records because the story was set in 1988!

He doesn't do stories too well, either. This one had some pretty glaring holes in the plot once you spend a few minutes pondering everything.

And even with all that, it simply wasn't well thought out. His protagonist is desperately trying to solve the puzzle his life has become, and it turns out a character not even introduced until two-thirds into the book is responsible. Had PDK gone to a writing workshop or handed his story to a writing coach, they probably would have told him he was crazy.

But, frankly, those that enjoy him will overlook all of this, because one doesn't read PDK for plot coherence, visionary futurism or character development. He has this quirk in his brain that lets him spin out freakishly interesting puzzles of an existential nature.

The movie folks love him because they can grab this central nugget of bizarreness, "re-imagine" his characters, completely re-write the dialog, and get — hopefully — a conceptually fascinating film. A film version of *Flow My Tears* is in development; see [here](#). Long after his death, PDK remains very popular in Hollywood, with over seven films in development or production.

But he simply doesn't tell his stories well, so I doubt I'd ever give him five stars. And *Flow My Tears* suffers because the protagonist's existential crisis is philosophically less interesting than I've come to expect. Sure, there's a crisis, but it isn't philosophical or psychological, and only existential in a superficial manner.

This isn't a good book for PDK beginners. For anyone curious, watch one of the better movies (Blade Runner, from *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, or *Minority Report*, from the short story *The Minority Report*), then read the matching story and consider the differences and similarities and decide whether you can enjoy the unpolished version.

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## Glenn Russell says

Flow My Tears, the

“Reality denied comes back to haunt.”

? Philip K. Dick, *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said*

*Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* - Written in 1974 and set in the near future (at that time) of 1988, Philip K. Dick's haunting dystopian novel addresses a range of existential, social and political themes: identity and loss of identity, celebrity and ordinariness, subjective perceptions and objective realities, state sponsored mind control and drug induced mind bending, genetic engineering and emotional networking. Never a dull moment as we enter a world where every action counts and all decisions are a matter of life and death.

Chapter One provides the framework: It's Tuesday night at eight o'clock. Along with thirty million other viewers, we're tuned into *The Jason Taverner Show*, featuring none other than Jason Taverner, a David Letterman-type TV host and pop singer. And Jason loves everything about his role as singer and entertainer, most especially his fans: "To him they were the lifeblood of his public existence. And to him his public existence, his role as worldwide entertainer, was existence itself, period."

Jason is the perfect choice as main character for this PKD novel exploring individuality since, for Jason, personal identity equals public identity. He's a celebrity; he's his own best fan; he's in love with himself and envisions all of life revolving around his status as celebrity - to be Jason Taverner, to be a star, the ultimate in being alive.

The fact that Jason is special is no accident. Leading pundits and politicians in Washington D.C. decided forty-five years ago to experiment with genetic engineering, producing a batch of "sixes," that is, individuals with tremendous magnetism, physical beauty, charm and especially CHARISMA as well as superior memory and concentration. Jason is a product of such eugenics; he's a forty-two year old six. He is so exceptional, so extraordinary, so superior, Jason thinks the way things are will never change - he will be forever young, charismatic and beautiful. Forever Jason Taverner.

But then it happens: after suffering a violent attack and subsequent emergency surgery, Jason wakes up in a dilapidated L.A. hotel room. Jason quickly discovers, other than wearing his custom-tailored silk suit and carrying a huge wad of money in his pocket, he is completely stripped of his identity along with his personal identification cards. Nobody but nobody, not even his agent, his lawyer or his girlfriend knows a Jason Taverner. Oh, no! He's in a nasty parallel universe, a man without any way or means of identifying himself.

From this point forward, we follow Jason's odyssey through seedy and posh L.A. in an attempt to reclaim even a scrap of his past as he is forced to deal with a parade of quirky people, oddball thingamajigs, murky quagmires and impossible dilemmas. To list several:

Pols and Nats – Short for Police and National Guard. There are pol and nat road blocks and check points at nearly every traffic intersection. And these fully armed folks can be mighty cruel: after he breaks into an apartment to harass a man he labels a sexual pervert, one Jesus-freak pol shares his Bible-inspired wisdom: "All flesh is like grass. Like low-grade roachweed most likely. Unto us a child is born, unto us a hit is given. The crooked shall be made straight and the straight loaded." Fundamentalism linked to drugs provides

a powerful kick.

Forced Labor Camps – Many are the men and women, including thousands of students, sent off to forced labor camps. One prime reason – no legitimate ID. Jason needs some good quality false ID fast or he will be picked up and sent off to one such camp as far away as the Moon or Mars to spend his waking hours breaking rocks with a pickaxe. What a plight for Jason Taverner, the rich, famous celebrity.

