

Frankenstein blade runner

Literature



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While all texts originate from the imagination of their composer, they also explore and address the issues of their contexts. This is clearly the case with Mary Shelley's gothic novel *Frankenstein* (1818) which draws upon galvanism and the industrial movement and Ridley Scott's film *Blade Runner* (1992) which has been heavily influenced by Thatcherism and Reaganomics. Despite there being over 150 years between their compositions both these texts explore several common themes such as mankind's loss of humanity and man attempting to play God.

Through the exploration of these common thematic concerns and the universal depiction of protagonists and societies obsessed with the Machiavellian pursuit of science and technology, these texts build upon each other's warnings to humanity and ultimately become linked through time. The common thematic concerns of these texts are explored through the use of camera angles, imagery and metaphors.

A central theme shared by *Frankenstein* and *Blade Runner* is the dangers of unrestrained scientific progress, a theme most evident when *Frankenstein* bestows the "spark of life" upon his creature in his effort to "pour a torrent of light into our dark world". Here Shelley alludes to the science of Galvanism which held the belief that bodies could be resurrected through an electrical current, or "spark". This compliments Shelley's later allusion, "a thing such not even Dante could have conceived" which alludes to Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, a poem recounting a man's journey through hell.

These allusions work hand in hand to parallel unrestrained scientific advancements with pain and suffering equivalent to journeying through hell, as well as communicating Shelley's warning to the reader of the hellish

ramifications that are inevitable if man continues to explore science in such a reckless manner. Blade Runner further enforces the dangers of unrestrained scientific progress and builds upon Shelley's warning through the opening panoramic shot which portrays a decaying city dominated by industrial buildings.

This works in conjunction with the recurring motif of artificial neon lighting and eerie non-diegetic sounds to create a cold dark ambience which is symbolic of the lack of warmth, affection and family which has been created by unrestrained scientific progress. This ironic depiction of the Los Angeles, this city of angels, as a hell on earth is reflective of the 1986 Chernobyl Disaster where unrestrained scientific progress directly led to death and severe mutation of millions of people. Blade Runner and

Frankenstein also comment on mankind's loss of humanity, a theme Shelley depicts when the creature is able to display basic human instincts as it relates to "the pleasant showers and genial warmth" of nature as it ventures through the wilderness. In contrast Victor shows "insensibility to (nature's) charms" while creating the creature by containing himself in a "deep dark deathlike solitude", this alliteration is metaphoric of Victor's inability to relate to nature and display basic human qualities which the supposed sub-human creature can.

This comparison shows that Victor, a symbol of humanity, has lost a basic human instinct which is considered inseparable from the human experience in Shelley's era due to the influence of the romantics, yet the supposed sub-human possesses this instinct, metaphoric of mankind's loss of humanity. Moreover, this comparison is symbolic of Shelley questioning the reader and

challenging them to change their values as well as warning against the Machiavellian pursuit of science and technology.

Scott reinforces mankind's loss of humanity through the fruition of the Tyrell Corporation's motto "more human than human" which can be seen in Pris wearing a bridal gown while hiding from Deckard, which is metaphoric of the replicant's ability to feel emotions of love and familial belonging, a basic human instinct which the humans of this world are unable to feel, evidenced in J. F. Sebastian's ironic dialogue "I make friends, they're toys, my friends are toys".

Sebastian's dialogue shows that humans no longer have real families and have lost the ability to develop relationships; whereas Roy's howl of pain at the death of Pris is symbolic of the familial bonds and relationships formed between replicants. Not only does this comparison establish the Tyrell Corporation's motto "more human than human" as a truism but it is symbolic of Scott building upon Shelley's original depiction of mankind's loss of humanity and reinforcing her warning against the Machiavellian pursuit of science and technology, linking these texts through time.

Moreover, Frankenstein and Blade Runner explore the theme of man attempting to play God which is evoked through allusions to the Promethean myth, as both texts present protagonists who steal the gift of the Gods, in this case life, and are gravely punished for doing so. Shelley evidences this theme through Victor stealing the Gods gift of life, alluding to Prometheus stealing the Gods gift of fire, epitomised in Victor's dialogue "A new species would bless me as its creator". Although heavily influenced by conservative views of the church Shelley presents the death of Frankenstein, a symbol of <https://assignbuster.com/frankensteinblade-runner/>

humanity, at the hands of his own creation which not only alludes to Zeus' punishment of Prometheus but is metaphoric of Shelley's warning of the inevitable peril which awaits mankind if he continues to attempt to play God. Heavily influenced by a growing corporate culture which disregarded human rights in the pursuit of "commerce", Scott also evokes the Promethean myth to illuminate the theme of man attempting to play God.

Like Frankenstein, Tyrell steals the Gods gift of life by creating "more human than humans" replicants, a direct allusion to Prometheus stealing the Gods fire. Scott continues to allude to the Promethean myth through Tyrell's death at the hands of Roy, his creation. Here Scott not only alludes to Zeus' punishment of Prometheus but also to the bible by Tyrell claiming Roy to be the "prodigal son" further enforcing the concept of man attempting to play God.

Moreover, the murder of Tyrell by his creation, Roy, alludes to Frankenstein's death at the hands of his creation, the creature, which is metaphoric of Scott building upon Shelley's warning against man attempting to play God, further linking these texts through time. Upon close analysis of these texts it becomes apparent that Scott's Blade Runner is a response to Shelley's Frankenstein, made clear through the exploration of common themes such as mankind's loss of humanity, despite being manifestations of contexts separated by 150 years.

Scott's tech noir film encapsulates Shelley's original warning against the Machiavellian pursuit of science and technology and takes into to the next level by presenting it in a post modern context where science and technology have advanced beyond the point of return. Perhaps the definitive

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underlying message of these texts is that despite the things we create being a reflection of ourselves and our societies, it is ultimately our creations that mould us and who we are, an idea surmised in Winston Churchill's words "we shape the things we build, thereafter they shape us".