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Journal Response #1: “The Door on the Wall” by H.G Wells

The Power of Imagination

When Wallace finally lets go of reality and walks through the green door, he enters a magical world. I picture the type of Utopia that Wallace enters as a Land of Arcadia since there is beauty and harmony within nature. The animals and children live peacefully among one another, the air is warm, the sky is bright, and everything is beautiful. Moreover, the garden has a biblical connotation to the Garden of Eden since Wallace’s garden portrays the same harmony and peace between all living things. Similarly to how the Garden of Eden represents a world before sin, Wallace’s garden represents a childhood without his harsh realities. Therefore, this type of Utopia is appealing to him because it opposes his structured and disciplined life. His father is characterized as a “stern, preoccupied lawyer, who gave him little attention and expected great things of him” (367). Wallace knows better than to disobey his father’s wishes, which is why he hesitates before running through the door. Moreover, Wallace lost his mother at a young age. During industrialization when the story took place, fathers were viewed as the head of the household. This left mothers to care for their children, teach them how to dream, and provide them with a carefree childhood. I believe that once Wallace lost his mother, he lost this part of his childhood, and lacked the warmth and closeness that a mother provides. Fortunately, this Utopia provides him with that warmth. It gives him a chance to play with friends, sit by a maternal figure, and let go of discipline. I believe that Wallace’s life reflects HG Wells’ life as well. H.G Wells’ father also planned his life out for him. His family did not want him to become a writer, so he became an apprentice for many different working-class jobs. This was not the life he longed for as he was creative and imaginative. Only once he found the courage to part from the path that his father paved for him was he able to find true happiness as an author. This mirrors Wallace since the boy was only able to experience happiness once he disobeyed his father and ran through the green door.

As a child, I did not have any imaginary friends or any imaginary places; however, when I try to think about what I wish my life could look like, I am often drawn back to the happiest memories of my childhood. In some ways, my childhood is my Utopia, and I would do anything to go back in time for a bit. I believe the main reason the line between fantasy and reality is so blurry in the minds of children is because of their innocence. They are shielded from the horrors of the world. Instead of learning about war, injustice, or death, they are raised believing in fictional realities such as princess fairy tales and the tooth fairy. Consequently, the line between what is real and what is not, is unclear to them. In addition, I think many children form these imaginative realities to fill a need or to express a thought. For instance, Wallace’s Utopia fills his need for friendship, a mother, and happiness. Another child living in poor conditions, for

example, might imagine himself living in a castle. Unfortunately, as we enter adulthood our ability to imagine and bring things to life slowly dies. I believe this is because we are stripped of our innocence and faced with real issues and responsibilities. It becomes difficult for us to imagine a Utopia since we do not believe that it is actually possible to live in one. Ultimately, I think H.G Wells is trying to illustrate the power of imagination. It gives us the ability to reinvent any part of our life that we are unhappy with. By imagining, we can momentarily escape any harsh realities that we are faced with, and we can allow ourselves to find some moments of comfort. However, I also think Wells is warning his readers about how dangerous powerful things can be. He seems to emphasize the way that individuals can become conflicted between dreams and reality. Wallace has been haunted by the garden, which illustrates that imagining fictional realities can create conflict in our lives. It can make us torn between what is real and what is not, and we may start wishing for things we will never truly be able to obtain



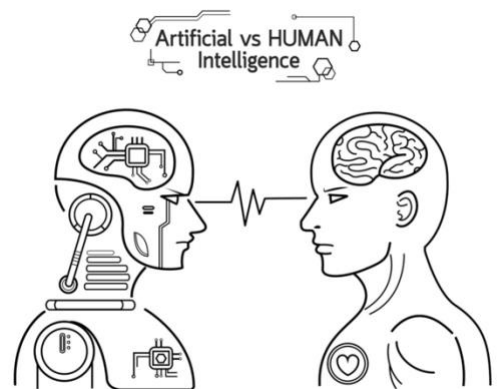
I was very excited when I found this image because it is exactly how I pictured Wallace's Utopia!

