

Text and context



Module A: Text & Contexts Essay Texts are although a form of composer's ideas and imaginations, they also reflect contexts and discuss different issues in the society of the time in which they were composed. The novel Frankenstein by Mary Shelley and Ridley Scott's noir film Blade Runner: The Director's Cut are good examples of texts that reflect on contexts and the composer's ideas and imaginations. Mary Shelley novel, Frankenstein, is a gothic fiction that represents the context of the 18th century when the Romantic Movement rose.

On the other hand, a futuristic world in which technology is overwhelming and fearful is presented in Ridley Scott's film Blade Runner. Although the texts have differences in forms, features and contexts and were composed over two hundred years apart, they have similarities and links in the concepts of humanity and the concern of science development. The essence of humanity is a major theme explored in both the novel Frankenstein and the film Blade Runner as they both question what true humanity is.

Through the novel Frankenstein, which is published during the period of Industrial Revolution where people started to study things through science and focus on developing technology, Shelley reveals the dark side of human nature and the society. The imagery of Frankenstein digging up graves, taking out dead corpses and examining them creates a strong sense of despair instead of hope and excitement even though that makes Frankenstein a creator of lives; this may be a hint of disagreement of industrial revolution and may imply that the development of science is not necessarily good.

The repetition of the words " death" and " horror" helps create an atmosphere of despair, which also foreshadows the coming of sadness and tragedies later in the novel. The Juxtaposition of " the beauty of the ream" and the " breathless horror" indicates the reality and the bad outcome of Frankincense's 'dream' of creating lives and also emphasizes his shock and disappointment, which again implies the bad outcome of the development of science and technology.

The carefully chosen words Shelley uses to describe the monster, such as " lustrous black" and " pearly whiteness" are help create the image of the monster. The use of commas makes it a long sentence and makes Frankincense sounds breathless, which emphasizes how terrified he is by the physical appearance of the monster. Shelley use of figurative language and imagery allows the reader to imagine the physical appearance of the monster and describes how the monster is made of human body parts, yet not quite human physically.

The fact that the monster is brought to live through electricity also contributes to his 'monstrousness', making him inhuman. However, the monster's human qualities are also reflected when he observes the De Lackey's family and finds out that he will never enjoy the happiness and company they have. The monster is aware that his appearance is frightening by calling himself " hideous" and " gigantic". The questions he asks himself, " What did this mean? Who was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? " show that he is thoughtful of his own conditions and emphasize his loneliness.

The monster represents a scientific production here and through the questions the monster asks himself, Shelley might be questioning the purpose and the destination of science. These are written in first person, which allows the reader to read the story from the monster's perspective and to feel for him. The fact that the monster has qualities of human, such as thinking, feeling and being self-conscious, helps define him as a human. This makes the reader question what true humanity is as the monster is hectically inhuman but has human qualities.

Ridley Scott's film Blade Runner also questions the essence of humanity, hence linking the two texts throughout time, where Scott questions the same thing through juxtaposing human with replicates. Unlike the monster in Frankenstein, the creations in Blade Runner, which are the replicates, look a lot more like humans physically as they are designed and created " More human than human. " This paradox may suggest that humans are letting machines and technology get better and more powerful than them.

The replicates look like human physically but they are not considered to be humans, " Replicates are like any other machine; they are either a benefit or a hazard. " The eyes which is a symbol as the window to soul' appears repeatedly throughout the film. The orange glow in the eyes and the differences between human and replicates reactions are how they are identified. The film questions what true humanity is by juxtaposing the human characters who lack empathy and emotions with the replicates who show concerns and care for each other.

The rain and the darkness of the city reinforce the sad atmosphere and the sense of distance between people. As the umbrellas keep the people distance from each other. In the scene where Deckard reveals the truth to Rachel that she is a replicant, close-up low angle shot is used to focus on Rachel's facial expressions to emphasize her emotions, which makes the audience feel for her. Deckard's monotone indicates that he has no empathy for Rachel as he only sees her as a machine, not a human.

However, Rachel, who is a replicant, shows her human qualities and vulnerability when she cries and talks in a sobbing voice. Deckard's lack of emotions contrasts with her vulnerability and emotions which ironically makes Rachel seem to be more human than Deckard. This is also shown in the scene where Deckard "retires" Rachael. A slow-motion low angle shot is used to convey her fear of death and her sense of humanity as she still wants to live longer right till her last moments.

The glass pieces under her dead body, the blood on her transparent raincoat and the cold rainy weather emphasizes the cruelty and the violence of her death. In contrast to Rachael, Deckard's calmness and heartlessness makes Rachael seem to have more humanity than him. Just like the monster in Frankenstein, the behaviors of Rachael and Rachel challenge the audience to define true humanity. Being rejected by their creators, the monster in Frankenstein and the replicants in Blade Runner turn against them, which may be a warning of the danger of science from the composers.

Shelley's warning is clearly informed through Frankenstein's statement of "how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge" which also foreshadows

the bad consequences of Frankincense's invention. The frame structure allows Shelley to reveal her concerns through Frankincense's story and the reader to read in different perspectives. Frankincense tells Walton the story to "deduce an apt moral from my tale. In a determined tone which makes it sound like a confession and shows the importance of the message behind the story.

Light is a symbol used repeatedly in the novel that represents discovery and may also imply that Frankincense and Walton cannot see the danger of discovery because the light is too bright. Walton says to Frankincense that "One man's life or death were but a small price to pay", which is ironic because Frankincense's invention causes the death of his friends and family. Blade Runner also warns the audience about the danger of science development. It was originally produced in the sass's when technology was coming widely common as the computer controlled machinery was replacing low skilled jobs.

The sound track adds a mysterious feeling to the film which makes the audience feel uncomfortable, suggesting the concern of science development. The never ending rain, the darkness and the polluted city symbolize the bad consequences and outcomes of the development of science and technology. Shelley and Scott both present the monster and the replicates more powerful and dangerous than human to suggest the danger of science and technology development. This is presented in the final battle scene where the positioning of Declared and Roy shows he vulnerability of human.

Declared half-lies on the ground and tries to escape where Roy, who shares similarities with the monster in Frankincense in his lack of love from his creator and his longing for revenge, is presented powerful. This is also an irony since Declared finally starts to show his human quality and vulnerability where the replicates have always been showing human qualities although they are not considered human. The fact that Roy has so many chances to kill Declared shows that replicates are a lot stronger than human, which also shows Coot's concern of technology turning against human one day.

In conclusion, Shelley and Scott both reflect their ideas and contexts in their texts, Frankincense and Blade Runner. They both explore concerns of the society of their times and warn us of the danger of science and technology development. Both texts are successful in presenting their ideas and they both focus on the characters' emotions, which enable the reader and the audience to feel related and engaged. Although the techniques they use, the forms and contexts are different, by paralleling them, we can see that the texts are linked through the common concepts and ideas.