Subsurface Students – In this tightly controlled police state, pols and nats surround college campuses to keep students below ground where they belong. Also, to prevent those potential troublemakers from “creeping across to society like so many black rats swarming out of a leaky ship.” The late 60s - the heyday of campus unrest in the U.S; not to be repeated in this police state.

Eddie the hotel clerk – In his new parallel world, the first person Jason meets is Eddie, who is not only a clerk and accomplished mind reader, but also, as Jason eventually learns, a police fink. PKD had his own personal issues with paranoia and he gives Jason many reasons to become paranoid. As they say, even paranoids have enemies.

Kathy –A teenage ID forger who tells Jason the pols and nats are looking at him as part of a conspiracy. Even more reason for paranoia. Jason feels the absurdity of being bound by such an ordinary person since, after all, he is a six, someone truly special.

Phone-Grid Transex Network – PKD foresees internet sex. But in his futuristic world the sex network is many times more powerful and potentially destructive. If you overdo it, your body will turn flaccid and you will burn out your brains. The pols don't like this phone sex network; they actually shot its former sponsors – Bill and Carol and Fred and Jill. A police state that doesn't mess around.

Sterilization Bill – Government sponsored sterilization of blacks. Recall PKD wrote this novel when the 1968 race riots were fresh in his memory. In this futuristic world, it is only a matter of time, sooner rather than later, when there will be no more black in the US. Race problems solved.

Cheerful Charlie – Computerized game-person who gives advice. Not that far removed from kids continually playing and interacting with computer games on their handheld devices.

Ruth Ray – Attractive, sensitive lady who shares her philosophy of love and grief with Jason. “Grief is the final outcome of love because it is love lost.” In his smugness of being a six, Jason has difficulty relating with such sentiment since the only real love he appreciates and understands is self-love. Ah, self-love, the love that never dies, especially if one is a celebrity. And most especially if one is Jason Taverner.

Hail to the Chief - The ultimate dystopian novel: One apartment has a wall-to-wall carpet depicting Richard M. Nixon's final ascent into heaven amid joyous singing above and wails of misery below. The wails of misery here on earth every PKD fan can picture with ease.

Drugs, Drugs, Drugs, - Who in this futuristic country could ever live a day without drugs? Alys Buckman, sister of Police General Felix Buckman, treats Jason to some mescaline. There's also the mysterious new experimental drug, KR-3, with its mind-warping effects, giving new, expanded meaning to having a bad trip.

Microtransmitters – Nearly invisible dots placed on pol and nat suspects to track their every movement. PKD wrote *Flow My Tears* during the time of Watergate. The author also anticipates the many advanced technological forms of surveillance.

Police General Felix Buckman fuming over two of his rivals among the police higher-ups: "They had, five years ago, slaughtered over ten thousand students at the Stanford Campus, a final bloody – and needless – atrocity of that atrocity of atrocities, the Second Civil War." No question, *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* depicts a nightmarish futuristic United States police state.

American author Philip K. Dick (1928 - 1982)

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## amapola says

Un distopico con le cadenze del thriller: in una società futura, repressiva e disumana, un uomo famosissimo, che conduce uno spettacolo televisivo da trenta milioni di telespettatori, una mattina si sveglia e scopre di non essere più nessuno; lui non esiste, è stato cancellato dalla memoria del pianeta. Inizia così la sua disperata corsa in cerca di una salvezza che appare impossibile.

Detta così sembra la solita storia del nostro eroe contro tutti. Ma questo è Philip Dick, non uno scrittore qualsiasi. La sua fantasiosa visionarietà si sposa con le domande più profonde di ogni uomo: chi sono io e di che cosa è fatta la realtà?

Philip Dick scrive male, è vero, e forse una storia del genere l'avrebbe raccontata meglio qualcun altro, ma certamente non con la stessa potenza e profondità, non con la stessa sensibilità e lucidità. L'imperfezione di Philip Dick, ancora una volta, mi ha coinvolta e commossa. Mi ci sono specchiata.

In epigrafe questi versi, tratti da una composizione di John Dowland del 1596:

*Scorrete mie lacrime, dalla vostra fonte sgorgate!*

*Per sempre esiliato, lasciatemi gemere;*

*dove il nero uccello della notte*

*la triste infamia di lei canta,*

*lì lasciatemi vivere sconsolato.*

<https://youtu.be/Y9HKl8H0PWg>

Voi chiamatela pure solo fantascienza, se volete. Io non ci sto.

