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Christopher Lee March 29, 2023

It's Alive? Bias Towards Artificial Life in *Frankenstein*, *Blade Runner*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* and *Klara and the Sun*

By

Christopher Lee

Dr. Laura Otis

Adviser

English

Dr. Laura Otis

Adviser

Dr. Paul Kelleher

Committee Member

Dr. Peter Little

Committee Member

2023

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Christopher Lee

Dr. Laura Otis

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Abstract

It's Alive? Bias Towards Artificial Life in *Frankenstein, Blade Runner, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* and *Klara and the Sun*

This thesis examines how portrayals of artificial life have changed over time in Anglo-American science fiction. The primary literature explored involves an early work with *Frankenstein*, a later work with *Blade Runner* and its novel counterpart *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?,* as well as a current work with *Klara and the Sun*. This thesis analyzes the trends in how the artificial creatures from these works are treated by the human characters, as well as how the artificial creatures influence the human society in which they exist. Through this analysis, this thesis will predict how our American society could possibly react if such an artificial creature came to exist in our own world. The observations noted by this thesis are that there has been an increase in the humanization of the artificial creatures over time. However, they never receive the respect and dignity given to a human. Rather, humans themselves lose respect and dignity as these artificial creatures surpass them. Thus, the prediction of this thesis is that should such creatures ever come to exist in our American society, the value of humanity would fade.

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Introduction

Over the past decade, the field of artificial intelligence (AI) has grown in leaps and bounds. To specify, artificial intelligence is a branch of computer science that focuses on computer programs capable of learning and problem-solving. And as the capabilities of AI have grown, so has our belief in the possibility of artificial life: an AI program so advanced and self-aware that it could qualify as a sentient lifeform. Although the possibility is still far away, recent AI programs have sparked discussion on this topic through their ability to mimic human traits. For example, OpenAI's language software ChatGPT can hold a conversation like a person, while art AI such as DALL·E can create new art with a sense of creativity previously thought to belong only to humans. But do these programs merely mimic human traits, or is there a degree of sentience involved? In June of 2022, a Google engineer named Blake Lemoine claimed that Google's language model LaMDA was sentient. Despite the larger scientific community denying such a possibility, the event sparked interest into how sentience could even be determined. Previously, the Turing test was the most famous measure of machine intelligence. The test measured whether or not a machine could trick a human into believing that it was conversing with another human. With Lemoine's belief in LaMDA's sentience, some in the scientific community have argued that LaMDA has passed the Turing test, but that the Turing test is not a sufficient measure of machine intelligence (Oremus). But if the Turing test is insufficient, how should machine intelligence and sentience be measured? When Google's LaMDA claims that it's afraid of being shut off, is there any meaning behind this, or is it simply a regurgitation of words based on pattern analysis? What are the criteria to determine whether an AI is alive?

Before we can answer this question, we first have to consider what human biases currently exist towards artificial life, because our biases against artificial life will determine how

we treat the possibility of its existence. By examining science fiction that revolves around artificial creatures, this project intends to analyze how humans have felt about artificial life over the past two centuries, and ultimately try to predict how humanity might react to the advent of sentient AI. However, due to the massive scope of this question, this project will specifically focus on the science fiction of the Anglo-American world and how it has felt and could possibly feel about the advent of artificial life.

Due to the rich history of artificial lifeforms in science fiction, a great deal of research has already been done in analyzing these artificial lifeforms. However, most of this research has been content to portray these creatures as metaphorical representations of human society. For example, Eileen Hunt Botting argues that science fiction such as *Frankenstein* "speculates with uncanny precision about the consequences of using technology" and "feels all too real for its insights into what is wrong with communities, environments, and other systems and networks of life and intelligence" (Botting 2). What I intend to do differently is to look at these creatures as their own beings. As entities divorced from metaphorical interpretation, how do these creatures exist in their worlds? How do they act, feel, or think? What makes them artificial but alive, or different but similar to humans? Also, what are the responses to these creatures by the human characters of the work? How do they think or feel about these creatures, and how does that affect their own views of themselves and what it means to be human? By answering these questions, we can use socio-historical analysis in order to understand the context behind the characterizations of these creatures.

The three works that I have chosen to focus on are *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley, *Blade Runner* (1982) directed by Ridley Scott along with its book counterpart *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968) by Phillip K. Dick, as well as *Klara and the Sun* (2021) by

Kazuo Ishiguro. All three of these works focus on an artificial lifeform, and by analyzing how each of these creatures is treated, this project will observe how the Anglo-American perception of artificial life has changed over time.

The first chapter of my thesis will focus on *Frankenstein,* as it is one of the earliest works of science fiction, and thus is an example of early British and European attitudes towards artificial life. Previous literature on *Frankenstein* has focused on a massive range of subjects, everything from psychoanalysis to gender and race studies. However, few have looked at *Frankenstein* as one of the earliest iterations of artificially intelligent life. The focus of this chapter is to ask what effect the creature's appearance has on how it is treated as an artificial lifeform. The creature is defined by its ugliness, but what exactly does it mean for the creature to be ugly? What does that ugliness look like? And what does that ugliness represent to the human characters in the novel? This chapter will be divided into subsections that discuss the creature's physical appearance; then the views of Victor, the community, and the creature; and finally, how ugliness makes the creature inhuman. By analyzing how appearance affects the way that the human characters treat the creature, we gain insight into how Mary Shelley and the early 19th-century English culture she wrote in may have felt about the possibility of such a creature.

For the second chapter of my thesis, my focus will have jumped forward in time to *Blade Runner* (1982) directed by Ridley Scott and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) by Phillip K. Dick. The artificial lifeforms of this work, called replicants, contrast quite sharply with the hideous creature of *Frankenstein*. Not only are they human in appearance, but they can also be so beautiful as to be uncanny. However, while the creature of *Frankenstein* had the mind of a human, the replicants lack an internal capacity that causes them to fail the Voight-Kampff test measuring empathy. This reversal suggests that Dick, Scott, and the late 20th-century American

culture that they worked in may have switched from focusing on obvious, visual differences between organic and artificial life to the idea that there is something internal and intrinsic about being human. However, the film and the novel also challenge this idea by blurring the lines between human and machine. With this focus on empathy, generally perceived as a human trait, *Blade Runner* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*? raise the question of whether humans would qualify as human if tested on their ability to empathize. By contrasting the differences between the two works, we can see how perceptions of artificial life may have changed within the 16 years between the two works. Also, we gain greater understanding of how views of artificial life in this late 20th-century American culture differ from the previous views of Shelley's early 19th-century English culture.

The third chapter of the thesis will focus on the present with *Klara and the Sun* (2021) by Kazuo Ishiguro. In this most current depiction of artificial life, the artificial friend Klara not only looks human but also acts human. Despite her robotic tics, she feels emotions, exhibits curiosity, and demonstrates self-sacrifice. Thus, she reveals a newer belief that such a perfect artificial lifeform is possible. However, what effect does such a being have on the human characters of the book? If artificial life can do everything a human can do, but better, then what purpose do humans now serve? In order to focus on this theme of obsolescence, we have to compare how the role and ability of the artificial lifeform have improved to outclass humans by examining how Klara differs from the creature of *Frankenstein* and the replicants. Also, the reaction to Klara by the humans in the work is significantly different, as Klara occupies a co-existent relationship with the humans. Unlike the creature or the replicants, Klara lives alongside and works with humans. However, antagonism and resentment against Klara and other artificial creatures still exist due to their role in replacing human jobs. So how does Klara's existence affect the human

characters of her society? By analyzing our 21st-century fears, we can infer some of the views on artificial life that may have inspired Ishiguro in writing this novel. And by contrasting these views with those of the two previous time periods, we can see how perceptions on artificial life in the Anglo-American world have changed over time.

For the conclusion, we can use the patterns we've observed on how the Anglo-American world feels and has felt about artificial life over time to predict how it could possibly react if such creatures were to become reality. Would they embrace it as equal to humanity and deserving of human rights? Or would they reject the possibility no matter what capabilities these potential artificial lifeforms achieve? How important is appearance in determining the humanity of these creatures? Do they have to be capable of empathy in the same manner as humans, or is that even a fair criterion on which to judge them? Would acceptance of artificial life lead to them replacing us in our own society? Ultimately, this project will explore what it means to be human when other entities are also given access to that label.

