

ENGLISH ADVANCED: *FRANKENSTEIN* / *BLADE RUNNER*

**“Texts connect the reader to worlds which they recognize and can readily share in.”
Discuss in relation to both texts set for study.**

Through my study of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818) and Ridley Scott’s Blade Runner (1989) I have come to appreciate that both texts connect the reader to fictitious worlds they recognize. The context and values of both the 19th and 20th Centuries are relevant to those of audiences today. Frankenstein challenged the social norms of society, written in a time where Christian values were dominant, during the Industrial Revolution and conflicting views of Scientism and Romanticism. Similarly, Blade Runner is composed in a time of unprecedented Industrialisation and technological, scientific development. Readers can relate to these texts as the composers, Shelley and Scott, explore the timeless paradigms of Romanticism, Scientism and Christianity.

In Frankenstein, readers engage with the idea of Scientism where Victor Frankenstein, a “natural philosopher” and “genius,” sets out to create life and “reveal the secrets of nature”. During the “two years that passed in this manner”, Victor pays no visit to his family. Shelly portrays Victor as an obsessed individual who believes unreservedly in Scientism (“I seemed to have lost my soul but for this one pursuit”) rather than the Romantic ideals of sublime nature, emotion, relationships or imagination. The epistolary form, where Victor’s narrative is told through Walton’s letter to his sister, allows Shelley to explore the notions of obsessive intent and the desire for control, and their consequences. Thus, a reader may recognise the ethical implications of creating life as they are still extant in today’s society.

An audience can relate to the concerns of technological advancement in Scott’s cyberpunk film classic Blade Runner where Scientism is portrayed at its extremity. Responders are confronted with a futuristic vision of Los Angeles, a never-ending megalopolis of pollution with industrialised and claustrophobic buildings. The film medium, unlike Shelley’s print medium, visually allows responders connect with the setting as it demonstrates the environmental consequences of 20th Century industrialisation. Deckard, our anti-heroic, hard-boiled detective protagonist is a “Blade Runner” assigned to “retire” the replicants. The violent characteristic of the Film Noir genre is shown where Deckard brutally murders the female replicant, Zhora. Consequently, Scott impacts on an audience’s sensibilities as they recognise the consequences of science and technology and relate to this fictitious world.

Readers can connect with the fictitious world Shelley creates based on the romantic ideals of emotion, love for the sublime and reflection on oneself. The Creature experiences “a strange multiplicity of sensations” as he wanders in search of identity saying, “What was I?” The audience relates to the Creature as he questions his existence and purpose in life, admits he is “miserable” but at times, “joyous” by appreciating “the enchanting appearance of nature”. Shelley offers insight through the layered structure of her text to show the Creature experiences emotion, reflection, and appreciation of the natural world. This suggests the Creature is in fact human and not an “abhorred monster”. Therefore, a reader may experience the romantic ideals and can readily connect with the Creature in this text – a notion effectively reiterated in Blade Runner.

An audience can connect with Blade Runner as it encapsulates the ideals of Romanticism. The highly symbolic intertextual reference to Descartes “I think therefore I am” represents the replicants’ ability to think and feel and raises them above machines and ironically above humans. The film enables Scott to convey the romantic ideals of emotion and relationships with close-ups and deliberate pauses. Shelley portrays these ideals through the main characters, Victor and the Creature, while Scott utilises most of his characters, specifically the replicants. Rachael cries upon realising she is a replicant and soon forms a loving relationship with Deckard, embodied in the lines, “I love you/I trust you”. If the ability to “think” and feel is human, then the Replicants are evidently

this and sometimes “more human than human”. The powerful contrast and characterisations used provoke feelings of sympathy amongst responders. Thus, Scott, like Shelley, enables responders to connect to fictitious worlds created in their texts.

A contemporary reader acknowledges or recognizes the Christian imagery presented by Shelley in Frankenstein. The theme of the Creator-Creation relationship is a religious analogy for God’s creation of man. Victor plays God by creating life, an act which Shelley considers blasphemous and immoral through Victor’s words: “I had been the author of unalterable evils!” The Creature creates a religious parallel between himself and “Satan”, confessing his remorse and lack of morality – a very human reaction. Shelley’s father, William Godwin, stated “What is born into the world is an unfinished sketch” implying a newborn is innocent and becomes corrupt through experience. Shelley’s value of her father’s philosophy is reflected when Victor rejects his creation, “Fiend that thou art,” and the Creature inevitably plummets into base corruption. Therefore, readers of both the past and present recognise and can share similar ideas with Shelly on the concept of Christianity.

Similarly, responders may readily share Scott’s value of humanity that is portrayed through the Creator-Creation relationship. Like the Creature, Roy represents Satan, wearing black while his “genius” creator, Tyrell, wears white. Roy confesses, “I have done questionable things,” and Tyrell, like a father, strokes his head. Unlike the Creature who desires companionship, Roy’s quest is to prolong his lifespan (“I want more life”) but in the denouement, he accepts the inevitability of the human condition. He ends his life with dignity, saving Deckard and delivering a beautiful soliloquy: “I’ve known adventures, seen places you people will never see...” Roy, once a satanic figure, rejects his human emotion of revenge, redeems himself and dies. The symbolic departure of the dove, slow motion, “tears lost in rain” and the sad but beautiful music force the audience to recognise Roy as human. Therefore, responders can readily share Scott’s and Shelley’s idea of Christianity and humanity.

Through my study of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (1818) and Ridley Scott’s Blade Runner (1989), I have come to understand that a reader may connect with a text as it portrays relevant ideas. Even though the texts are composed almost 200 years apart, both Shelley and Scott share similar contexts and values. The worlds they create are encapsulated through the paradigms of Scientism, Romanticism and Christianity. Thus, it is evident that both composers of these contextually different enable responders to connect with fictitious worlds presented in their texts.