Themes Of Creator And Creation In Frankenstein And Blade Runner

Frankenstein (1818) and Blade Runner (1982) explore vital themes of creator and creation, and both can be related to the tales of Genesis 2-3. As reflected in the texts, there are strong themes of anthropologic flaws accredited to humanity over time such as ambition, greed, ego and the potential to defy deity and extend human life. Both texts emphasize the significance of literature that examines humanity, in terms of their creators, actions, and how the two compare to Genesis.

The moniker often given to Genesis is the 'fall of man'. Philosophers like Milton and Augustine describe this story in terms of humanity's failure to follow the will of God and the consequential disgrace that accompanies such disobedience. Throughout most Christian interpretations of history, mankind’s actions only matter as a counterpoint to God’s. It seems clear that Ridley Scott's Blade Runner and Mary Shelly’s Frankenstein both draw from the accounts of Genesis. Many interpretations have noted similarities between the two and the biblical text. The film can be viewed as a modern interpretation of Genesis 2-3, in which, the focus shifts from the character of God to the nature of humanity’s evolution through technology; a creator versus creation scenario. Although the film alludes to issues concerning divinity, especially through the portrayal of Eldon Tyrell, a typical deity plays a very muted role. The texts read the biblical account as humanities’ discourse, rather than an account of God's interaction with humanity.

Philosopher Stephan Mulhall argued that both pieces are 'obsessed' with the question of human nature. 'Obsessed in the way the leader of the replicants is obsessed with his quest for life, for a life which is on par with that of human beings'. Like the Eden story, what each of the characters (as well as Victor Frankenstein) have at stake in the film, is the toying with their interpretation of being human. But more specifically, humanity finds itself under constant tension between the knowledge of good and evil and the constraints of mortality. My analysis of the texts, building upon my comments about the genesis myth, will analyse the characters will of Roy and Deckard in Blade Runner, and Victor Frankenstein and his creation in Mary Shelly’s Frankenstein.

Roy most obviously follows the existential archetype as presented in genesis. Much like Adam, he (a replicant) was created at the pleasure of another (Tyrell Corp.), and his function is to obey the programs (or commands) of the one who created him. The epigraph to the film defines Roy, Pris, and other replicants as slaves. their function is to serve, like Adam. Following this logic, all the replicants are Adamic. Not only in their hierarchy, but they also have no parentage, no guidance to learn from. In the opening scene of the film, Leon (when questioned about his mother) fails the Voigt-Kampf test. Like Adam, he has no mother, no human predecessors to inaugurate him into humanity. By leading the replicants to Earth, Roy begins his quest to test the boundaries of his creator's strictures. Somewhere on his journey, Roy gains knowledge. His closing speech fills in the knowledge he has gathered in hindsight: 'I've seen things you people wouldn't believe.” But, while enlarging his awareness about the universe, his knowledge fails to satisfy his true desire--more life. Tyrell's bedroom scene not only highlights the striving for life, but the heavy onus knowledge brings. Soon after Roy enters, he crassly accosts Tyrell by saying, 'I want more life, fucker.” But in an abrupt shift, he confesses, 'I've done questionable things.” The bold request for life remains beside his awareness of the disobedience present in

his declaration. Roy's final speech ultimately describes him as a human by bringing together the knowledge of immortality. When he says, 'Time to die…" he recognizes that humanity also means mortality.

Deckard's question after his test is instructive, 'How can it not know what it is?" For Deckard, knowledge of good and evil, in both the film and in Genesis, is equal to self-knowledge. For Rachael, learning that she is a replicant makes her question all her previous thoughts about her past and existential status. Paradoxically, Rachel deepens her humanity after finding out that she is a replicant. After she shot Leon, she and Deckard returned to his apartment, visibly upset by the experience. Deckard tries to comfort her by saying, 'Shakes? Me too. I get 'em bad. It's part of the business." To this Rachael responds, 'I'm not in the business. I am the business." This offers a much deeper insight into their origins as replicants and adds that said origins are almost irrelevant in the context of acting humanely. This dialogue, like Genesis, argues free will is not a defining characteristic of humanity. Rachael's programming, like that of Adam and Eve, does not prevent her from deciding to become human.

In Genesis 2, Adam is formed from the dust of the earth and told to serve the Garden. For Mary Shelley, Adam's questions capture the essence of Victor Frankenstein and his creation. Similarly, both fictional characters ask why they were created and, why they were burdened with the knowledge to conquer nature and to suffer grievously for it. In Shelley's novel, Frankenstein, the handsome, Faustian, mad scientist, driven by his desire for eternal glory, animated a dead body, hoping to become the revered father of a physically superior race of men. But when his creature is brought to life, the ironically named Victor is horrified by its hideous appearance and rejects it. This leaves the monster (who yearns for community) alienated and piteously alone, and so (like Adam) the creature requests that his maker create an Eve. And only when Frankenstein refuses this request does his 'Adam' methodically murder everyone his creator loved. While Victor believes the Monster is the evil version of himself, the Monster believes he is his creator's Adam; entitled to all the love and support God gave to his Adam.

One main component of Frankenstein that is not paralleled in Blade Runner is the Romantic period. It is contrasted quite dramatically; there is no concentration on nature whatsoever in the futuristic world Ridley Scott created. This alludes to a concern of degradation of the natural world prevalent in Blade Runner. In Frankenstein, romantic values of the importance of nature are crucial in the life of Victor. Truth is another influential theme, but present in both texts. Just as Tyrell lies to the Replicants about their existence, Shelley rejects the truth that comes with logic and reasoning (the creation of such a Monster).

The idea of a lack of humanity in the creator and the even more human qualities of their creation is the overarching theme in both texts, however individual ideas relating to contextual influences slightly differ between the two. Frankenstein was written over 150 years before Blade Runner, when the world was very new to technology and advancements in science. The Industrial Revolution influenced the way people lived their lives and this is greatly represented in Shelley's Frankenstein. Blade Runner reflects the same values of new technologies, and the negative effects they can have on people. This is a dilemma that continues to resonate in the 21st century-humanity's abuse of the limitations of technology.

Viewing Frankenstein and Blade Runner through the lens of Genesis not only highlights Scott's and Shelly's obsession with anthropology but it also defines some of human nature's

characteristics. Reading Genesis with Frankenstein and/or Blade Runner as companion text allows one to read the Genesis story not so much as a 'fortunate fall" but rather as a tale that provides a glimpse of the curse and blessing humanity has inherited. Not an inheritance stemming from sin, simply the constitution of the human creature. To become fully human – instead of 'more human than human", involves embracing the results of eating from one tree but never tasting the other.