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## Marvin says

Phillip K. Dick is a philosopher in a pulp writer's body. His books reads like pulp fiction in style but are loaded with philosophical inquires regarding reality and perception. Sometimes so much so that the text can't keep up with it. *Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said* is one example. The plot centers around a celebrity who finds himself no longer remembered. To be more precise, he no longer exists. All his identity is wiped out and no one knows him not even his friends. This is actually one of his more straight forward stories but all the gimmicks of a Dick novel are there; the mind altering drugs, people removed from a safe environment into the unknown, police states and malevolent authorities. Some of this may seem well worn to the casual reader However it is important to realize no one was writing stories like this before Phillip K Dick. *Flow My Tears* is a good read but I would recommend a couple others before this one, like *Man in The High Castle*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* or *Martian Timeslip*. But whatever you choose, anyone into science fiction or even 20th century literature, should read at least one Dick novel.

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## Erik says

All who have tasted the bitter juice of madness know that reality is ultimately a fragile creature. It is a pale insect, a lightning gnat in a vitreous lantern, that each of us brandishes at the dark unknown. Our tepid light pushes back this tenebrous sea only just enough to reveal a shadowy landscape, a hazy glimpse of truth. The worst of us see this and declare all is known. The best of us admit doubt. Either way, what we think we know is little more than an Escherian architecture of heuristic and bias, a cognitive illusion necessitated by the limitations of our brains.

This difficulty is in turn compounded by a constant bombardment of alternative realities. Our little insect in its little jar is besieged. Politicians tell us comforting bedtime stories in which, e.g., vast quantities of poisonous gas can be emptied in the atmosphere without consequence. Armed with both pen and sword, religious adherents slaughter each other wholesale in their struggle for mythological dominance. Advertising execs peddle glamorous fairy tales, as much selling a way of life as a product in their pursuit of our coin.

Nevertheless, the mutability and instability of reality isn't necessarily a bad thing. Truth is, I happen to \*like\* the notion that every person's reality is niche and that the universe chose not to shackle us with any monolithic inescapable meaning. I happen to think the phrase, "I don't know" is sexy.

I mean, really, we could choose to summarize every relationship as an intersection of constructively or destructively interfering realities. Each person yearns to be perceived in a certain way, while others try to maintain the integrity of their own realities. I would go so far as to say that you could measure love by the degree to which you subordinate your reality to another person's. To love completely is to surrender completely, to actually take up another's lantern in emphatic union. Put another way, love has no room for ego.

But what happens when the surrendering of reality isn't voluntary? What happens when our firebug flickers, sickens, or is extinguished by insidious external or internal forces?

That was the question that galvanized Philip K. Dick to write. In his 1978 essay/speech *How To Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later*, he wrote, "The two basic topics which fascinate me are 'What is reality?' and 'What constitutes the authentic human being?' Over the twenty-seven years in which I have published novels and stories I have investigated these two interrelated topics over and over again. I consider them important topics. What are we? What is it which surrounds us, that we call the not-me, or the empirical or phenomenal world?"

Flow My Tears is no exception. It tells the story of mega-famous celebrity singer and TV host Jason Taverner who one day wakes up in a seedy hotel and discovers that no one knows who he is. Since he lives in a police-state (populated in usual PKD fashion with empaths, flying cars, and experimental drugs), his non-identity puts him in danger of being rounded up and sent to a forced labor camp. In short, the highest falls to the lowest – and he doesn't even know why. Thus begins his and the reader's quest to discover how the subversion of his reality came about.

Along the way we meet such characters as Kathy, the probably insane police informant / counterfeiter; the titular police general Felix who is in love with his wild, sexual, drug-abusing sister; and a fearful middle-aged spinster, maker of beautiful retail pottery that, as the final words of the book's epilogue tells us, is

probably loved.

In some ways, *Flow My Tears* is one of PKD's most human books. Entire scenes are dedicated not to any plot movement but to two characters – often strangers – sharing their burdens with each other. I particularly appreciated a conversation Jason has with a woman on the nature of grief, which the woman claims is a good emotion. She says:

“Grief causes you to leave yourself. You step outside your narrow little pelt. And you can't feel grief unless you've had love before it—grief is the final outcome of love, because it's love lost. It's the cycle of love completed: to love, to lose, to feel grief, to leave, and then to love again. Grief is the awareness that you will have to be alone, and there is nothing beyond that because being alone is the ultimate final destiny of each individual living creature. That's what death is, the great loneliness.”

Yet, despite this humanity, *Flow My Tears* fails in much the same way that Philip K. Dick ultimately failed in his quest to explore reality. While PKD's eminently readable style provides real joy during the journey, *Flow My Tears* is essentially a kind of ontological puzzle. What keeps us reading is a desire to understand the HOW and WHY of our protagonist's mysterious loss of identity.

To be blunt, the puzzle's solution is garbage. It is complete and utter tripe. It is an obvious afterthought. It fails on every conceivable level. It is not hard science. It is not metaphorical allusion. It's not like a guessable culprit in a mystery novel. There is no satisfaction whatsoever, neither the 'ahhh!' of illumination, the 'oooh!' of spectacle, nor the 'hmmm' of introspection. Instead, the book's ontological denouement retroactively cheapens the journey readers took to get there. Hell, the character who hears the explanation does himself say, WTF are you talking about?

