

IMAGINING WORLDS, MAPPING POSSIBILITIES

Select Science Fiction Stories

Edited by

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"MINORITY REPORT": A STUDY OF STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Nitya Datta

INTRODUCTION

Philip K. Dick's short story "Minority Report" (1963) depicts a futuristic 'crime free' society that is governed by a highly developed technological and scientific system called Precrime. The story, in spite of its futuristic setting, is a cautionary tale on the dangers of inhabiting heavily technologized societies powered by artificial intelligence and algorithms. The narrative offers a sharp critique of structural violence that is mediated by technology. Put differently, the story deals with the themes of growing human dependence on technology and structural violence in the form of the inevitable rise of a totalitarian society, controlled through state-sponsored surveillance.

Within the science fiction canon, Philip K. Dick's writings are notable for marking a departure from earlier positivist representations of technology. His fiction often depicts the psychological effects of technology on the human mind. Philip K. Dick (PKD), unlike other SF writers, does not focus on the 'newness' of technology or its 'alien' non-human nature but rather shows the ubiquity of technology and the growing human dependence on it. These anxieties are most visible in "Minority Report" which represents the consequences of living in a technological utopia. The distortion of this seemingly perfect world points to the dangers of a society that places unquestioning faith in scientific thinking and a high reliance on technology.

A SHORT HISTORY ON THE EMERGENCE OF AMERICAN SF

An emerging form of pulp fiction in the 1930s and 1940s in America presented adventure stories of space travel/exploration and alien races. This earlier form, known as 'hard' SF, consisted of a wide range of