Journal Response #2: Bicentennial Man

Once a Robot, Always a Robot

Asimov's "Bicentennial Man" is written in an extremely straight forward style; thus his use of characterization is very simple, and none of his characters are highly developed. For instance, George and Paul are both flat characters. They do not evolve throughout the story, and they exit with the same mindset and personality they had when they were introduced. A slight exception to this use of characterization is the protagonist, Andrew. Andrew develops throughout the story, as his urge to gain his humanity increases as the plot progresses. Despite this development, Andrew's thoughts and words are still very simple and unambiguous. Asimov ensures that his readers always know exactly what the protagonist feels and thinks, without the need for further analysis. In some ways, I agree with critics when they suggest that Asimov's

characters are insignificant since he concentrates on the plot. In my opinion, the story had some dry periods, where the plot alone was not enough to draw in readers' attention. I enjoy reading stories and novels with more complex characters since it allows me to make connections and appreciate the author's effort and style. Consequently, I feel that this story lacked the intricate detail and description that would make it more interesting. Moreover, Asimov's style is very different from authors I am used to reading, especially from the authors I have read while studying at Dawson. As a student, I am usually presented with complex stories where each character is three dimensional. These works are easier to interpret due to the varied use of literary elements such as characterization, setting, and figures of speech. Since Asimov's story lacked these elements, I also understand the criticism he receives for not being worthy of scholarly analysis. Despite my agreement with critics, I still see how this style works well for "Bicentennial Man". It is an effective way for the author to portray all of the protagonist's thoughts in the exact way he is thinking them. Although Andrew is a very developed robot, he is still a *robot*. Therefore, by making his language simple and clear, I believe that Asimov demonstrates his robotic consciousness. He emphasizes the idea that despite Andrew's gradual gain of humanity, he will always be a robot. Something I found interesting was how Andrew's thought process slowly progressed. I noticed how he gradually became comfortable giving humans "attitude" and how he fought for his rights. This was very different from how he acted at the beginning of the story when he obeyed all robot laws; even when he was mistreated. What I found even more intriguing was that even as Andrew comes closer to gaining humanity, Asimov does not let go of this straight-forward characterization. In my opinion, this further portrays the idea that people will always view Andrew as robotic, and that his robotic conscious will always be a part of him. Lastly, I still see Andrew as a very interesting and compelling character. Even though he is a robot, he shows a wide range of emotions: sympathy, anger, sadness, and even jealousy towards humans. I find it remarkable how Asimov was capable of creating such a round character with almost no use of real characterization and other literary elements.



Journal Response #3: Blade Runner

Part-1 Free Writing:

In the opening scene of the movie, I was immediately taken aback by the level of disorder and chaos in the city. Everything was crowded, and I immediately thought to myself that I would never want to live in such a mess. I also didn't enjoy the violence in the movie, and I am going to

assume that it will only become more violent as it progresses. This is very different from the types of movies I usually watch which are very light spirited or comical. When I watch a movie, I prefer to not have to think too much, but Blade Runner did not permit my brain to rest. From the first moments of the film I felt as though I was trying to solve a puzzle. Who was Deckard? What did his job entail? Was this man sitting through the Voightt Kampff test a Replicant or a human? My last question was answered quickly enough as Leon rose to his feet and shot the man performing his test. At this moment, I realized how dangerous the replicants really were and their threat to society. I found it interesting that the producers or writers of the film decided to make the Replicants look exactly like human beings. It made me compare the film to our current reality and the advancement of technology and artificial intelligence. In years from now, I wonder if robots will be working human jobs, such as being enrolled in the military.

Part 2- Journal:

The Humanity of Replicants

Leon's reaction to the Voight Kampff test in the opening scene of the film seemed human to me. He seemed nervous and somewhat disoriented which I perceive to be normal reactions given he was placed in an office to be tested and analyzed. I began to think that if ever I were placed in a similar situation, I would not be any calmer than he was. However, after Leon shot the man performing this test, it became evident that he was, in fact, not human at all. This was the precise moment when I realized how dangerously human the Replicants were, and I began to question the Voight-Kampff test and how it worked. I believe that the Voight Kampff test is faulty. It distinguishes humans versus Replicants in terms of emotional and physiological responses such as reaction time, pupil dilation, and heart rate. However, if Replicants can be made to look and act exactly like humans, then they can also be made to have similar physiological functions and emotions. Consequently, this would make the test irrelevant, as one would never be sure if the responses are natural human ones, or simply ones that have been programmed into an android to make them seem human. The way Replicants are continuously being given more human features in "Blade Runner" is illustrated through Rachel, one of the Replicants. She was given memories, and has emotional responses to the recollections of her childhood, similarly to a human. Therefore, if she had to undergo the Voight Kampff test, she may relay much more human emotions. Moreover, the Voight Kampff test emphasizes the importance empathy. I believe that testing ones humanity based on empathy is not effective because different humans have different personalities. For instance, some individuals may begin to weep after learning about a tragic event that happened to a stranger; whereas others may be only slightly touched by the same news as it does not affect them. Therefore, the way the Voight Kampff test uses empathy to determine whether an individual is human seems unreliable. Furthermore, human beings in the film have a very difficult time distinguishing Replicants from other humans. In fact, a human can be in the same room as a Replicant and will not know it unless a test is performed. This makes me question why the Replicants were made to look so human in the first place. It is extremely ironic that the corporation that made these androids as human Replicants is now trying twice as hard to try to identify and kill them. Would it not have been easier to just make them stand out in the first place? I think one possible reason for which Replicants were manufactured to look human is so they would be easily accepted in society. Androids that resemble humans are more likely to be welcomed into society, making it easier for them to perform their designated tasks. This idea is explored in Asimov's "Bicentennial Man".

