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Ümran KÜÇÜKSAATÇİ

Re-establishing the Power Dynamics in Gender and Sexuality on the Way to Posthuman: *The Stone Gods* (2007) and *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) by Jeanette Winterson

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Ümran KÜÇÜKSAATÇİ

Jeanatte Winterson'ın *Taş Tanrılar* (2007) ve *Frankissstein: Bir Aşk Hikayesi* (2019) Eserlerinde İnsan Ötesi Yolunda Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Cinsellikteki Güç Dinamiklerinin Yeniden İnşası

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C O N T E N T S

CONTENTS…….. i
SUMMARY……...ii

ÖZET Jeanatte Winterson'ın *Taş Tanrılar* (2007) ve *Frankissstein: Bir Aşk Hikayesi* (2019) Eserlerinde İnsan Ötesi Yolunda Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Cinsellikteki Güç Dinamiklerinin Yeniden İnşası…….…….……iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS……iv

INTRODUCTION……1

On the Way to Posthuman…….....2

Feminists as the First Posthumanists: Posthuman Feminist Theory…….11

CHAPTER ONE

GENDER AND SEXUALITY AS A DISILLUSIONMENT IN *THE STONE GODS*

1.1. Depiction of a Posthuman World in *The Stone Gods*…….…...25

1.2. Re-establishing Power Differentials Regarding Gender and Sexuality……..…31

CHAPTER TWO

GENDER AND SEXUAL FLUIDITY AS A DISILLUSIONMENT IN *FRANKISSSTEIN: A LOVE STORY*

2.1. Posthuman Warnings: *Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus* (1818) and *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) …….....51

2.2. The Portrayal of Similar Worlds in *The Stone Gods* and *Frankissstein: A Love Story*….55

2.3. Recreation of Hierarchical Binaries in *Frankissstein* Regarding Gender and Sexuality...57

CONCLUSION…….....76

REFERENCES……...84

CURRICULUM VITAE…….....92

SUMMARY

Humanist and anthropocentric philosophies prioritize humans, emphasizing their rationality. However, this results in discrimination within and between human and nonhuman groups, particularly favouring white, male, and physically healthy individuals. To challenge these oppressive divisions and power imbalances, theorists have critiqued humanist perspectives, especially with the rise of technology and nonhuman intelligence. Posthumanist theory, embraced by feminist scholars like Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, and Francesca Ferrando, aims for a more inclusive and egalitarian world, integrating technological progress. As Jeanette Winterson provides profound insights regarding posthuman future in *The Stone Gods* and *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, this thesis has argued the possibility of eradication of the hierarchical binaries regarding gender and sexuality in a posthuman world. Winterson's two novels have been analysed within the framework of posthuman feminist theory to argue whether a posthuman environment is more inclusive and non-hierarchical. However, Winterson's depictions reveal that despite blurring boundaries between human and nonhuman, new power imbalances emerge, perpetuating binary gender systems. In other words, technologies, mainly controlled by men with an anthropocentric mindset, reinforce traditional gender norms and hierarchies, marginalizing nonbinary individuals and human/nonhuman females. Therefore, Winterson's novels expose the persistence of binary gender systems and hierarchical structures in posthuman realms, contradicting the expectation of dismantling human primacy and fostering a non-hierarchical world.

Keywords: posthumanism, posthuman feminist theory, *The Stone Gods*, *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, gender, sexuality

ÖZET

Jeanatte Winterson'ın *Taş Tanrılar* (2007) ve *Frankissstein: Bir Aşk Hikayesi* (2019) Eserlerinde İnsan Ötesi Yolunda Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Cinsellikteki Güç Dinamiklerinin Yeniden İnşası

