

## ENGLISH: *FRANKENSTEIN/BLADE RUNNER*

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Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* were both composed in considerably different times and contexts, yet they still share similar values and attitudes. Despite their differing contexts they both explore the idea of the consequences of science when it goes unchecked by moral conscience. The fact that both these texts share this idea reaffirms its universal and lasting relevance. Shelley's 1818 novel reflects Romantic and Gothic elements whilst Scott's 1991 film is influenced by consumerism and mass industrialisation of the 20th century. Both texts immerse their audiences in worlds where scientific advancements have had negative effects on the environment and the lives of the individual.

Both *Frankenstein* and *Blade Runner* demonstrate the consequences of science going unchecked by moral conscience. This is demonstrated through the creation of the 'monster' character in each text as they act as a symbolic representation of the negative effects of science on humanity. *Frankenstein* creates the monster for the purpose of personal scientific glory. This is demonstrated through the use of high modality as he says "A new species would bless me as its creator" and "natures would owe their being to me". *Frankenstein*'s arrogant tone and the language show that his motivation is for his own benefits. His abdication of responsibility is highlighted through his description of the monster with "yellow skin... watery eyes... shrivelled complexion and straight black lips" this imagery along with the use of vile epithets such as "abhorred monster!" and "wretched daemon" shows his hatred of the monster. His abdication of responsibility is further demonstrated when he leaves at the sight of his own creation. His selfish motivation and refusal to accept responsibility for the creature demonstrates *Frankenstein*'s lack of moral conscience as he simply abandons his own creation. Shelley's novel rejects common Enlightenment ideals focused on reason and scientific discovery. This is suggestive of a Romantic way of thinking. This is reflected in the consequences of the creation of the monster. These consequences are shown through the imagery of *Frankenstein* as "my cheek had grown pale", showing the deterioration of his own health as a result of his quest for scientific glory. The consequences are again shown through the violence of the monster as he "strangled the innocent as they slept" when he murders William and later Clerval, Justine, the little boy and Elizabeth. The violent acts of the monster are similar to those of Batty and the replicants as the 'monster' character in each text demonstrates the dire consequences when science goes unchecked by moral conscience.

*Blade Runner* similarly conveys the notion of the consequences of science going unchecked through the characters or creation and creator. Scott reflects common fears of the 20th century due to industrialisation going too far. Like *Frankenstein*, Tyrell creates the Replicants for personal, economic gain as they're created for slave labour on the off world colonies. Tyrell's selfish motivation is shown as he says "commerce is our goal here at Tyrell" and "Rachel is an experiment, nothing more". His lack of emotive language and arrogant tone show he is distancing himself from his own creation. This therefore shows lack of moral conscience as he dehumanises the replicants and refuses to refer to them as anything more than 'an experiment'. The consequences of this are demonstrated through the menacing acts of the Replicants. This is seen when Batty and Leon confront Chu. The *mi-en-scene* shows the Replicants standing over Chu forcing their physical superiority. This is further shown as they taunt him, pulling the bioengineered eye out of the freezing test tube and placing it on him. The contemptuous acts of the Replicants show the consequences of science going unchecked as Chu abdicates responsibility for his part in making the Replicants as he says "I just do eyes". Consequences for abandoning moral conscience are again seen when Batty confronts Tyrell. Tyrell's refusal to accept any moral responsibility for the replicants is shown through the condescending aphorism "the light that shines twice as bright burns half as long". The negative impact of this is seen when Batty kills Tyrell with his bare hands. The close up on his face showing his severe anger and beads of sweat combined with the cracking noises in the background (assumedly Tyrell's bones) and the triumphant music all add to demonstrate that when moral

conscience is abandoned, dire consequences result. Both texts use the 'monster' character to demonstrate the destructive consequences of science going unchecked by conscience.

Walton is another character in *Frankenstein* who abandons moral responsibility in favour of science. His quest to explore the North Pole leads to him neglecting moral conscience. His motivation is again personal glory seen through the italic 'shall' in "success shall crown my endeavours". His moral responsibility is questioned when the ship gets stuck and the crew expresses desires to turn back if the ice succeeded, his rhetorical question "could I... refuse this demand?" shows his moral responsibility has been clouded by his egotistical desire for glory. The consequences of this are shown through the Gothic setting of the ice locked setting, described through imagery as "surrounded by ice... compassed by a thick fog" the setting reflects the negative impact that science, going unchecked by moral conscience can have. The epistolary structure of the narrative is also important as it allows Walton's story to foreshadow *Frankenstein's* and the monsters. Walton's is the first of three levels and mirrors the negative impacts to affect *Frankenstein* and highlights the common flaws they both have as they allow their ego to cloud their moral conscience. The narrative structure also allows gothic and Romantic motifs of the characters to create a cautionary tale demonstrating the consequences of scientific excess. Similar to *Blade Runner* the setting in *Frankenstein* reflects the negative effects of science being abandoned by morals.

*Blade Runner's* deteriorated landscape also shows the negative impacts when moral conscience is ignored in favour of science. The highly deteriorated landscape is Scott's representation of the negative effects of science going unchecked. *Blade Runner* was composed in a time of mass industrialisation, commercialism and consumerism and the fear of this going too far is reflected in the polluted setting. Scott highlights common fears of the effects of this materialistic way of life in the establishing shots in the opening scene. The opening shots use elements of film noir to show the post-apocalyptic setting through lack of natural light, dark colours such as black and navy blue and highly polluted and heavily industrialised buildings. This is coupled by the eerie music demonstrating the mysterious nature of this world and the voice-over advertising 'a new life in the off-world colonies'. The damaged landscape is Scott's representation of the consequences that science and technology can have when developed unrestrained, as it has even gotten to the point where people seek to leave this polluted world.

Despite the considerably different contexts of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* they both clearly explore the idea of the consequences of science when it goes unchecked by moral conscience. The universality of this idea is highlighted through the fact that it is explored in both these texts, enabling it to withstand the test of time giving it lasting relevance. The comparative study of each text allows one to call into question what is at the heart of humanity and how scientific advancements have had negative effects on the environment and the lives of the individual.