English 80

Reaction Paper #5: Satire, Dystopian Fiction and *Wall-E*

INTRODUCTION:

Thus far this semester we have been reading about our industrial food system and the ways that our lives are impacted by the constant production, advertisement, distribution and disposal of stuff. While the texts we have been reading have been scholarly and academic, these are not the only ways that such issues can be explored. A popular method artists and writers use to expose the shortcomings of society is through satire. Satire can be defined as: **“**a genre of literature, and sometimes graphic and performing arts, in which vices, follies, abuses, and shortcomings are held up to ridicule, ideally with the intent of shaming individuals, corporations, government, or society itself into improvement.” *South Park* is perhaps the most readily recognizable satire of American society, but many other such satires exist.

Zsolt Cziganyik, in “Satire and Dystopia: Two Genres?” writes, “The term dystopia is often replaced by another one, negative utopia, which relates itself to the realm of utopian literature. The world of utopia is depicted as ideal, a negative utopia or dystopia offers a gloomy, often bitter vision of the future, providing a picture of the present that is cast in the future, often in a caricature-like fashion, painted in dark colours” (1). Cziganyik goes on to define dystopian fiction as a unique form of satire that, instead of focusing on one particular figure or phenomena, scrutinizes the workings of an entire society. This is usually achieved through highlighting a particular aspect of society, and through its distortion in the fiction, it points out the distortion within the society it satirizes. In *Wall-E* we encountered a rather bleak vision of the future that could be if the problems outlined by Leonard, Pollan, Schlosser, Barber and others are not addressed.

ASSIGNMENT:

Write a 1.5 to 2 page MLA format essay that explores the concept of dystopian fiction as demonstrated in *Wall-E*. Be sure to bring in direct evidence from the film in the form of vivid and clear descriptions of scenes and/or images. Questions to consider include: How is *Wall-E* an example of dystopian fiction according to the definition laid out by? Is the film effective in depicting the “bitter . . . future” that we may find ourselves in if we do not change our ways? Why or why not? What role do you think such works of fiction serve in society, if any? What problems in society are being exploded in “caricature-like fashion” by the film?