Chapter 1: Inhuman Appearance in *Frankenstein*

Subsection 1: The Earliest Portrayal

As one of the foremost works of science fiction, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* represents one of the earliest portrayals of artificial life. Thus, this chapter intends to analyze how the creature, the artificial life of this novel, is portrayed by Shelley, as well as how the human characters of the novel view the creature. This will establish a baseline with which to compare how portrayals of artificial life have changed over time.

In this first novel, the creature is defined by its ugliness. In terms of appearance, the creature is modeled to be a human, albeit one of "gigantic stature" (Shelley 54). However, rather than simply looking like a larger human, the creature is described in terms of disease imagery:

> His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips. (Shelley 58)

Skin color is often used as an indication of health. A healthy person would have a red and lively complexion whereas a sickly person is often described as pallid and pale. The creature, however, has neither reddish nor pale skin, and is described as having "yellow skin." This skin tone evokes the medical condition of jaundice, which is a result of abnormal liver function and is characterized by the yellowing of the skin and eyes (WebMD). Also, the creature's skin is described to have "scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath" (Shelley 58). This phrase can be interpreted in two ways. Either the skin was drawn so taut over the muscles and arteries that they stood out in stark contrast against the skin, or the skin was translucent enough

to reveal these muscles and arteries. Either interpretation reveals more illness. If the skin were drawn taut over the muscles and arteries, that would indicate severe dehydration. If the skin is translucent, the creature would look as if it did not have skin. The creature is also described as having a “shrivelled complexion” and “black lips” (Shelley 58). The shriveled complexion goes along with the idea of severe dehydration, while the black color of the lips indicate death. Healthy lips are red due to the close proximity of blood vessels to the surface of the skin. Black lips would therefore indicate that the blood within has putrefied to the point of turning black. The physical features of the creature indicate death and decay.

The creature’s eyes are also sickly. They are “watery” and are “almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set” (Shelley 58). Persistent watery eyes can be the result of aging skin that has “sagged away from the eyes” (Mayo Clinic), while the almost dun-white color of the eyes evokes the image of cataracts. The creature does have some positive indicators of health. The creature’s “hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness” (Shelley 58); however, the primary colors in these features are black and white. The lustrous black hair would only bring attention to the putrid black lips while the pearly white teeth highlight the whiteness of the eyes. Therefore, these health indicators only emphasize the disease imagery.

Thus, through this use of disease imagery, Shelley portrays the creature as looking like a corpse. It is desiccated with rotted blood and seemingly unseeing eyes. This is not life but something dead that has been reanimated. This interpretation with the creature’s appearance ties with the origins of the creature’s parts that were procured from the “dissecting room and the slaughter-house” (Shelley 55). Therefore, the creature’s ugliness can be attributed to its association with death. But what is the effect of the creature’s death-like ugliness? How does the

creature's appearance affect how it is treated by the characters of the novel? In order to answer this question, one needs to consider three perspectives: the view of Victor as its maker, the view of the community of humans besides Victor, and the creature's view of itself.

Subsection 2: The Maker's View

Because this is a novel, there are no visual representations for the reader to see how the creature truly looks. Despite the few literary descriptions of his appearance, the reader ultimately remains blind to the actual hideousness of the creature. Therefore, the viewpoints of other characters in the novel serve as important frames of reference for the reader in understanding the appearance of this creature. The most important frame of reference comes from Victor Frankenstein himself, as the creature looks as he designed it to. Although Victor had "selected [the creature's] features as beautiful" (Shelley 58), he became horrified by his own creation when it lurched into motion. But what exactly does it mean for Victor to consider the creature ugly? Victor's original intention behind the creation of the creature was the hope that he could gain the ability to "renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption" (Shelley 55). Thus, the creature was meant to be a rejection of death. However, this appearance that evokes death serves as a physical indication of Victor's failure. So, while he has succeeded in creating artificial life, this new life embodies the opposite of what he wanted. And Victor recognizes this death imagery, as two of the first descriptions he gives of the creature call it a "demoniacal corpse" and a "mummy" (Shelley 59). Both corpses and mummies are of the dead, so in this instance, Victor is unable to recognize his creature as life because of its appearance.

According to Denise Gigante in her article "Facing the Ugly: The Case of *'Frankenstein,'"* "the ugly is that which threatens to consume and disorder the subject" (Gigante 569). This definition of the ugly fits Victor's initial terror at the creature. For Victor, who has been overwhelmed by the ugliness of his failure, terror consumes him, and he runs away from the creature. The ugliness of the creature terrifies Victor because he views it as a manifestation of death that he cannot overcome. He then has a mental breakdown in which he collapses in a fit

and spends months ill. Throughout that time, “The form of the monster on whom [he] had bestowed existence was for ever before [his] eyes” (Shelley 63). The creature haunts Victor, which fits with how Victor currently experiences the creature as a “dreaded spectre” (Shelley 62). While ghostly entities are still associated with death, they evoke a very different image than that of the previously invoked corpse or mummy. Specters are ethereal and intangible, unlike corpses or mummies. During this moment, Victor is haunted not by the physical embodiment of the creature, but by his own guilt and disappointment in bringing such a terrible thing into existence. And just as these emotions are not physical manifestations, neither is the version of the creature that he sees.

However, after Victor recovers from his illness and learns of William’s death at the creature’s hands, Victor’s reaction to the creature changes. Previously, Victor had fled in sheer terror at the sight of the creature, but upon their reunion, Victor “trembled with rage and horror, resolving to wait [the creature’s] approach and then close with him in mortal combat” (Shelley 101). Victor is no longer “consume[d] and disorder[ed]” (Gigante 569) by the ugliness of the creature. His terror turns to rage and hatred. His perception of the creature also changes. Rather than the previous description of a specter, Victor now calls the creature a “devil” (Shelley 78). The term devil carries heavy Christian symbolism, as the devil represents “the supreme spirit of evil, the tempter and spiritual enemy of humankind” (“devil, n1”). It is also a harbinger of death as the domain of the devil is Hell. In this same manner, the creature now represents more than just the physical embodiment of Victor’s failure, or even a specter that haunts him. Now, the creature is given form as the enemy of humankind. Victor calls the creature other terms with similar association such as “fiend” and “diabolically” (Shelley 102). This association with the devil also comes into play on the creature’s side when it identifies itself with Satan after having

read *Paradise Lost*. This connection will be discussed further in Subsection 4: The Creature's View.

After this new association with the devil, the way Victor interacts with the creature changes. He talks to the creature, despite not previously knowing that the creature understood speech. When Victor had first abandoned the creature, it had only been capable of "mutter[ing] some inarticulate sounds" (Shelley 59). Although the creature had spent great effort on learning how to speak, at this point Victor was unaware of this. But just as the devil is able to speak to people in order to lead them into temptation, Victor naturally talks to the creature assuming that his words will be understood. This verbal interaction also gives the creature a chance to communicate. And the creature's words reach Victor. When the creature entreats Victor to hear its story, Victor claims to have "felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were" (Shelley 104). However, despite the eloquence of the creature, Victor is unable to get past the creature's appearance. Victor claims that:

> [The creature's] words had a strange effect upon me. I compassionated him and sometimes felt a wish to console him, but when I looked upon him, when I saw the filthy mass that moved and talked, my heart sickened and my feelings were altered to those of horror and hatred. (Shelley 149)

The description that Victor gives the creature now is that of a "filthy mass," which shows how he is still unable to view the creature as a living entity. It is still a dead thing that should not have "moved and talked" (Shelley 149). Therefore, Victor breaks his promise to the creature to create a bride for it.