The real tragedy is how this disappointing conclusion reflects the end of the author's life arc. See, *Flow My Tears* is the last book PKD wrote (besides *A Scanner Darkly* maybe?) before his great “revelation” in which he began to experience visions of a supposedly religious nature.

Earlier I quoted from a speech, written in 1978, four years after his revelation. Here's the speech and here's a summary. If you read both, what you'll find interesting is that the summary contains only quotes from the first half. Probably because the first half is awesome. It's everything we love about PKD. Perceptive, philosophical, honest, even optimistic in the face of darkness. I liken this first half to the bulk of PKD's bibliography, and to the bulk of *Flow My Tears*.

But the second half is tragic. He speaks in great detail about *Flow My Tears* and claims that some Spirit guided his hand as he wrote it. He notes parallels between events in the book and events that later happened in his life, and suggests a cosmic importance. He even draws a connection between a scene in the book (in which police general Felix has an emotional moment with a stranger at a gas station) and a scene in *Acts* (in which Paul meets a stranger on a road), claiming that it was “an obvious retelling” of that Biblical story.

Well, I read both. It isn't. No more than the daily horoscope – “Aspects of your life that you've neglected lately might haunt you on a day like today, Virgo” – is an obvious prophecy of my day.

Nevertheless, based on this deluded confirmation bias, PKD goes on to claim that our reality is a sort of hologram overlaying a TRUE Biblical reality, in particular the time period of around 50 AD when *Acts* was written.



Contrary to how PKD saw it, this revelation doesn't grant extra significance to his work. To invoke an invisible, sectarian spirit retroactively cheapens the real, universal humanity.

So. That much for reality.

But what about the other question PKD obsessed over, the question of, "What is an authentic human being?"

I'll let him speak for himself:

"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."

PKD phrases the authenticity of humanity in terms of resistance to external threats, but I would suggest the greatest threats to reality come from within. It is our own venal, desperate, confused selves we must watch and resist. Alas, PKD's resistance was not enough. For reasons too complex for any of us to know, he transformed from a man who was seeking reality to a man who believed he had found it. The ultimate dead end.

*Flow My Tears* is not about that, but if you pay close attention, you can see the first intimations of his transformation. It is, after all, an emotional book about a famous man seeking to understand the mystery of his reality, with an answer that makes no sense and explains nothing. A vision, if you will, of the first cracks in PKD's reality lantern and a prophecy of an imminent shattering and the final escape of one man's bright reality.

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## Derek says

This is my first dip into the work of Philip K. Dick. After reading a chat board on where to start reading PKD, I kept hearing *Flow My Tears*, *the Policeman Said* mentioned over and over again. So, without pause, I went to the library the next day and retrieved a copy.

I sat and read this book in one sitting. It is not often that I read books at once. In fact, the last time I remember reading a book so quickly was *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. I am certainly not a fast reader -- I take my time and savor each page with thought, much like a fine wine -- and I was surprised to finish this book before mid-afternoon.

PKD's words are jumble-y, but for whatever reason, his prose works its magic and simply flows. It's kind of like eating a literary Tootsie Pop: frantic and bizarre tangy-crunchy outside, heartfelt and astoundingly-resonantly-humane gooey inside. I think that, perhaps, this is the first time I've ever been so captured by a novel in which I really don't care about the characters or plots; I just want to sit and soak in a tub of this author's silky-sad truth.

One thing I must say, however: the resolution of this novel's conflict is **stupid**. PKD must not have been able to figure out a logical way to explain the main character's sudden nonexistence. There were also a few other times when I questioned certain scenes -- namely the child sex and random hugging of black people scenes -- within the book and their relations to overall plot, aside from questions to the theme of love. I am also baffled, and mildly delighted, at the book's strange epilogue. I find it particularly lovely that life ends well for at least something: namely, the blue vase.

Overall, this book left a funny taste in my mouth, like when I've finished off a strawberry shake from McDonald's, and all I can taste is that weird, strawberry syrup-y afterbirth. The end of that shake sucks ass, but I still want more strawberry shake.

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## **Lyn says**

Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said is one of Philip K. Dick's best.

Yet unlike many main characters from PKD's books, protagonist Jason Taverner is not a misunderstood, delusional recluse, but rather a world famous, genetically superior celebrity. Supporting protagonist Felix Buckman is a police general with only a handful of individuals more powerful. PKD uses these worldly heroes to illustrate the transience and frailty of what people understand as important. Taverner spends a couple of days where no one knows or even recognizes him. Buckman is made to encounter a reality where he is far from in control, and where the whole basis of his power, of the world's power structure is shown to be ephemeral and false.

