

A comparison between *Frankenstein* and *Bladerunner* demonstrates that the norms and values in society are dynamic rather than static.

Evaluate this statement, with detailed reference to both your prescribed texts.

Despite the perceived dynamic nature of social norms through time, such changes are arguably evolutions of preceding contextual concerns rather than outright upheavals of previous social norms. Thus, it can be said that the norms and values of society are dynamic in the sense that they are constantly evolving, however the underlying stimulus for such concerns remain constant. A product of the Romantic era, Mary Shelley's epistolary novel, *Frankenstein* embodies a reaction against the scientifically inclined, emotionally restrictive ideologies of the previous Enlightenment era. 180 years later, Ridley Scott's tech-noir film, *Bladerunner* is released during an era of swift technological advancement and unbridled capitalism. Despite their chronological disparity, the underlying stimulus and admonitions that they both reflect are analogous; mankind's attempt to usurp the role of God, and the destruction that inevitably ensues. Both texts also offer a stark warning regarding the pursuit of knowledge above notions of humanity and the impact of technological and scientific progression in their respective contexts on the natural environment and individuals.

The creation of human life is a divine entitlement that various characters and the world continues to attempt to exploit today. In Shelley's context, 19th century Romantics possessed an innate propensity to transcend ordinary experiences; to confront the sublime. Coupled with the burgeoning Galvanistic belief that electricity could release life, the notion of usurping God effectively resonates with Shelley's context as well as Scott's 20th century era, in which huge genetic advances were made. Thus the technology to exploit the divine entitlement has evolved, but the innate desire to transcend God, has not. The language barriers conveyed by Deckard's and the Chinese man's awkward duologue, "for.... no four," juxtaposed with the close ups of the ziggurat, biblically alludes to Babel, a tale evincing God's retribution towards humanity's attempt to transcend him, attesting to the fact that such social norms have not changed even throughout history. This is reinforced by the contrasting aesthetic undertones of the Western neon, and Asian oil paper umbrellas in the mise en scene. Additionally, this notion of usurping God is introduced again through Tyrell; a paragon of egocentric narcissism; synonymous with the term, "playing God." The eye is a prominent motif throughout Scott's film, utilised to convey human emotion. Thus, Tyrell's ironic myopia despite the apparent divinity of his portrayal, clothes in palpal robes and surrounded by candles,, can be considered a metaphor for the lens with which he views the world; lacking empathy, and blinded with an established ambition for omnipotence. A direct critique of the Reagan government's exploitation of the working class during the 1980s.

The concentric nature of Shelley's text evinces a myriad of character experiences, foreshadowing their plight. The biblical allusion, "you seek knowledge as I once did, and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you," and foreboding tone of *Frankenstein's* warning during letter four, underpins the moral significance for the remainder of Shelley's text, as well as Scott's text. Despite their chronological disparity and the differences between the 20th and the 19th century, Romanticism and Enlightenment, one social norm remains constant; mankind's futile attempt to usurp the role of God. This is subsequently reinforced by an imperative caveat, resonating with the social norms of both Shelley's and Scott's contexts and

content, "How dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge, and how much happier that man than he, who aspires to be greater than his nature will allow," supporting this notion that social norms have simply evolved.

The ignorance of the destructive tribulations arising from humanity's attempt to usurp God is an additional universal notion conveyed in both texts. During the onset of Scott's text the Los Angeles hellscape is presented, accentuated by synthetic pulses of Vangelis music, bombarding the audience with a festering effluvia of technology. The acid rain coupled with the flaming smokestacks resembling nuclear explosions in the mise en scene, allude to Reagan's ignorance of environmental destruction and endorsement of nuclear weapons; a mockery of God's universal role by annihilating his creation. The notion of humanity's destruction at the hands of his creation is further evinced through Tyrell's death, and the Monster's murder of Frankenstein's loved ones, "I gazed upon my victim, and my heart swelled in exultation and hellish triumph." Just as Ridley Scott reflects the Los Angeles hellscape to convey the ignorant social norm of economic gain and industrialisation at the expense of the environment and individuals, Mary Shelley also utilises environmental conditions to convey Frankenstein's resultant mental and physical destruction. The pathetic fallacy, "rain depressed me, my old feeling recurred and I was miserable," reflects how Frankenstein's initial zeal regarding his scientific pursuits has instead, become the author of his depression and despair, resonating with the dehumanisation of Shelley's industrial revolution, as well as Scott's 20th century era, characterised by its rigid emphasis on industrialisation at the expense of human dignity.

This ignorance is again reflected in Scott's text whereby he evinces that humanity has become so focused on technological progression that they are oblivious to their own dehumanisation. Although a replicant, Batty's humanity is evident through his resentment of Tyrell, "give me life, Fuck," and the close ups conveying his harrowing grief following Pris' death. Batty's intelligence and expressiveness is also conveyed through his intentional misquoting of William Blake's America, A Prophecy, "fiery the angels fell," contrasting with the socially inept, decrepit sweatshop worker, Chew. Frankenstein's musings before the creation of the Monster coalesce the nature of the social norms of both texts' content, "How I would sacrifice my future, my existence, my every hope for the furtherance of my enterprise."

Thus whilst the social norms and values have appeared to change and embody a dynamic entity, they have only evolved, whilst the underlying stimuli for such concerns remain constant.