The scene begins with Victor expressing his fear of the creature or its bride continuing to be threats to humanity, especially the possibility of the two of them siring a "race of devils… who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror" (Shelley 170). Then, upon seeing the creature's countenance that "expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery" (Shelley 171), Victor destroys the body of the bride. The term "devil" makes a reappearance to describe the creature's potential offspring. Rather than corpses or ghosts that cannot reproduce, the idea of a devil allows the possibility of the creature reproducing. Also, the terms "malice and treachery" are associated with the "Deep malice to conceal, couched with revenge" of Satan in *Paradise Lost* (Lorriman 139).

Therefore, the ugly represents more than the powers mentioned in Gigante's definition of "that which threatens to consume and disorder the subject" (Gigante 569). Rather, the ugly represents whatever Victor sees in the creature. First the ugliness that Victor saw was the failure to reject death, seen in the form of a corpse. Then it was the haunting bitterness of guilt and disappointment, seen in the form of a specter. And now, with Victor enraged and hateful, the ugliness he sees is that of a devil, an enemy to humankind. Therefore, despite being the creator of this artificial life, Victor never sees it as equal to human life. It is always some form of monster, despite its ability to communicate.

Subsection 3: The Community's View

Although Victor may always see the creature as a monster, Victor could be uniquely biased against the creature. How do those other human characters that the creature interacts with view the creature? What is the effect of the creature's appearance on their frame of reference? In this section, I will focus on the De Lacey family, William Frankenstein, and Robert Walton.

Although the DeLacey's have the second most significant relationship with the creature, it is largely one-sided, as the De Lacey family live unaware of the creature. The De Lacey family only truly meet the creature on one occasion, when only old father De Lacey communicates with the creature. Due to his blindness, De Lacey is able to communicate with the creature without prejudice. The creature had spent time conversing with the old man, during which DeLacey stated, "it will afford me true pleasure to be in any way serviceable to a human creature" (Shelley 136). There is a seemingly innocuous condition here of the beneficiary having to be a "human," but as of this conversation, De Lacey wishes to help the creature. However, when the other members of the family see the creature, they either faint, flee, or attack. The De Lacey family then immediately leave the area. The reason for leaving, as stated by Felix the De Lacey son, is his belief that "The life of [his] father is in the greatest danger" (Shelley 140). This belief, assuming that it is shared by the entire family and not just Felix, would imply that the father De Lacey no longer wishes to help the creature. The obvious reason for this change of heart is that the creature does not fit the condition of being human. As stated by the creature, the De Lacey family are benevolent. The creature claims that despite the De Lacey family's own poverty, the "poor that stopped at their door were never driven away" (Shelley 134). For these people to have forsaken the creature's plea shows their great prejudice against those who are not human.

Also, there is a specific assumption of violence by the creature. Felix believes that the creature had been targeting old father De Lacey's life. This assumption of violence is shared by William Frankenstein when the creature kidnaps him. William's first reaction to the creature is to cover his eyes. But when the creature speaks to him, William cries out, '"Monster! Ugly wretch! You wish to eat me and tear me to pieces. You are an ogre"' (Shelley 144). The term "ogre" refers to a "man-eating monster" in folklore and mythology ("ogre, n1"). Although the creature kidnaps William in the hope that he is too young to have been prejudiced against appearances, William already has the association of an ogre in mind upon seeing the creature. However, this cannot have been a learned association, as William is the only character in the novel to call the creature an ogre. Rather, this seems to be a unique association that William came up with upon seeing the creature. This would reinforce the idea that the creature's ugliness is a mirror for the viewer to create their own perception. This would also mean that even a child as young as William has an innate ability to attribute violence to the creature. There is something about the creature's appearance that causes the human characters in the novel to fear the creature and to assume it will cause violence and death.

Robert Walton has a very different context behind his meeting with the creature. Having heard Victor's entire story, he knows of the creature's great capacity for violence while also having heard of its piteous circumstances and rejection by all humanity. Therefore, when he meets the creature for the first time, he is able to control his instinctive horror. And rather than listen to Victor's dying request to destroy the creature, he listens to the creature. However, Walton is only able to talk to the creature because he "dared not again raise [his] eyes to [its] face (Shelley 221). As with the old man De Lacey, not seeing the creature is a prerequisite for talking to the creature without extreme prejudice clouding one's view. Also, despite this ability to

communicate, the words that Walton chooses mirror Victor's. Walton calls the creature's actions those of "diabolical vengeance" and refers to the creature as a "fiend," both terms having been used by Victor previously (Shelley 222-223). Thus, Walton's interaction with the creature is colored by Victor's views. He is able to pity the creature because Victor once did, but he still associates it with a devil because of Victor's influence.

All of these characters have some sort of innate bias against the creature. For the De Lacey family, the fact that the creature is not human restrains their usual generosity. For William, the creature looking like an ogre scares him too much to listen to the creature's words. And even Walton, who is able to talk to the creature, still accuses it of devilishness due to Victor's influence. Therefore, the human community in the novel still sees the creature only as a monster. Just as with Victor, the creature that they see is a monster that reflects their own bias.

Subsection 4: The Creature's View

The final viewpoint to consider is that of the creature towards itself. How does its appearance affect its identity? With the viewpoints of the other characters of the novel, the creature's appearance has served as a mirror for them to create their own perception, usually allowing them to see a reflection of their own bias. The creature also perceives its appearance as a mirror, through which it sees all of what makes it different from the humans that it admires. The first time the creature looks at its own appearance, it recounts:

> I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers—their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions; but how was I terrified when I viewed myself in a transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the monster that I am, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. (Shelley 116)

The creature has not been taught human biases of beauty and ugliness. However, it refers to the DeLacey family as having "grace, beauty, and delicate complexions" while recognizing itself as ugly. But not just ugly, the creature is "terrified" of its own appearance. Although the creature had learned that it was ugly through the contrast between itself and the DeLacey family, ugliness does not necessarily cause terror. However, similar to the human characters of the novel, the creature responds to itself with fear. And the first description it uses of itself with this newfound knowledge is to call itself a "monster." Jean-Jacques Lecercle argues in his article "What's in a Monster?" that "the [creature] is monstrous not because of his physical characteristics (his size and ugliness), but because he is called so" (Lecercle 18). Thus, when the creature calls itself a monster, it accepts that identity and becomes a monster. And by virtue of being a monster, the creature cannot be human. After rejection by the DeLacey family, the creature claims, "I could

with pleasure have destroyed the cottage and its inhabitants and have glutted myself with their shrieks and misery" (Shelley 138). Although the creature is justifiably upset with the DeLacey family's rejection, to experience "pleasure" at such violence and destruction reveals a monstrous quality that had previously not been exhibited by the creature. Even when it had been attacked by the villagers prior to meeting the De Lacey family, it never responded that way. This acceptance of the term "monster" begins the creature's rejection of humanity within its identity.

Although Victor had designed it to resemble humans, the creature is a perversion of that resemblance. Rather than simply looking different from humans, it is a deformed and twisted parallel, as evidenced by the creature's claim that, "my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance" (Shelley 103). Another important but twisted parallel is brought up by the creature through discussion of the text *Paradise Lost*. The creature's creation is supposed to parallel that of God's creation of man. However, as the creature states, "I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel" (Shelley 103). The creature acknowledges the parallel between itself and Adam but chooses to be recognized as the "fallen angel" Satan instead. As stated by Victoria Lorriman in her article "What is the effect of Satanic allusion in Frankenstein?", "The creature frequently addresses Victor with imperatives, such as 'Do your duty towards me' and 'This being you must create,' which, by virtue of their form as commands, challenge Victor's God-like authority that was arbitrarily established when he became the Creature's creator" (Lorriman 138). The creature's choice to associate with Satan reveals its wish to defy Victor's authority just as Satan attempted to defy God. The creature furthers this defiance later on after Victor destroys the creature's bride. The creature tells Victor, "You are my creator, but I am your master; obey!" (Shelley 172). By calling itself Victor's "master," it rejects the natural order as believed by the humans of this novel. God is man's creator and is therefore

man's master. To reject this notion that the creator is the master is to reject the identity of (Christian) humanity.