Hümanist ve insanmerkezci yaklaşımlar, rasyonelliklerini vurgulayarak insanı önceler. Ancak bu, insan ve insan olmayan gruplar içinde ve arasında, özellikle beyaz, erkek ve fiziksel olarak sağlıklı bireyleri kayıran ayrımcılığa yol açar. Bu baskıcı bölünmelere ve güç dengesizliklerine karşı çıkmak için kuramcılar, özellikle teknolojinin ve insandışı zekanın yükselişiyle hümanist bakış açısını eleştirdiler. Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti ve Francesca Ferrando gibi feminist akademisyenler tarafından benimsenen insan ötesilik kuramı, teknolojik ilerlemeyi bütünleştiren daha kapsayıcı ve eşitlikçi bir dünyayı hedefliyor. Jeanette Winterson *Taş Tanrılar*'da ve *Frankissstein: Bir Aşk Hikayesi*'nde insan ötesi geleceğe dair derin içgörüler sağladığı için, bu tezde, insan sonrası bir dünyada toplumsal cinsiyet ve cinselliğe ilişkin hiyerarşik ikiliklerin ortadan kaldırılma olasılığı tartışılmıştır. Winterson'ın bu iki romanı, insan sonrası bir ortamın daha kapsayıcı ve hiyerarşik olup olmadığını tartışmak için posthüman feminist kuramı çerçevesinde analiz edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte, Winterson'ın tasvirleri, insan ve insan olmayan arasındaki sınırların bulanıklaşmasına rağmen, ikili cinsiyet sistemlerini sürdüren yeni güç dengesizliklerinin ortaya çıktığını ortaya koymuştur. Diğer bir deyişle, esas olarak insanmerkezci bir zihniyete sahip erkekler tarafından kontrol edilen teknolojiler, kendini belirli bir cinsiyet içerisinde sınıflandırmayan bireyleri ve insan/insan olmayan kadınları marjinalleştirerek geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet normlarını ve hiyerarşilerini pekiştiriyor. Bu nedenle, Winterson'ın romanları, insan önceliğini ortadan kaldırma ve hiyerarşik olmayan bir dünyayı teşvik etme beklentisiyle çelişerek, insan sonrası dünyalarda ikili cinsiyet sistemlerinin ve hiyerarşik yapıların kalıcılığını ortaya koyuyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: posthümanizm, posthüman feminist teori, *Taş Tanrılar*, *Frankissstein: Bir Aşk Hikayesi*, toplumsal cinsiyet, cinsellik

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, posthuman feminist theory has been applied to Jeanette Winterson's two novels, *The Stone Gods* (2008) and *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2020), to discuss the possibility of a world where the power differentials like gender and sexuality do not function hierarchically. For this purpose, humanistic and anthropocentric approaches, which prioritize human over any other species, have been elucidated at first to comprehend how these approaches created binaries, thereby hierarchies, and to demonstrate how the concept of human has changed over the years through posthuman critical theory. Then, posthuman approach that has generated a new perception on human notion, has been handled in the first part of the introduction.

Feminist politics had grappled with the humanist ideals even before posthumanism was introduced because humanist values associated women with nature and irrationality while attributing civilization and rationality to men. In a published conversation between Emily Jones and Dianne Otto (2020: 2), Otto articulates "nature has been feminised and treated as the object of Man's rationality and scientific knowledge". Many feminist writers endeavoured to disrupt this constructed view and to use technological developments as a means of emancipating women from dualisms reinforced by humanist constructions. Therefore, the works of some significant feminist writers for posthuman theory such as Luce Irigaray, Shulamith Firestone, and Donna Haraway have been introduced in the second part of the introduction. These theorists constitute the theoretical background of posthuman feminist theory which is the main theory used in this study. Through the end of introduction, posthuman feminist perspective have been illustrated by drawing upon Rosi Braidotti's definitions mostly.

Both aforementioned novels raise questions about the future of human world regarding gender and sexuality among humans and nonhumans in a posthuman era. Thus, these two literary works have been thoroughly analysed and interpreted within the scope of posthuman feminist theory. Initially, the posthuman environment depicted by Winterson in *The Stone Gods* (2008) has been illustrated in Chapter One. Then, it has been argued that the depiction of posthuman world in this novel reflects a disillusionment in terms of gender and sexual diversity because of the inability to create a non-hierarchical system through the characters and their acts on the contrary to posthuman feminist presumptions.

In the second chapter of this study, *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2020), which is selected as the other main literary text to be analysed, has been profoundly interpreted. Before this, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: Or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) and Jeanette Winterson's

Frankissstein: A Love Story (2020) have been analysed in terms of both being cautionary tales against posthuman. Then, the relation between two primary sources, *The Stone Gods* and *Frankissstein* has been demonstrated to shed light on the reason behind their inclusion in this study. Further, the possibility of a world where the traditional power dynamics, such as those based on gender and sexuality, cease to operate in hierarchical structures has been argued by examining the novel within the framework of posthuman feminist theory.

Lastly, this thesis is set to conclude that technological advancements often strengthen and recreate negative heterosexual patriarchal dynamics in posthuman worlds as illustrated and discussed through the analysis of these two novels. By drawing upon the analyses of these two novels, this study has demonstrated how technological advancements can perpetuate existing power imbalances, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality, on the contrary to the premise provided by posthumanist or posthuman feminist theorists such as Haraway, Braidotti, Pepperell and Ferrando.