Set in a dystopian future where the United States is ruled by a police state after a second civil war, and where students are hunted down and interred in forced labor camps, Flow My Tears, The Policeman Said brings together many mainstay themes of PKD's work.

This one is more over the top than most, and this is where Dick is at his best.

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## **Manuel Antão says**

If you're into stuff like this, you can read the full review.

The Nature of Reality: "Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said" by Philip K. Dick

Flow, my tears, fall from your springs!  
Exiled forever, let me mourn;  
Where night's black bird her sad infamy sings,  
There let me live forlorn.

Down vain lights, shine you no more!

No nights are dark enough for those  
That in despair their lost fortunes deplore.  
Light doth but shame disclose.

Never may my woes be relieved,  
Since pity is fled;  
And tears and sighs and groans my weary days  
Of all joys have deprived.

From the highest spire of contentment  
My fortune is thrown;  
And fear and grief and pain for my deserts  
Are my hopes, since hope is gone.

Hark! you shadows that in darkness dwell,  
Learn to condemn light  
Happy, happy they that in hell  
Feel not the world's despite.

In "Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said", taken from "Flow My Tears" by John Dowland

This is one of the books that changed me in ways I'm still trying to come to terms with, and I've read it more than 30 years ago. At the time I lacked the tools to properly tackle this. That's why I've been wanting to re-read it and analyse it in the light what I currently know. I still remember the feeling I had the first time I read it back in the day. Mind-boggling to say the least. 30 years later, can I define what reality is? Doesn't reality belong to the subjective objectivity realm, i.e., isn't it the highest degree of objectivity possible for a human being? Reality can only be a subjective objectivity as it falls back on whether I chose to accept it as the truth or deny it completely. This means objective reality does exist, but I can only perceive it with my own perception filters. I have to decide what is reality as best I can, and may choose to assert some prepositions even though everyone else denies it (Copernicus comes to mind). It's to my advantage to seek to make my perception filters as little distorting as possible, but I doubt I could ever achieve that completely, because I'm the product of my own culture to start with, to say the least.

If you're into SF, read on.

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## **Stuart says**

This is my fifth PKD book this year, and while I thought it was beautifully written in parts, and its depiction of a police state appropriately chilling, it lacked many of the reality-bending twists and macabre humor of some of his best books, like *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* and *UBIK*.

The main characters Jason Taverner and Felix Buckman were sufficiently troubled and complex to keep my interest, but the events of the middle portion of the book dragged a bit, although the ending does provide for some very moving passages that are presaged by the book's title. Still, the revelations at the end don't generate the disorientation and horror that *UBIK* did, nor the dark humor and satire that infuses *Androids*. I imagine that the pervasive use of drugs, forced labor camps, police checkpoints, and references to starving

students living in underground warrens surrounded by barbed wire fences and police barricades were much more relevant at the time of the book's publication in 1974, but it doesn't have as much shock value now. Still, PKD gets deep into his characters' minds and probes some uncomfortable places with empathy and insight, but this wasn't my favorite of his. I'm looking forward to reading *A Scanner Darkly* next, which I've heard good things about.

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## Algernon says

Maybe I was in the wrong mood for it, but something was off with one. I usually love the classic science-fiction (Heinlein, Clarke, Asimov, Vonnegut, etc) and *Flow My Tears* had some moments of greatness, especially in the interaction between the man with no identity and the various women he encounters. The change of POV to the police general was also effective, and the paranoid surveillance state described almost 40 years ago still has the power to evoke disturbing thoughts of "are we there yet?"

Despite all the positive aspects I mentioned, I felt let down by the ending. I'm trying not to give spoilers, but I detected a certain lack of logic and a bit of *deus ex machina* in the resolution. I got the message I think (life is absurd and depressing, but there is beauty and love to be found along the way) but my engineer mind expected a better explanation for the concepts presented here.

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## Darwin8u says

Probably 3.5 stars, but I tend towards grade-inflation with authors I admire, so -- just to be safe -- I'm rounding down on this one (until I decide I want to round up in 3 years). I liked the first 4/5, but the last quintile bugged a little. It started brilliantly, but ended with a J. Leno (long explanation of the joke just told). It was like towards the end PKD discounted his readers would get it, so he left simple instructions (remove plastic before eating) and tied the whole thing off neat (with complementary happy ending). Other than the explanatory ending and the relative happy ending for the narrator, the book was fascinating and at times brilliant.