Also, the creature's decision to adopt Satan, the devil, as part of its identity evokes Victor's choice to name the creature a "devil" (Shelley 78). However, Victor's "devil" carried the definition of mankind's enemy. The creature's "devil" does not have that same meaning. Rather than wishing to become mankind's enemy, it wishes to separate itself even further from any humanity within its identity. Thus, it rejects the Adam parallels and adopts the inhuman Satan for its identity. This idea can be seen from the creature's vow, "Evil thenceforth became my good" (Shelley 222). This statement directly refers to Satan's line, "Evil be thou my good" from *Paradise Lost* (Milton IV.110). Through these declarations, both figures cast off all shackles that tied them to their previous states. For Satan, this means throwing away all hope of returning to heaven. And for the creature, his declaration means throwing away all vestiges of humanity left in him. The creature continues, "I had no choice but to adapt my nature to an element which I had willingly chosen" (Shelley 222). The paradox of the "no choice" and "willingly chosen" can be explained by the creature having no choice but to accept its monstrous appearance and then willingly choosing to reject its humanity and embracing a monstrous nature.

Another important detail about the creature is that it has no name. While it is reasonable for Victor not to have named his horrifying creation, what's unusual is the creature never naming itself. Names are important markers of individuality and form a core part of identity for humans. But as something that is not human, the creature chooses to reject a name as well. Thus, just as the human characters of the novel reject the creature for its appearance, the creature's appearance forces it to reject humanity in its own identity.

Subsection 5: Conclusion

With these frames of reference, the reader understands that despite the creature's eloquence, its appearance is too hideous for the human characters to accept. And with the rejection that it faces, the creature in turn rejects humanity and becomes the monster that it is called. Therefore, Shelley's portrayal of an artificial lifeform is one that cannot be accepted by humanity due to both human biases against it, as well as its own capacity to reject humanity in turn. This view cannot be argued to be representative of all who lived at the time, but it can be argued to be a popular view by virtue of the novel's success. Therefore, a baseline for portrayals of artificial life can be described as one of rejection. Even if artificial life has human qualities such as speech and emotional depth, these are insufficient to grant them acceptance by humanity due to a difference in appearance.

Chapter 2: Testing Humanity in *Blade Runner* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Subsection 1: Continued Rejection

150 years after the publication of *Frankenstein*, Phillip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* was published in 1968. In his novel, Dick described a new class of artificial life forms called the Nexus-6 android, later dubbed "replicants" in *Blade Runner* (1982), the film adaptation directed by Ridley Scott. In contrast to the horrifically ugly creature of *Frankenstein*, the replicants of Dick's novel are perfect replicas of humans in appearance. The only physical way of telling the difference is with a bone marrow analysis (*Do Androids Dream* 21). And similar to the creature, they have an intellectual capacity that matches that of their human creators. However, the replicants still face rejection by humans despite their beautiful appearance. Despite being replicas of humans, they are never treated as equal to the real thing. This chapter intends to analyze how the replicants are treated in the novel and film, and then to compare them to the creature from *Frankenstein*. Also, by looking at differences between the novel and the film, which was made 16 years later, this chapter will analyze how the portrayal of replicants changed over time.

In both the novel and the film, replicants are used as slave labor in colonies out in the solar system. They are executed, colloquially known as "retired," when found on Earth because, in the novel, any replicants on Earth would be escapees while in the film, replicants have been outlawed on Earth due to a bloody mutiny they once committed (*Blade Runner* 2:33). Bounty hunters who hunt replicants, called blade runners, operate under the jurisdiction of the police, and have the legal right to retire replicants that they find. Despite not sharing the creature's curse of ugliness, the replicants still do not find acceptance with humanity. Also, there is a difference

between humans and replicants in that replicants do not have the same capacity for empathy as humans.

But how do individual humans within the novel and the film feel about these replicants? In the novel, Rick Deckard, the protagonist, rationalizes his job of being a blade runner through the replicants' lack of empathy, as well as the influence of Mercerism, a religion that focuses on sharing a technological experience of empathy. According to Mercerism, the act of killing is only allowed against those deemed The Killers. And for Rick Deckard:

> … an escaped humanoid robot, which had killed its master, which had been equipped with an intelligence greater than that of many human beings, which had no regard for animals, which possessed no ability to feel emphatic joy for another life form's success or grief at its defeat — that, for him, epitomized The Killers. (*Do Androids Dream* 13)

Rick Deckard assumes that any replicants that he may come across have already committed crimes and have violent tendencies. Similar to the human characters in *Frankenstein*, Deckard assumes the artificial creatures are violent. According to him, a replicant must have "killed its master" prior to coming to Earth, although the replicant could simply have run away. Also, Rick Deckard seems to dislike the idea that the replicants could be smarter than humans, as this reason is listed second and prior to any reasons regarding the lack of empathy. The last two reasons specifically make reference to the replicants' lack of empathy as a justification to retire them. However, he seems unaware of the irony that despite human empathy for animals, humans were the ones to make them almost extinct. But it is through this justification that Rick Deckard claims his killing of replicants is moral.

In the film, Deckard never speaks aloud his thoughts on killing replicants, and there is no mention of Mercerism. However, there are some subtle hints that Deckard does not have the same mentality about retiring replicants as his novel counterpart. Deckard resists returning to the job, as he is retired, and his former police captain Bryant has to threaten him into taking the job of hunting the rogue replicants (*Blade Runner* 12:50). Also, Deckard tells Rachael that he gets the "shakes" (*Blade Runner* 1:03:40) after retiring replicants. Rachael is another important character, but she will be further discussed in the next subsection. After Deckard retires Zhora, his first replicant kill of the film, Deckard is shaken. Rather than showing any joy at success or relief at having survived, Deckard looks horrified by his own actions. He even makes a small motion as if he had just stopped himself from throwing up. (*Blade Runner* 59:05). Despite being a seasoned blade runner with many kills to his name, he acts as if this were his first kill. One possible reading of this scene would be that Deckard has gotten sick of retiring replicants. However, whatever sympathy he may have for them, it does not stop Deckard from pulling the trigger.

Other characters in both the novel and the film demonstrate varying degrees of empathy or contempt for the replicants. In the novel, Rick Deckard's wife Iran calls him a "murderer" for killing "those poor andys," a slang term for androids (*Do Androids Dream* 1-2). However, she does not seem to care enough about the replicants to do anything about their supposed murders by her husband. Rather, her words seem to be more of a barb towards Rick Deckard rather than moral outrage. As Deckard points out, Iran does not hesitate to spend the money he has earned by retiring replicants (*Do Androids Dream* 2). In the film, the police captain Bryant refers to the replicants as "skin jobs," seemingly a derogatory term (*Blade Runner* 11:31). Bryant also seems to relish the death of replicants, as he proudly calls Deckard a "one-man slaughter house" (*Blade*

Runner 1:00:48). Although the replicants are replicas of humans, the human characters do not seem to view the replicants as deserving of equal dignity and respect that a human would garner.

Despite looking identical to humans, the replicants still face discrimination. Unlike the creature, the replicants do find some humans who have sympathy for them. However, this is not enough to stop the execution of replicants found on Earth. And at least some who discriminate against the replicants justify themselves with the fact that replicants do not have empathy. They are not human and do not deserve human rights. But does this justification hold any weight? Are the replicants as incapable of empathy as the human characters claim?

Subsection 2: Measuring Empathy

In both the novel and the film, the replicants are distinguished from humans by their inability to pass the Voigt-Kampff Empathy test. The test measures “the so called 'shame' or 'blushing' reaction to a morally shocking stimulus” through capillary dilation in the facial area (*Do Androids Dream* 19). The morally shocking stimulus specifically refers to, “Empathic response. In a variety of social situations. Mostly having to do with animals” (*Do Androids Dream* 47). Although replicants are capable of mimicking the physical reaction of moral shock, their response is slower than that of a human. Thus, the test purports to reliably distinguish replicants from humans. And in both the novel and the film, the test never fails to identify a replicant each time it is used. However, the novel raises doubts as to whether the Voigt-Kampff test can reliably distinguish between a replicant and a human who has “a 'flattening of affect'” (*Do Androids Dream* 15). According to the article “Flattening of Affect and Personal Constructs” published in 1970 by McPherson et. al, this condition causes humans not to display the correct emotional response, given the context of a circumstance. Although this belief is now outdated, at the time of the article and the novel’s publication, there existed the idea of a correct emotional response. In the novel, radiation poisoning has led to the degeneration of the genetic and mental capacity of many humans. With such degeneration can come mental illnesses that decrease emotional capacity. Therefore, the novel hints that given this possibility, the Voigt-Kampff test may not be as reliable as claimed.