When Andrew wears clothes, he is ridiculed and stared at by those around him because he looks like a robot. However, as he has multiple surgeries and begins to look and act more human, he becomes accepted by society and taken seriously by those around him. Similarly, the androids have to be made to look human in order for actual humans to feel comfortable around them, and to rely on them.



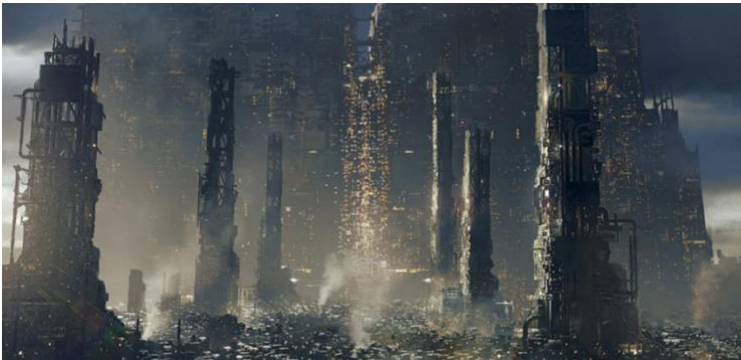
This is a real female android developed by Hanson Robotics. Her name is Sophia. It looks like Blade Runner's Replicants are slowly making their way into reality!

Journal Response #4: Response to Anil Narine's "Policing Traumatized Boundaries of Self and Nation: Undocumented Labour in Blade Runner"

Blade Runner Foreshadows the Future

I believe that the film does illustrate the situation described in Narine's essay. One of the things that made me most uncomfortable while watching the movie "Blade Runner" was the level of disorder in the city. The mass crowds, the chaos, and the mixture of languages made me very uneasy. I felt as though I was watching not a city in a single country, but rather a mish mash of the entire world. The way the city is portrayed in "Blade Runner" emphasizes the idea of mass culture, where individuals live in a "deprived monoclass" and are indistinguishable from one another. Everyone is simply trying to survive while a few people are labelled as the elite. In the movie, the distinction between the lower class, who Narine refers to as the "little people", and the elite is illustrated as the scenes of mass crowds are broken by calm scenes in the Tyrell Corporation, or by blade runners performing the Voight Kampff tests. These scenes emphasize the small percentage of the population leading successful and wealthy lives. Moreover, the blimps symbolizes the elite power circulating over the city and watching every move of the citizens below. This image shows how, from the sky, the citizens are literally and metaphorically "little people". Furthermore, this higher power is so miniscule that anyone who has it will do anything to keep their hands on it. In his essay, Narine explores this idea through Deckard, explaining how he cannot refuse his position as a blade runner even though it tortures him. Deckard has a "fear of falling" into the void and becoming a nobody. He knows that even though he despises his employment, he will become just another low life worker if he quits. I like how Narine explores the way Deckard resembles a Replicant: they are both slaves. Similarly to how the Replicants are slaves to the labour they were made for, Deckard, is a slave to his work. This

