The Two Parts of Humanity In Bicentennial Man

The rendition of what it means to be a human is very complex. This makes sense because we humans, as a collective, are complex in nature. Physically, we need the oxygen around us to breathe, we need food and water every day to survive. Our flesh is unique and we have certain bone structures that define us. On the other hand, the emotional aspect of the human can not be ignored. A human being can understand and convey intricate emotions like compassion, love, and self-reliance. What I find to be very interesting is that, in Ex Machina, Ava seems to have a grasp on complex human tendencies through her ability to connect with Caleb on an emotional level. However, it is found out later that her emotions were mimicked, or rather programmed, to manipulate Caleb to help her. Where it gets really interesting, however, is how Andrew in The Bicentennial Man is portrayed. It can be argued that Andrew conveyed a bevy of emotions back when he whittled the wood carvings and got his own bank account earlier on in the story. The difference is that he intentionally altered his appearance to fulfill his version of humanity. Ava in Ex Machina and Andrew in The Bicentennial Man have an intense desire to become a human and have the perceived ability to express human emotions, but Ava's inability to conform to human qualifications ultimately leaves her incapable of humanity.

In the film Ex Machina, a technology firm employee, Caleb, wins what was thought to be a company-wide competition to partake in a private Turing test with Ava, a new and unique artificial intelligence that was developed and built by his boss. The Turing test that was utilized was originally designed to showcase a robot's intellect by measuring its ability to pass as human in a conversation. Ex Machina demonstrates throughout Caleb's many interactions with Ava why there can't be a Turing test used for emotions. Once a robot is intellectually advanced enough, it will be close to impossible to determine whether the artificial intelligence is one who actually experiences emotion, or mimics and uses it to advance themselves. For example, when Caleb refers to this phenomenon as someone who is "trying to test a chess computer by only playing chess… It won't tell you if it knows its playing chess or if it even knows what chess is," (35) he feels like Ava can't be properly tested due to the fact that, while she may sound and act human, it is in her program to act this way. The intriguing thing here is that this problem that Caleb brings up in the beginning of the film never gets resolved. His boss, Nathan brings this up at the end of the film after he finds out Caleb's plot to escape with Ava. When he tells Caleb knowingly, " Not whether she does or doesn't have the capacity to like you. But whether she's pretending to like you," Nathan reveals the point of the whole test was not to test Ava, but rather test Caleb's response.

The Bicentennial Man by Isaac Anisimov is an intriguing iteration on what it means to be human. Most notably, it can be argued that it essentially looks at to what extent human body parts make a robot human. The main character, Andrew, begins the story as a household servant who works with the Martin family for generations. He is treated well and at first nothing seems out of the ordinary. However, to the Martin family, it is clear that Andrew is very different from other robots. When sir said, " The new robots don't shift their thoughts with new cognitions in response to new events. They do what they're designed for and never stray in their thinking. Not like you. I like you better," he recognizes that Andrew's cognitive abilities are superior to the other robot models and it exemplifies Andrew's complex perceptive abilities. Sir is proven to be right when George asks Andrew why he wants to wear clothes. Andrew, in response, said he

felt, “bare” and without them he felt “different” and “useless” (12,12,13). Andrew also knew that, after an interaction where he was harassed by two other humans, that no one in society at large would treat him as a human without physical transformation. He undergoes surgery after surgery, further weakening his physical prowess while converting himself to humanity. On his death-bed, after his full transformation has been completed, he finally becomes what he always strived for. Andrew the robot became Andrew the human.

Humanity will always be difficult to define. All chase its elusive prize and only a few succeed. Andrew’s full transformation to mortality made it possible for him to be truly called human. On the other hand, Ava may be able to mimic a human but in the end, she can never get a grasp on what it means to be a human.