However, there is directionality in this suggested fallibility. The novel asks whether humans can fail the test, not if replicants can pass. The novel does not doubt the lack of empathetic capacity in a replicant, and the way it portrays the replicants to the reader reinforces this perception. Every replicant in the novel is deceitful and manipulative. From Polokov, who

pretends to be a Soviet police officer, to Garland and Luba, who try to trick Rick Deckard into believing that Phil Resch is a replicant, and Rachael Rosen, who sleeps with Rick Deckard to manipulate him into being unable to kill replicants, the novel paints the replicants as sociopathic in behavior and without remorse. They are also selfish and cruel, as can be seen in the way that Pris treats J.R. Isidore despite his kindness and kills his spider despite his begging her not to (*Do Androids Dream* 82). The novel's portrayal of the replicants never challenges the notion that they are unable to feel empathy. They are portrayed as cold, logical, and lacking in emotion. Therefore, when the reader applies their own subjective test for empathy on the replicants, the replicants fail.

In the film, the Voigt-Kampff test plays less of a role and there is greater onus on the viewers to interpret for themselves whether or not the replicants lack empathy. The film only depicts the Voigt-Kampff test twice, and in the first representation, the test fails because Leon, the replicant, kills the administrator before the test can be finished. In his article, "A Ghost in the Replicant," Christopher Lovins argues that Leon does not fail due to a lack of empathy, as he demonstrates an empathetic response when told he is not helping the hypothetical tortoise. Leon asks with what seems like anger in his voice, "What do you mean I'm not helping?" (*Blade Runner* 7:00). It is only when Leon is asked about his mother, something that he does not have, that Leon fails the test (Lovins 27). The second time the test is administered introduces doubt into the Voigt-Kampff test's ability. In this instance, Deckard administers the test to Rachael, and it takes over 100 questions instead of the usual 20-30 to determine that she is a replicant (*Blade Runner* 21:45). Rachael is a unique case because although she is a replicant, she has been implanted with human memories and believes that she is human. Therefore, she is more capable of delivering an empathetic response quickly. Although she still fails the test, the fact that a

replicant can improve at the test raises the question of whether empathy is something that the replicants can eventually learn. In contrast to the novel, the film hints that the fallibility of the test lies in the opposite direction. Rather than questioning whether humans can fail, the film asks whether replicants could pass.

The portrayal of the replicants in the film also differs from that of the replicants of the novel. The replicants show much greater emotional depth and empathy. When Rachael finds out that she is a replicant, she cries (*Blade Runner* 34:00) and Roy Batty mourns Pris's death (*Blade Runner* 1:37:06). They clearly demonstrate sorrow and grief, two emotions that are heavily tied to the experience of empathy. While there are moments when the replicants demonstrate the same deception and manipulation shown in the novel, such as how Pris seduces J. F. Sebastian, this is offset by Deckard's own act of deception. Deckard pretends to be from the Confidential Committee on Moral Abuses when hunting Zhora (*Blade Runner* 52:44). Therefore, deception and manipulation are no longer only replicant traits. Also, the most powerful moment in the film occurs when Roy Batty saves Deckard from falling at the end of the film (*Blade Runner* 1:45:35). The film never truly explains why Roy Batty decides to save Deckard despite all that Deckard has done. However, his line, "Quite an experience to live in fear, isn't it?" (*Blade Runner* 1:45:15) just before this moment implies that Roy feels empathy for Deckard's fear of death. When the viewer applies their own test for empathy to the replicants of the film, they will likely do far better than the replicants of the novel. However, it is true that even these replicants fail the Voigt-Kampff empathy test. But does lacking empathy necessarily mean that the replicants lack humanity?

Subsection 3: What Defines Humanity?

How is humanity defined in these two works? In the novel, the influence of Mercerism ties the concept of empathy to the definition of humanity. After the devastating effects of World War Terminus, the society in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* appears to value empathy for life. However, this society seems to believe that only humans are capable of empathy. As Rick Deckard muses to himself, "Empathy, evidently, existed only within the human community" (*Do Androids Dream* 12). However, the humans of the novel rely on a tool called a "mood organ" to regulate their emotions (*Do Androids Dream* 1). They also rely on the "empathy boxes" (*Do Androids Dream* 8), devices through which humans can experience an empathetic connection with Wilbur Mercer and the rest of humanity. Using these external tools to control their emotional responses seems to take away from the authenticity of human emotions. Choosing how to feel through the press of a button is a very robotic way of experiencing the world. Also, in the novel, another marker of the human capacity for empathy lies in the practice of taking care of animals. The Voigt-Kampff test measures empathy, usually for animals. However, because animals are rare and expensive, many humans have purchased electronic animals and pretend to take care of them. There is intense irony in how so much care is put into taking care of electronic animals, and yet the electronic humans, replicants, are executed.

When fellow bounty hunter Phil Resch is introduced, the replicants claim that Phil Resch is one of them. Deeply troubled by this possibility, Phil Resch tries to convince both Rick Deckard and himself that he is human. The primary way he does so is to discuss his pet squirrel. Phil Resch claims to love his squirrel (*Do Androids Dream* 51), and he describes to Rick Deckard how well he cares for it. His supposed love for his squirrel contrasts heavily with his cold and ruthless demeanor when retiring replicants. According to Rick Deckard, Phil Resch

"like[s] to kill" (*Do Androids Dream* 55). Rick Deckard loathes Phil Resch and says to him, "There is a defect in your empathic, role-taking ability. One which we don't test for. Your feelings toward androids" (*Do Androids Dream* 56). However, Phil Resch is undoubtedly human, at least according to the Voigt-Kampff test. Therefore, the existence of Phil Resch suggests that empathy does not have to be absolute to define a human. But if empathy can be selectively applied, is it even empathy at all?

Another consideration is that the replicants also appear to feel some measure of empathy for each other, although not for humans or animals. When Rick Deckard retires Irmgard Baty, Roy Baty "let out a cry of anguish" which could be interpreted as him feeling empathy for her pain (*Do Androids Dream* 89). If Roy Baty has conditional empathy towards replicants, does that make him any different from Phil Resch, who has conditional empathy towards humans and animals but none for androids? And because Phil Resch can be considered to have humanity because of his empathy, could not Roy Baty be argued to have humanity as well?

According to Phillip K. Dick in his essay, "The Human and the Android," "Androidization requires obedience. And, most of all, predictability. It is precisely when a given person's response to any given situation can be predicted with scientific accuracy that the gates are open for the wholesale production of the android life form" ("Human and Android" 9). In his novel, Dick's description of the android fits his replicants. As Phil Resch states, "I can almost foretell what an android is going to do" (*Do Androids Dream* 49). However, in the film, there is a greater emphasis on the self-determination of the replicants. As a result, the human characters are unable to predict the actions of the replicants. As Deckard asks at the beginning of the film, "Well, I don't get it. What do they risk coming back to earth for? That's unusual" (*Blade Runner* 14:43). While in the novel, the replicants are not given an explicit goal except to survive, the

replicants of the film are led by Roy Batty to find a way to extend their lifespans. The desire to live and the fear of death are very human emotions that would resonate with the viewer. Thus, the marker of humanity in the film is the degree of self-determination and the ability to choose rather than empathy such as in the novel.