is because without it, he loses any distinction he had from the mass crowds below him. Hence, I do believe that the film is a nightmarish picture of migrant workers taking over the city and leaving little room for a middle class. However, I also see it as an extension of the world we are already living in, or an exaggerated representation of where the world might be headed. We live in a society where the elite are most heard and recognized, whether it be due to fame, government leaders, or head of corporations. Everyone below these people live in a cycle trying to conform to their laws and ideals. Although it is narcissistic, it is not hard to imagine a world where the middle class begins to dissipate. With the increase in immigration and our very materialistic society, the world may eventually be divided between the lower class and the elite, just as in "Blade Runner." Next, after reading Narine's article, I did not understand why he did not undertake the more obvious thematic ideas of the film, such as artificial intelligence, and the line between being human and not. While the article does explore the idea of distinguishing humans from androids, it does not explore humanity. The movie Blade Runner made me reflect upon how advanced artificial intelligence is, and how humanity may not be only be seen in human beings. Roy Batty, just like all humans, feels the need to survive. In addition, he experiences a large scale of emotions such as anger, hatred, love, sexuality, and even empathy. For instance, he saves Deckard as he is hanging off the building. The article mentions this scene, and how Deckard and Roy become "uncanny doubles," however, I think this scene goes beyond that. I believe it illustrates Roy's humanity that was so hidden by violence. With the exceptions of physiology, Roy experiences the same emotions, desires and fears as a human being. While this article does not mention this main thematic idea, I did find Narine's approach of fear of global capitalism and migrant workers enlightening. It was not something I had originally thought about after watching the film.



As I was looking for a possible representation of the future as described in Narine's essay, I came across the image. I was shocked by the striking difference between this image and the one I included in Journal 1 of Wallace's Utopia. It really is interesting to think about the two extremes that the human mind is capable of imagining!

Journal Response 5: Montreal During Covid-19: A Slightly More Totalitarian Society?

A New Totalitarian Reality

I believe that ever since Covid-19 started, our reality has adopted a much more dystopian quality. For starters, the main similarity that strikes me as a reader of 1984 during these times is the idea of solitude. In the book, every individual lives isolated from those around them, both socially and physically. Throughout the novel, this is illustrated through Winston. Winston possesses many spiraling thoughts and emotions, yet he has no one to share them with. He has

no friends or family, only comrades he makes small talk with during his lunch break at work or during communal gatherings. However, he cannot express himself to them for fear that he will be denounced to the thought police. In addition, 1984 is a world where frequenting restaurants, walking into shops, or talking to people on the street, are actions viewed as suspicious and signs of unorthodoxy, rather than normal social interactions. We are currently experiencing a similar reality due to covid-19. Although we are not prevented from sharing our thoughts and opinions, we have become physically and socially isolated. Restaurants and bars are closed, making it difficult to go out with friends, mingle, and meet new people. Cities around the world have gone into lockdown, and we are unable to host gatherings and roam freely without waiting in a line or maintaining proper distance from others. It seems as though we have become disconnected from those around us, just as Winston is disconnected from society. Moreover, fear is a very prominent similarity between today's world and 1984. In 1984, there is surveillance everywhere, and the patrols and thought police are always on the lookout for signs of unorthodoxy, something that creates a lingering fear in Winston. Similarly, everyone these days is fearful not only of the virus, but of getting caught breaking isolation rules. The police has been circulating parks and neighborhoods to give tickets to those who host gatherings, and we are often reprimanded for not maintaining proper distance from others. Even our own neighbors have become our enemies as we fear they will denounce us to the police if we invite guests over. This is similar to how Winston fears his own comrades or neighbours will denounce him to the thought police if they think he is suspicious. Overall, the virus has increased the government's control over our interactions, illustrating a more totalitarian lifestyle. Of course, there are differences as the measures implemented in our society are not a means to grasp control of the population as in 1984, but to ensure public health and safety. Still, it is difficult to ignore the similarities between the fear and surveillance in 1984 and in our society. Furthermore, a parallel can be drawn to the telescreens in 1984. Due to our isolation, we have adopted many technological advances, such as online learning. In my opinion, online learning is eerie. Although we are sitting alone in our rooms, there are still thirty other eyes watching us through a screen, an idea that does not sit well with me. There are times where I am writing a test on zoom using a different computer screen, so I cannot see the others on zoom. I forget that I am on camera for some time, and then I suddenly realize how unusual it is that someone that I cannot see is watching me, similarly to the telescreens. We sit in front of our computers for hours at a time, looking attentive and cooperative, just like Winston must look composed each time he is in sight of a telescreen. All in all, the increased amount of surveillance and fear present today has made society in 1984 one step closer to our reality.