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## Randy says

**"So I ask, in my writing, What is real? Because unceasingly we are bombarded with pseudo-realities manufactured by very sophisticated people using very sophisticated electronic mechanisms. I do not distrust their motives; I distrust their power."**

**- Philip K. Dick, "How to Build a Universe That Doesn't Fall Apart Two Days Later"**

It's going to take a while to process this one. PKD's novels often strike an existential chord and *FMTTPS* is no exception. Amoral TV personality Jason Taverner is attacked by a tentacled alien creature and when he awakens the following day he's...somebody else? Or nobody? As in most PKD stories, the future is an absurdist dystopia that is often a reflection of the author's life and times. So the "drug" chapter is therefore hilarious and sad all at the same time. Written towards the end of PKD's career when he had gained some literary recognition but financial success still eluded him (but prior to the "pink ray of light" encounter), *FMTTPS* is more challenging and raw than his earlier pulp work.

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## Scarlet Cameo says

***"La realidad negada regresa para atormentar. Para caer, sin previo aviso sobre la persona, y enloquecerla."***

Jason Taverner es una súper estrella que un día despierta y nadie lo recuerda...a partir de ahí nos encontramos en la carrera de Jason para averiguar el porqué, el problema recae en que, en un mundo altamente controlado por la policía, sin identidad ni papeles, Jason terminará enrollándose con personas peligrosas y situaciones ilegales, en una carrera contra reloj para evitar su muerte o inclusión en los campos de trabajos forzados.

***"Me he mezclado con un ser complicado, raro y desequilibrado[...]. Tan malo como no he encontrado aún en mis cuarenta y dos años"***

Siendo Taverner el protagonista no es, ni de cerca, el personaje más interesante de esta historia. Entre la conversación de Ruth Rae y la misteriosa vida de Felix Buckman, Jason queda, para su suerte/infortunio, el 50% del tiempo acompañado de alguien que dará más énfasis a su historia, que permitirá ver un aspecto distinto de su personalidad y del mundo bajo el cual nos encontramos.

***"Los huesos descarnados de existencia con los que todo hombre nace: ni siquiera tengo eso."***

El final..creo que esté se unirá a mi pequeña lista de libros en los cuales el epílogo es lo que menos me gusto, antes de llegar a esa parte el final era abierto pero me hubiera parecido perfecto que así quedará, el epilogo nos da un vistazo a lo que sucede con todos los personajes y nos deja con la sensación de que eramos un espía durante el transcurso de la historia

***"Jason Taverner y yo somos figuras de un viejo dibujo de un niño. Perdidos entre el polvo."***

Esta obra es muy interiorizada, las reflexiones e inseguridades de todos los personajes están muy bien trabajados, la resolución de que es lo que sucedió con la vida de Taverner, aunque inverosímil, dentro de este mundo, podemos darla por posible, y más importante aún la paranoia que envuelve la historia, ese elemento hace que gran parte del tiempo estes pensando ¿Qué demonios está pasando? y esa pregunta va haciendo que poco a poco la historia te atrape, porque interiorizas la situación y empatizas con el terror del protagonista.

***"...Pues ahora, abandonado y solitario  
me siento, suspiro, sollozo, me desmayo, muero  
en dolor mortal e interminable miseria"***

***"Oíd!, vosotras, sombras que en la oscuridad moráis,  
aprended a despreciar la luz.  
Felices, felices quienes en el averno  
del mundo no sienten el desprecio."***

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## Apatt says

*“Love isn't just wanting another person the way you want to own an object you see in a store. That's just desire. You want to have it around, take it home and set it up somewhere in the apartment like a lamp. Love is”--she paused, reflecting--“like a father saving his children from a burning house, getting them out and dying himself. When you love you cease to live for yourself; you live for another person.”*

What? This in a Philip K. Dick novel?

This is an unusual PKD book, though you could argue that *all* PKD books are unusual so there is nothing unusual about one of his books being unusual. What I mean is that the tone and style are different from the earlier PKD classics like *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* and *Ubik*. First published in 1974 after the aforementioned classic PKD novels, *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* seems to be written during a transitional period in Dick's style. Profanities are common place in the dialogs, something not present in Dick's works from the 60s (I believe), and there is more depth to the characters, more compassion, and more emotional resonance.

This story is set in a dystopian 1988 USA (a “near future” at the time of writing) where the people live under a police state, anybody found at spot checks without proper documentation are liable to be summarily shipped off sent to labour camps (students especially). The novel's protagonist is Jason Taverner, a famous singer who has his own nightly TV show with viewership in the millions. One day he wakes up in a rundown hotel and finds that nobody knows who he is, not even his closest friends and lover. The how and why of his predicament is one of Dick's best story ideas, but the less I elaborate on that the better.

This is one of my favorite PKD books, I would rate it alongside the aforementioned *Ubik*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* and *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* as the best of his works; certainly I would rate it far above his Hugo winner *The Man in the High Castle* of which I am not a fan. The standout feature of *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* is that it is more emotional than most of his fiction. There is a sadness and sympathy to it that I do not associate with his works. That said PKD fans will be right at home with the usual Dickian trope of drug induced reality warping.

