

Scanners Darkly: Drugs, Media and Schizophrenia in Philip K. Dick's Oeuvre

Philip K. Dick's stories provide a thorough description of how technological instruments and media equipment stimulate and manipulate dreams, memories, and emotions of the human brain. As Anthony Enns outlines, the texts portray a wide range of mechanical and media equipment, creating diverse forms of the "posthuman." The robot-protagonist in "The Electric Ant" (1969) and the "simulacra" in *We Can Build You* (1972) are controlled by punched tape memory constructions. The schizoid and autistic characters and their supposedly successful treatment evoke filmic metaphors in *Martian Time-Slip* (1964). *A Scanner Darkly* (1977) also utilizes filmic imagery – the psychedelic coma is described as "an endless horror feature film in his head for the remainder of his life" (86) – but the mentally disturbed mind imitates a "closed loop of tape" (66), becoming similar to a faulty computer that is unable to process new data, "[r]epeating his last instruction" (265). In *Valis* (1981) and *Radio Free Albemuth* (1985), the protagonist's mind joins an "intergalactic communications network," a "long-abandoned telephone" service (113).

My essay analyzes these mechanical images by utilizing media theories of Friedrich A. Kittler, Marshall McLuhan and Christian Metz, thinkers who find the (Lacanian) subject and the stages of media history strictly interrelated. N. Katherine Hayles' interpretation of the Dickian "schizoid android" suggests that the images of cyborgs and those of mental disorder are intertwined. I deploy, therefore, psychological theories of autism, schizophrenia and brain mapping, drawing on psychologists whom Dick was (possibly) familiar with (Wilder Penfield, James Olds, Eugene Minkowski, Leo Kanner, and so on). The essay concludes with an analysis of the nonlinear textual elements in these stories; following Paul de Man, I interpret these textual deviations as errors in "a text machine," formal manifestations of the disturbed perceptions of Dick's posthuman characters.