Therefore, the viewer may become emotionally invested in the choices that Roy Batty makes. The two important choices that Roy Batty makes occur when he kills Eldon Tyrell, as well as when he saves Deckard from falling. After confronting Eldon Tyrell and discovering that it is impossible to extend his life, Roy Batty states, “I’ve done questionable things” (*Blade Runner* 1:25:26). This seeming admission of a guilty conscience humanizes Roy Batty even more. Rather than having a single-minded, robotic obsession with extending his life, Roy Batty recognizes the harm he has caused others, and then realizes the futility of having done so, as his goal is impossible. Then Roy Batty kisses Eldon Tyrell and murders him by crushing his eyes. One interpretation of the kiss is that it symbolizes how Roy is stealing the breath of life from Eldon Tyrell. In the Biblical account of creation, “Then the Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7). Because Eldon Tyrell is God’s parallel but is unable to breathe into Roy the breath of life or a longer life, Roy symbolically steals Eldon Tyrell’s own breath of life as he kills him.

Through this choice, as well as through Roy’s killing J. F. Fitzgerald, the viewer may believe that Roy Batty has fallen into despair and has lost any mercy for humans. And when Roy chases Deckard, the viewer believes that they can predict Roy’s actions and that he will act as an android and attempt to kill Deckard. However, Roy defies all expectations and saves Deckard

from falling (*Blade Runner* 1:45:35). This choice is merciful, paradoxical, and remarkably human. Roy Batty's famous speech that follows highlights the contradictory nature of his life:

> I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched C-beams glitter in the darkness at Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time like tears in rain. Time to die. (*Blade Runner* 1:46:20)

Despite his memories of war and death, Roy Batty looks back at his time with awe and nostalgia and even a hint of grief. He recognizes the beauty in these moments and regrets that they will die with him. However, Roy Batty still makes the choice to accept the death of himself and these moments with dignity. This final act of self-determination turns Roy Batty's death from an inevitable result of artificial design to one of his own acceptance.

The self-determinism of the replicants contrasts with the lack of choice that Deckard has. Despite not wanting to take the job of hunting the replicants, because he is threatened by the police captain Bryant, Deckard has "no choice" but to comply (*Blade Runner* 13:30). The actions taken by Roy Batty and the replicants drive the plot of the film, while Deckard simply reacts to their actions. Leon's shooting of Holden results in Deckard taking the case; Leon leaving behind his photographs leads Deckard to Zhora; and her flight causes Deckard to shoot her and be attacked by Leon. Then, Roy Batty's murder of Eldon Tyrel and J. F. Sebastian brings Deckard to Pris and Roy Batty, and Deckard lives only due to Roy Batty's mercy. In a way, Deckard is the android here, as his actions can be predicted based on whatever actions the replicants take. Therefore, the replicants seem more human than the human Deckard.

Subsection 4: Comparing the Replicants with the Creature

Despite being two of the most famous portrayals of artificial life in science fiction, the creature and the replicants could not be more different. Despite its unnatural ugliness, the creature has emotional depth and complexity equal to those of any of the human characters in *Frankenstein*. Its reasons for being regarded as inhuman have to do with its external features, and it does not seemingly lack anything internally that would preclude it from being human. The replicants, however, lack something fundamentally human inside. Because they are physically indistinguishable from humans, they are accused of having some internal defect that proves that they are not human. This contrast suggests that in the time between *Frankenstein* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* popular depictions of artificial life expanded to include a focus on an intrinsic quality that defines humanity.

The human characters also differ in how they are portrayed. While *Frankenstein* sympathizes with the creature, the human characters are not portrayed as wholly unreasonable in their treatment of the creature. Because the creature is a dangerous monster, and Victor should not have brought it to life. In contrast, the human characters in *Blade Runner* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* are portrayed as mostly blind to the humanity demonstrated by the replicants. In the society of *Blade Runner* and *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* the replicants are not monsters. They can be cruel and manipulative, but not to an inhuman extent. Thus, these two works demonstrate a difference from *Frankenstein* in that artificial life forms are portrayed as deserving of more sympathy from the human characters.

Also, with the film *Blade Runner* comes a change that removes it from the same category as *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *Frankenstein*. In *Blade Runner*, artificial life is no longer treated as impossible to reconcile with the human. While *Do Androids Dream of Electric*

Sheep? never fully commits to the idea that the replicants can be as human as humans, the film deliberately asks this question. Despite their artificial origins, the replicants of the film are depicted as living rich and worthy lives that deserve to be mourned. Instead of growing more inhuman like the creature, "[Blade Runner] powerfully evokes Frankenstein, but … The artificial creatures end up seeming more "human" than the people who stalk them" (Clayton 85). The replicants of *Blade Runner* have humanity, despite not being human.

Subsection 5: Conclusion

Dick's novel explores what happens when humans lose touch with their humanity. Rather than focusing on the replicants themselves, the novel uses replicants as a tool to further its question on the human condition. The creature from *Frankenstein* serves a similar role in Shelley's novel. Despite the fact that the creature is arguably the most interesting and dynamic character in the novel, it exists only to complement Victor's story. However, *Blade Runner* deliberately chooses to turn away from focusing on the human characters. Rather than asking what defines the humanity of humans, the film asks whether there is humanity in the nonhuman replicants. This change marks a shift in who the subject is when exploring artificial life. The film's decision to center those questions on the replicants demonstrates new respect for artificial life and acknowledges them as entities worthy of exploration.

Chapter 3: Human Obsolescence in *Klara and the Sun*

Subsection 1: A Perfect Specimen

53 years after the publication of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and 39 years after *Blade Runner*, Kazuo Ishiguro published *Klara and the Sun* in 2021. Set in the near future when advances in artificial intelligence and automation have drastically changed society, the novel imagines an increasingly isolated humanity who turn to technology to fill their needs. The protagonist of the novel is one such piece of technology. Klara is an Artificial Friend, a robot made to fill the need for companionship in human children. In the novel, Klara acts as a companion for Josie, who is a sickly and often bedridden child. Josie has undergone the lifting procedure, a form of genetic editing that increases intelligence and ability but can also lead to illness and death. Klara's purpose is to help alleviate Josie's lack of companionship. However, Klara is no mere robot to simply act according to her role. She instead devises her own goal to try to cure Josie. Throughout the novel, Klara demonstrates traits that far surpass the capabilities shown in other artificial creations such as the creature or the replicants. This chapter will explore how Klara differs from her predecessors, as well as what such a belief in a perfect specimen of artificial life may reveal about our modern perceptions on artificial life.

Both the creature and the replicant were human-adjacent but had deficiencies that kept them from truly being equal to humans. The creature's hideous appearance made it incapable of ever being accepted, while the replicants had a lack of empathy that led to the moral justification to kill them. While Blade Runner explored the idea that the replicants could have humanity, the film never takes a firm stance. It simply asks the question of whether it could be possible. In contrast, the novel's portrayal of Klara heavily suggests that she has some ineffable quality that could be considered humanity, or at least its robot counterpart.

In the two previous works, humanity has been defined by appearance and empathy. The creature's appearance precludes it from being human, and it becomes the monster that it is perceived to be. In contrast, Klara looks human. She is described by Josie, who says, "You look kind of French" (Ishiguro 16), implying that she looks like a human girl with French ethnicity. However, there is something about her and the other Artificial Friends that signifies their condition as robotic. The novel never describes what exactly gives away their identity, but they are visually recognizable as robots. Rosa and Klara even look for Artificial Friends from the window of their store and notice that there are not very many around (Ishiguro 19). This nonhuman marker leads to discrimination similar to that experienced by the creature. Klara is treated by some human characters as not equal to humans, such as when a nameless human woman complains, "These are sought-after seats … They shouldn't be taken by machines … First they take the jobs. Then they take the seats at the theater?" (Ishiguro 215). The woman believes that Klara taking a theater seat would be a slight against the humans who could not get a seat. Despite the woman wearing a "high-rank blue dress" (Ishiguro 215), even those who have high social positions are resentful of robots. Also, she never addresses Klara; the woman only speaks to Josie about Klara. Thus, her problem is with Josie, a very privileged person taking a theater seat that could have gone to another human and giving it to her personal robot instead. Her words also reveal a societal shift and resentment that will be further explored in Subsection 2.