Dick's prose is the usual utilitarian style he uses in most of his works, the dialog is often stilted as if the characters are all drug addled to some extent. If this sounds like a criticism it really is not. I like the way Dick writes, it is clear and effective for conveying the weirdness inherent in his stories. As for the dialog, his characters tend to say the oddest things out of the blue, like Jason Taverner suddenly tells a woman she looks too old for her age for no apparent reason and getting whacked on the head as a result. Dick's sense of humour is also wonderfully weird, such as the title of Taverner's latest hit being “*Nowhere Nuthin' Fuck-up*”, which he describes as a sentimental number. His depiction of 1988, of course, bears little resemblance to that year in reality with personal flying vehicles and vinyl records still very much in use. I hope this does not dissuade anybody from reading it however, I believe that it is not sci-fi writers' job to predict the future but to speculate and provide some food for thought.

*Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* is one of Dick's most underrated books. As usual, he makes us question the reality we live in but this time he also makes us think about how we perceive ourselves and others and how our perception affects our social interactions and relationships. An unexpectedly moving book.

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This is the cover of my paperback edition from the 80s, featuring an actual crying policeman; but otherwise, has nothing to do with the plot!

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### **Wilier says**

Ok todo se resumen en un grave problemas de drogas alucinógenas.

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### **Adrienne says**

This is a mysterious book that raises many more questions than it answers. Among the questions this book has inspired me to ask:

-How on earth could I have spent a year and a half in love with a woman who told me this was her favorite novel?

-Is there a time/space-altering drug that can transport me to a universe where I never wasted my time on this book?

-Am I honestly supposed to believe that a world in which not everyone cares about the existence of a pompous white dude is some kind of dystopia?

-What's with Philip K. Dick's obsession with lesbians, anyway?

Conclusion: when I'm in the mood to read sci-fi, I'll stick to Octavia Butler and her ilk, thankyouverymuch.

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### **Edward says**

It really was refreshing to read such a simply and straightforwardly told story for a change. This novel contains the usual stuff you'd expect from PKD, with heavy themes of drugs, and strange metaphysics (the novel is more about these than any sort of futurism, which comes across as incidental). The story itself was compelling, and the conclusion was surprisingly coherent, given the loose ends and meanderings of the plot, though I didn't find the ending entirely satisfying. There was a point at which the protagonist's actions became incongruous with aspects of his personality that had been set up (such as taking random hits of Mescaline in situations that demanded his full mental attention). But what the hell, this novel is fun, compelling and thought-provoking, despite its flaws. It's not my favourite PKD, but it's a solid and enjoyable read nonetheless.

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### **?????? ???? says**

That .GIF image perfectly captures the range of distinct reactions that Philip K. Dick's *Flow my Tears, the*

*Policeman Said* got out of me in the expanse of reading it in the last four days. There was bafflement--then disbelief--then mild disgust--and, finally, karmic relief. Don't get me wrong, it's not a badly written book. Of course fucking not, it's PHILIP K. DICK! His outstanding *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* will forever destroy me in this world and in another parallel existence because asdfghjklmalfunctionerror10101...

Anyway, that being said, something along the way went wrong as I peruse through the two hundred and four pages of this novel; I can't really pinpoint exactly where, but all I know is that I couldn't help but alternate between confusion and rage as I went on. Originally, around eighty pages or so, I was going to rate it with four stars because, right from the get-go, I was just enjoying the brisk, no-nonsense yet highly engrossing pacing and linguistic style that Dick had incorporated in his storytelling; the breadth of the entire narrative work felt so much lighter than *Do Androids Dream*, honestly, making it easy for me to keep up with every twist and turn as I follow the protagonist Jason Taverner, a government-experimented Six which basically means a person with enhanced physical/sexual appeal and whatever attractive aptitude there is. He's a former musician-turned celebrity talk show host and in a relationship with another icon named Heather Hart, also a Six.

After a confrontation with one of the women he duped and took advantage of, promising her a career in showbiz only to sleep with her a few times, he was left physically compromised and woke up in a dingy motel room with only a wad of cash on hand but with no trace of discernible legal records of proof of identity whatsoever. It's as if he's been literally deduced to non-existence.

Set in a fictional futuristic world of 1988 in the United States where everything seems to be under the command of a rampant police state where laws and legislation are just plain FUCKED-UP (sexual legal consent is reduced to thirteen years of age; African-American lineage is sanctioned to die out), the premise and the mystery that this book are hitched on were promising and I really did eat it all up in the first two days of reading. By the fourth day, however, as I stare blankly at the last page (right after containing myself from convulsing in laughter), I realized it had more to do with my unmistakable dislike for every goddamn character featured in the book with the exception of the police general Felix Buckman (whom I was 50/50 with) and the very brief insert of one Mary Anne Dominic (who really should have been a major character as oppose to some flimsy extra in the background).