On the Way to Posthuman

> Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowing. […] It is human, and only its possessor and begetter takes it so solemnly- as though the world's axis turned within it. But if we could communicate with the gnat, we would learn that he likewise flies through the air with the same solemnity, that he feels the flying center of the universe within himself (Nietzsche, 1873: 1).

As Friedrich Nietzsche stated, humans have been trapped in an anthropocentric worldview for so many centuries, and as he suggested, humans have a tendency to view themselves as the most important species on earth and attribute a higher value to their knowledge. Humanist thought maintained this mindset until the "posthuman turn" (Braidotti, 2013: 51). According to Weitzenfeld and Joy (2014: 1), humanism reinforced this anthropocentrism, which "has narcissistically privileged humans as the center of all significance". Humanist scholars such as Cicero, Kant, and Hume assumed that humans were at the center of everything, as they possess rationality and consciousness, unlike nonhumans. Humanism also attributes "the source of knowledge and value" (Weitzenfeld and Joy, 2014: 4) solely to humans, further solidifying their central position. As Cary Wolfe (2009) proposes, classic humanism presents human beings as unique because of their rational abilities, and it emphasizes that humans deserve admiration and consideration precisely due to their exclusive possession of these capabilities. This long-standing perspective on humans as the center of everything can be illustrated by Nietzsche's metaphorical (1873) example of a mosquito that, if conscious and able to communicate with humans, would regard itself as the most important thing in the world. On this matter, Tim

Hayward (1997) emphasizes the impossibility of human values' decentralization since human beings are the valuers themselves. Thus, the enduring belief in human centrality, as exemplified by Nietzsche's metaphor and emphasized by Hayward, underscores the inherent difficulty of decentralizing human values.

Anthropocentrism is not merely about humans prioritizing their values, but also about elevating humans above all other species, which leads to the marginalization and subordination of nonhumans to maintain human superiority (Kopnina et al., 2021). Therefore, the concept of anthropocentrism entails more than a mere self-love, as suggested by Hayward's (1997) position. Rather, it involves an ingrained perspective that assigns a superior value to humans above all other species, often resulting in the exploitation and domination of nonhuman organisms and the environment. Similarly, humanism aims to contribute to human welfare above all other objectives, often disregarding other species and using them as means for human welfare. This is because only humanism, "a belief system that defines human beings as ontologically free through a universally shared essence such as reason" (Weitzenfeld and Joy, 2014: 4), could give rise to anthropocentrism in its most basic and present form. Thus, both humanism and anthropocentrism are historically and philosophically intertwined concepts and understanding their interconnection is crucial for comprehending their influence on posthuman thought as Kopnina (2019), in her explanatory article, elucidates, posthumanism notably criticizes any belief or theory that advocates the priority of humanity akin to conventional humanism. In this case, it becomes imperative to trace the roots of humanism and anthropocentrism in order to grasp the genesis of posthuman critique that decenters humanity.

Humanism is a philosophical and intellectual movement that has its roots in ancient Greek thought, and it experienced a revival during the Renaissance era. This movement regained its momentum during the Enlightenment period, also known as the Age of Reason, due to its strong emphasis on human rationality and its contribution to human welfare. Early Greek philosophers, including Thales, Anaximenes, Plato, and Epicurus, were pioneers of the humanist perspective. They relied on observation and reason for their theories instead of attributing natural phenomena to divine powers. For instance, Xenophon rejected the existence of metaphysical matters, and Aristotle approached the world realistically, like his teacher Plato. Additionally, Epicurus believed that the soul dies when the body dies, which shifted the focus towards the world. However, before all of them, Protagoras took the lead with his famous doctrine: "Man is the measure of all things, of the reality of those which are and unreality of those which are not" (as cited in Law, 2011: 26). This doctrine again reiterates the centrality of

humans and reinforces the notion that the existence of humans is crucial because they themselves consider it to be so.