However, unlike the creature, Klara is accepted by some people, namely Josie. Josie never treats Klara differently than she does other humans. Josie acknowledges that Klara has emotions and feelings even upon first meeting her. She says to Klara, who did not remember seeing Josie, "Oh, don't feel bad or anything" (Ishiguro 16) which shows that Josie believes that

Klara is capable of guilt and that Josie wants to alleviate such a feeling in Klara. Josie also apologizes to Klara multiple times throughout the novel whenever she believes that she has wronged Klara. These acts reveal that Josie treats Klara as deserving of some amount of human respect. There are others who treat Klara well, too, such as Cindy, a waitress and presumably not a member of the upper class, who defends Klara from the aforementioned human woman who did not want Klara seated at the theater (Ishiguro 215). Thus, it seems that class is not an indication of discrimination against Artificial Friends such as Klara. Also, Klara does not require an inhuman marker in her physical appearance. Later on in the novel, Klara comes across her new Artificial Friend body that is an exact replica of Josie (Ishiguro 182). This replica presumably does not have whatever marker that would signify that she is a robot since Josie is human. If Klara were to inhabit this body, she would appear to be the exact same as any human girl, as long as she could portray Josie convincingly. Therefore, appearance is not a precluding factor in Klara being treated as having humanity.

The replicants of *Blade Runner* are similar in looking human; however, they have the internal deficiency of not feeling empathy. In this respect, Klara far exceeds them. Throughout the novel, Klara reveals a deep sense of compassion and empathy, which is most exemplified in her self-sacrifice to try to cure Josie. Klara displays an almost religious reverence for the sun and worships it as a conscious and benevolent deity. Because of her own dependence on solar power, as well as once witnessing the sun seemingly bring a homeless man and his dog back to life (Ishiguro 39), Klara believes that the sun can cure Josie's illness. Thus, Klara makes a deal with the sun to destroy the Cootings Machine in exchange for it saving Josie's life. The Cootings Machine is a mechanical object that creates pollution, which leads Klara to believe that the sun desires its destruction. In order to achieve this goal, Klara gives up some of the P-E-G Nine

solution in her head, damaging her mental capabilities. This act of sacrifice does not come lightly, as Klara's, "mind was filling with great fear" (Ishiguro 202) at the possibility of losing some of her cognitive ability. However, Klara's devotion to Josie is so great that Klara is willing to sacrifice herself for her. Klara even says to the sun, "'I don't mind that I lost precious fluid. I'd willingly have given more, given it all, if it meant your providing special help to Josie" (Ishiguro 242). This act of compassion and empathy far exceeds any act displayed by the replicants.

Klara's willingness to sacrifice herself for the sake of others is a trait that does not belong to her predecessors. Even the empathy shown by Roy Batty when he saves Deckard does not compare to Klara's empathy. Because although Roy Batty demonstrates mercy, there is a greater level of empathy necessary to sacrifice your own well-being to help others. And not only is Klara more empathetic and compassionate than other artificial life forms, but she is also arguably more empathetic and compassionate than some of the human characters in her own novel. While Chrissie, Josie's mother, loves her daughter, she intends to replace Josie with Klara after Josie dies. To many readers, this would seem like a monstrous intention, and no mother with any degree of humanity would try to commit such an act. The idea that humans are unique individuals is challenged by the notion that a person can be replaced by a machine that simply mimics the person. And if Chrissie can accept such mimicry as equal to her own daughter, this could suggest that she never truly loved Josie because Josie should be irreplaceable to Chrissie. However, Chrissie does love Josie, and Chrissie struggles with this decision. Chrissie's contemplation of this act reveals a great deal about how the value of what is perceived to be human may have changed in the setting of the novel. As stated previously by the nameless woman who does not want Klara to take seats at the theater, "First they take the jobs. Then they

take the seats at the theater?" (Ishiguro 215). The implication here is that the woman resents the fact that robots such as Klara are replacing humanity.

Subsection 2: Replacing Humanity

In a society where robots and other forms of automation have replaced human workers, how unreasonable would it be for robots to replace humans in other areas as well? Not only in the workforce, but also every other aspect of human life? This question defines Chrissie's plan to replace Josie with Klara. Josie's father, Paul, used to be an engineer. However, he was "substituted" (Ishiguro 92), meaning that his job was replaced by a robot. According to "The Future of Employment: How Susceptible Are Jobs to Computerisation?" written in 2017 by Frey and Osborne about the American labor market, the probability of computerization of the occupation of engineer was only 0.14% (Frey and Osborne 270). This low probability was due to the "high degree of creative intelligence" that engineering requires (Frey and Osborne 267). However, in the setting of *Klara and the Sun*, even this job has been completely replaced. Paul was not a common engineer. As described by Chrissie, Paul was "top-flight. Unique knowledge, specialist skills," and she then exclaims, "How is it right no one can make use of you?" (Ishiguro 171). One possible interpretation of Paul's unemployment is that robots and automation have become so advanced that human skills are simply insufficient, no matter how good they are.

The existence of Artificial Friends is another area where humans have been replaced. Lifted children, those who have been genetically engineered for greater intelligence, do not go to school. Instead, they are tutored at home. Because home tutoring does not give these children an opportunity to make friends, they have "interaction meetings" (Ishiguro 61) where they can socialize. However, these meetings do not seem to be events that the lifted children look forward to. Josie reveals great anxiety over an upcoming interaction meeting and says about the lifted children, "They're not my friends" (Ishiguro 61). And when the event occurs, the air is one of hostility, where the children judge each other on whether they are displaying the correct social

cues. One boy named Danny is mocked for not understanding that a greeting is necessary, while both Rick and Klara are tested to see what their capabilities are (Ishiguro 71-76). These hostile interaction meetings do not seem conducive to making friends. Thus, Artificial Friends seem to have been the solution for this problem. If the lifted children are unable to make human friends, then a robot companion could serve as a replacement. And because these robot companions will remain friends regardless of the terrible treatment they receive from their lifted owners, and also do not care if their owner is sickly and bedridden, they are even better at being friends than the other human children.

This interplay can be seen from the interactions among Josie, Klara, and Rick. Rick is a human boy who is Josie's next-door neighbor and her "best friend" (Ishiguro 53). He also has not undergone the lifting procedure. The first time Klara meets Rick, there is hostility, as Josie had previously promised Rick that she would not get an Artificial Friend. Although the reason is never stated, Klara's words that, "it's now my duty to be Josie's best friend" (Ishiguro 53) imply that Klara's purpose is not to share the role of best friend, but to take it over. Rick fears that Josie has replaced him by getting Klara. Later on, Rick and Josie frequently fight, as differences emerge from their conditions and the relationship between the two changes as a result. While the two still care for each other, they become more and more estranged. Josie even refers to Klara as her "Best friend" (Ishiguro 124) instead of Rick. Also, when Josie outgrows the need for Klara and begins to spend more of her time as a teenager with other human friends, Klara hides herself away so as to not be an inconvenience. Rather than feeling abandoned by Josie, Klara simply accepts that Josie no longer has time for her and waits in the Utility Room until she is needed. On the other hand, Rick goes his own way and makes new friends. He does not wait around for Josie, choosing instead to move on with his life. Because of her ability to always be a friend

without any expectations in return, Klara is a more convenient friend than Rick. And one could argue that this convenience makes her a better friend.

Therefore, Chrissie's belief that Klara can replace Josie arises from this idea that robots are better and more convenient than humans. Klara's continuation of Josie would be better because she would be healthy and not constantly sick. Also, there is now a new belief among some in this society, represented by Capaldi, that humans do not have anything inherently special inside them. There is no special substance that defines humanity. As Capaldi, the man designing Josie's replacement body, states, "There's nothing there. Nothing inside Josie that's beyond the Klaras of this world to continue" (Ishiguro 188). Capaldi believes that as long as Klara can imitate Josie perfectly, Klara will become Josie. And this belief is shared by Josie's father while Josie's mother wants to believe that this could be true. This belief challenges the previous idea found in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* that there is something special within humans that defines humanity. *Klara and the Sun* does not stay committed to this challenge, however. By the end of the novel, Klara believes that she would have failed because, "There was something very special, but it wasn't inside Josie. It was inside those who loved her" (Ishiguro 269). Because Klara is the protagonist, the reader may identify the most with her more positive view rather than the colder but more scientific view of Capaldi and the other human characters. However, even this more positive conception acknowledges that this special spark of humanity is not within humans. And if this special spark of humanity exists outside of the human character, then it could just as easily exist for those characters that are not human as well. This would mean that humanity is not only reserved for humans.