Other than those two, I cringe my nose at the rest, more particularly in vile contempt for the overall way the female characters are portrayed, the greatest offenders of them all have to be the insecure, selfish and self-entitled paranoid bitch Heather Hart, and the clinically insane (sort of a) sexual predator who is skilled in the art of emotional blackmail, Kathy Nelson. The least offenders have to be Ruth Mae (whose speech about love and grief was actually pretty philosophical--too bad it came off completely dissonant to her general characterization), and the bisexual (pansexual?) fetish-driven drug addict Alys who had an incestuous affair with her twin brother and sired a son with him. And YES she is less offensive than Hart and Nelson because at least Alys had a personality I did enjoy reading about while the other two were so emotionally flat and perceived only in how the main male character objectifies them. They're placeholders that reflect his sexual frustration and inadequacy which make them rather one-dimensional miserable fuckers.

Normally, I could overlook gender-biased portrayals if they serve the story or a theme in the narrative. However, it didn't feel like these poorly characterized female characters ever served a purpose except to interact with the male protagonist, Jason Taverner. I don't have any kind of concern about his character since he took that mescaline drug. I suppose I eagerly wanted to know what happened to him that he lost his identity and people don't remember him at all in spite of being a popular son of a bitch. My interest in his welfare continued to decline the more he showed what a pompous chauvinist he was (although his very short interaction with Mary Anne Dominic rekindled some sympathy because that was the only sweet and



humanizing moment for his character in this book).

Then again, everyone in this book is miserable--and not even in a compelling way that makes me sympathetic for them. Whatever end they got (Dick was kind enough to wrap up their fates nicely in his Epilog) is something they more than deserved, in my brutally honest opinion. It's actually great that Dick didn't leave it to chance, or his readers' imaginations, as to how these characters' fates came to an end because I personally didn't form any sort of connection with them to ponder about what happened in their lives after the novel finished. So thank Loki that Dick inquisitively wrapped it all up. Phew.

I love character-driven stories; I root for characters with problems and struggles that make me sympathetic to their plights; characters who later on develop self-awareness of their bad choices instead of just going through the motions of being victims forever. None of the characters in this book ever grew or did anything that could have redeemed them, with the exception of Mary Anne (who is so slight of a character that she only appeared in six or eight pages).

I did LOVE THE ENDING though. Basically, the beautiful blue vase that was the product of love, commitment and talent that Mary Anne produced was able to be displayed in a museum (while she had a career in ceramics; how ironically bittersweet and awful was it that the shoe-in extra gets a happy ending?) AND MORE OR LESS OUTLIVED EVERY MISERABLE FUCKER IN THIS BOOK. That was poetic justice if nothing else.

In any case, I will keep reading more of Philip K. Dick's books because THERE ARE SO MANY OUT THERE and I am looking forward to acquaint myself more with his writing. Overall, *Flow my Tears, the Policeman Said* just didn't work for me as a sum of its parts, especially when the parts are composed of characters that I perceived to be grimy, irresponsible disablers of human dignity and progress. The mystery plot and the answer concerning Jason Taverner's sudden lack of identity was still a pretty thrilling read, though.

**RECOMMENDED: 7/10**

**DO READ MY REVIEWS AT**

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**notgettingenough says**

You can criticise Dick all you like for being wrong about flying cars, or thinking the LP record was for ever (note: it *isn't*?), but he is writing science fiction and, as Ray Bradbury points out far more eloquently than will I, that is about ideas. It isn't about sentence construction, plot or character development. If you wanted to, it is easy enough to criticise this book on all these counts, but so what? Why would you bother? What matters is....

<http://alittleteaalittlechat.wordpress...>

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## Jayanth says

Mediocre. I tried so hard to like it, but the way the story took shape did not help one bit.

I chose to read this while searching for long, quirky, strange titles. Having read and liked 'Second Variety' by Philip K. Dick, I was eager to read this one. PKD is considered to be a sci-fi genre defining author, for having thought of unimaginable things during his time, opening up a new worlds of imagination for future authors and readers.

The premise is very very interesting and the book started off very well - *What if you are a celebrity who has 30 millions viewers weekly and one day you wake up to realize nobody recognizes you, as if you never existed before?*. The scene that is critical for this strange event that sets things in motion is chilling. It was so good that my expectations for the rest of the story doubled. But this event and its sci-fi elements are never again addressed, which is so disappointing. Also, the story went down hill from that critical moment.

The character arcs are not well done in my opinion, especially the protagonist's. There are glaring flaws in the story that made me think "are you really that stupid?". Most of the characters were interesting, although not much likeable. The futuristic world of this book felt shallow and underdeveloped.

For me, the only highlights of this book are the premise and a certain conversation between two characters about love, happiness and grief. It went on for 3-4 pages, but it was beautifully written.

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