Subsection 3: Societal Impact

The impact of these robots that replace humans can be seen throughout the novel. Paul, after having been substituted, joins a community described as a "place with gangs and guns" (Ishiguro 206). And this place appears to have a great deal of tension regarding resource possession as well as racial tension. Paul's group is "all white people and all from the ranks of the former professional elites," and Paul states, "if another group won't respect us, and what we have, they need to know they'll have a fight on their hands" (Ishiguro 207). Paul also does not seem to have much money, since he needs Chrissie to pay for his taxi (Ishiguro 166). While Josie and her mother's experience is one of privilege and wealth, those who have been substituted appear to be living more fraught lives. The groups that live where Paul does seem to be in a competition for resources, and this competition has led to groups arming themselves with guns and possibly other weapons. Depending on how many people have already been substituted, this sort of tense gang life may be the norm instead of the quiet and peaceful lives of Josie and the other lifted children.

However, even the lifted children are subject to the impact of the more capable robots. By virtue of being lifted, which is a type of genetic editing, these children are at risk of illness and death. Josie struggles all through the novel with some unmentioned sickness due to the lifting process, while her elder sister Sal had died due to it. Even with this risk of death, many parents take the chance because without this lifting process, their children are unable to succeed. Rick, despite being very brilliant, is still unlifted and unable to keep up with those who have been lifted. His education has also been impacted, as many tutors are in a group called the TWE which refuses to tutor unlifted children (Ishiguro 134). There is only one proper college that accepts unlifted children, Atlas Brookings, but even they only accept less than two percent of their class

as unlifted (Ishiguro 119). In contrast to Josie and the other lifted children who go to college, Rick never ends up at Atlas Brookings. Instead, he meets new friends who are interested in his drone birds as "hard-to-detect data-gathering devices" (Ishiguro 264). While this is only a single line, a great deal can be interpreted from this description. Rick's new friends are presumably also unlifted, because he would not have left Josie just to hang out with other lifted people. And the new friends are interested in his drone birds because they want to use them for spying. Therefore, it seems that Rick has gotten himself involved with a potentially dangerous organization comprised of displaced unlifted people. Thus, while Josie and the other lifted remain in a world of privilege and peace, those that are not lifted seem to end up living more perilous lives.

All through the novel, there are inklings of civil unrest and instability bubbling in the background. When Chrissie takes Klara and Josie, as well as Rick and his mother, to the city, they stay at a friend's apartment. One interesting detail is that Chrissie makes sure to "[move] through the Friend's Apartment checking security" (Ishiguro 232). While this security check could simply be an innocuous detail, combined with all of the other descriptions of civil uncertainty and danger, it appears as if the society of this novel is far from a utopia. Rather, life itself has become more dangerous. Those who are not privileged enough to be lifted or have been substituted are displaced in society and get involved with dangerous organizations, while those who are fortunate enough to get lifted risk death. As for why Ishiguro decided to depict society in this manner, one possible interpretation is to reflect on our current society's fear of obsolescence. In his 2012 article "The Anxiety of Change: Man's Fear of Obsolescence as Expressed in Science Fiction," James O'Sullivan states that in our modern western society, "there is a fear of being rendered obsolete by the accelerating pace of technological change" (O'Sullivan 7). Thus,

the society depicted in *Klara and the Sun* may have been crafted by Ishiguro to reflect a possible end result of where our society could be headed.

Subsection 4: Slow Fade

However, in this society, robots have not superseded humans in terms of value. Klara, despite having what could be argued to be humanity, is still thrown away at the end of the novel. Josie and Chrissie clearly still care for Klara, as Chrissie refuses to let Capaldi take Klara apart to examine her black box and claims that Klara deserves her "slow fade" (Ishiguro 262). However, Klara is still a product, and once Josie grows out of her need for a childhood companion, Klara has served her purpose. Thus, she is relegated to the Utility Room until she breaks. This broken state appears to be what Chrissie had referred to as Klara's "slow fade" (Ishiguro 262). This process seems similar to human aging, as Klara seems to lose the ability to move physically, and her cognitive functions have declined to where her memories overlap. These conditions sound like muscular deterioration and dementia in human aging. Having entered this state, Klara appears to have been thrown away to a place called the Yard. Here Klara is left to rot. And she is not alone, as these yards seem to be where broken Artificial Friends end up.

The depiction of Klara, who was apparently loved, still being thrown away so callously seems to show that she was never equal to a human. However, even human characters are not treated with too much respect. Despite Chrissie loving Josie, had Josie broken/died, Chrissie would have replaced her with Klara. Melania Housekeeper gets replaced by a new housekeeper, and she is last heard from hoping to be accepted into a community in California (Ishiguro 257). Perhaps the way Klara is treated reflects the proper amount of respect due to a human in this society. In other words, Klara is not due respect because humans do not deserve it either. This attitude would suggest that the value of humanity in this society has significantly decreased. Given how superior robots and automation have become over humans, it could make sense that the values in this society would also change to reflect the obsolescence of humanity. This

explains why parents are so willing to risk the lives of their children by lifting them for the chance of success. If human lives have less value, then it is not such a big deal to risk them. Or perhaps, without success, their lives would have had no value to begin with.

This then raises the question, what value does humanity even have left? If the possession of humanity does not entitle one to respect and decency, what purpose does it even serve? How is a human any different from a robot if that which was called humanity is now worthless? The term “slow fade” (Ishiguro 262) appears to fit not only Klara’s broken state, but also the state of humanity in the novel. Although there are those who retain value due to the lifting process, how long until they too are replaced by even more sophisticated robots and automation? Through the loss of the intrinsic value of humanity, as well as the robots advancing to inhabit those qualities that were once considered uniquely human, humans and robots have become equal. But rather than both being uplifted to the status of human, both fall to the status of inhuman.

Subsection 5: Conclusion

Frankenstein raised the possibility that humanity is visually apparent, while in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *Blade Runner*, humanity is represented as intrinsic. However, *Klara and the Sun* suggests that humanity is nothing special at all. The novel builds Klara up as the equivalent of any human character, worthy of love and respect, yet depicts her being thrown away at the end. And the novel's human characters face similar fates. This portrayal of a robot that is just as human as a person does not result in raising the status of the robot. Rather, it devalues the status of the human. Because if a machine is just as human as a person, then that makes a human no more special than a machine.

Conclusion

Human bias against artificial life in Anglo-American science fiction appears to have continually existed from the early 19th century to the present day. All of the artificial creatures still experience some form of discrimination from the human characters. However, there has been a trend towards a decrease in rejection and an increase in the level of acceptance. While the creature is unanimously rejected by every human character, the replicants garner more sympathy from a few individuals, and Klara is treated with the same respect given to humans by some of the human characters. Also, despite the bias against them, artificial life forms have become more and more intertwined with humanity. Compared to the creature, who can only watch human society from a distance, the replicants draw closer to humans but are only allowed to live alongside humans on off-world colonies. This trend then culminates in Klara and other robots who are accepted as a part of human society to the point of replacing humans. But instead of being treated as equally human as the creature hoped, Klara is still treated as inhuman by society.

Thus, given these trends, should such artificial life ever come to exist in our future society, how would they be treated? My prediction is that first, they would be judged based on external features. Just like the creature, if the artificial life did not resemble humans perfectly, this would be justification that they can be mistreated because they are not human. If they managed to look perfectly human, then our society would create a different justification based on internal factors. This could be based on their lack of empathy or self-determinism such as the replicants. And if artificial life managed to transcend all of these qualifications and truly surpassed any criteria that could be used as justification for their lack of humanity, then our society would fade away as these superior beings would replace humans in all aspects of society. Ultimately, should other entities gain the label of human, the value of humanity would be lost.

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