The estrangement of individuals from God, celestial entities, and spiritual principles, accompanied by an inclination towards a rational and pragmatic outlook towards the world and human beings, was a notable aspect that captured the admiration of Renaissance humanists. Leonardo da Vinci, an Italian painter at the peak of Renaissance period setting in the fourteenth century and closing through the beginning of the seventeenth century, portrayed humans according to humanist ideals, or William Shakespeare praised human nature and human deeds in his works as in *Hamlet*: "What a piece of work is man, how noble in reason" (Shakespeare, 1602: 54). This revival of classical thought in Renaissance, which means rebirth in French, was mainly induced by "the students of the literature of Greek and Latin poets, philosophers, historians and rhetoricians" (Azhar and Ali, 2021) at the time. The revival of classical letters for European scholars was provided by Italian philosophers by making them available through translations (Crosson, 2020). This revival of classical letters had a significant impact on European scholarship, and paved the way for a new intellectual movement that is humanism.

The word humanist originated from the Italian word "umanista" in 1500s, and has two meanings, first of which is "the revival of classical learning in the European Renaissance" according to Copson's study (2015: 2), and latter of which is "non-religious or non-Christian" (Copson, 2015: 2). The largest reason for this is because Catholic Church's corruption is what ignited Renaissance humanism. It was corrupt due to various activities belittling human capacity and mind, for example, selling lands from heaven or indulgences imposing the idea that humans are only sinners. Martin Luther alleged these indulgences and heaven-lands purchases had precluded people from acts for their own good in *Ninety-Five Theses* in 1517. This ground-breaking piece of work afflicted the supremacy of the Catholic Church over people, and then humans started to question the role of the Church between God and humans. This cultural transformation during the Renaissance period found expressions in literary forms such as in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1602) or Thomas More's *Utopia* (1551) since they either depicted a glorified and ideal human, or an ideal order for humans (Azhar and Ali, 2021). In visual arts it is exemplified by the works of Leonardo da Vinci. As seen in his artworks such as *Mona Lisa* (1503) and *Vitruvian Man* (1490), da Vinci shifted towards a more realistic style, with a pronounced focus on the ideal human (man) form, reflecting the shift towards humanism during the Renaissance era.

Humanism dates back to Greek and Renaissance periods; however, it got stronger with the Enlightenment Period in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which includes the birth of

the rights of man as well. People of this period witnessed great advances and went through big changes since humans started to look for logical explanations in everything and value logic and consciousness to improve humans' lives. That is why the period is also known as "the Age of Reason". In his short article, a prominent Enlightenment thinker Immanuel Kant (1784: 1) defines Enlightenment as "Man's release from his self-incurred tutelage" and he explains "Tutelage is man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another". He likens Pre-Enlightenment times to the man's immature times in which they are unable to use their reason without the help of another, and indicates man got mature and able to use his reason. So, this paved the way for a more rational, free world for humans, and formed the basis of Enlightenment thinking. As Stephen Law (2011: 32) explained, French philosophers Denis Diderot and Jean d'Alembert, who were highly critics of religion, describe the Enlightenment thinker as someone who sets aside the authority, religion, or tradition, in short, everything that suppresses minds and "dares to think for himself". This definition of the Enlightenment thinker complies with that of a humanist as a humanist cares about the people more than anything else such as God, authority, nature etc. instead (Copson, 2015). Also, it concurs with Copson's (2015: 6) definition of humanism that is "a democratic and ethical life stance, which affirms that human beings have the right and responsibility to give meaning and shape their own lives" by taking the definitions of various humanist organizations into account. Accordingly, this period prompted humans to reflect upon their own existence and earthly well-being as it was marked by a shift in humanity's ascent to the figurative center and the decline of the Church from its dominant position. This circumstance was coupled with significant scientific discoveries, such as Galileo's development of the telescope in 1609, which revealed new truths about the Earth and the universe, as well as Edward Jenner's discovery of the vaccine in 1796, which had tremendous benefits for human welfare. As a result, humans became increasingly influential and their significance in the world grew. So, people began to prioritize science and reason over the authority of the Church. Besides, the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 revolutionized the field of evolutionary biology and challenged the Biblical account of creation. Therefore, the birth of humanism and Enlightenment is twinned inasmuch as developments in the era affected the religious authority adversely provoking humanist thinking which holds a nonreligious perspective (Copson, 2015).

Although Tim Hayward (1997) assumes that anthropocentrism (human-centeredness) is indispensable since we are humans, Kopnina (2019) rejects the whole human-centeredness because she reckons it is a fallacy to think there is no other way other than thinking as humans exemplifying with the fact that being a white man does not entail to think only as a white man

and ignore the perspectives of other groups, such as women or people of color. Many other scholars also criticized this anthropocentrism because it resulted in human chauvinism, favoring humans above nonhumans or others that are seen less humans such as the women or the poor, and speciesism, which is "disadvantageous consideration or treatment of those who are not classified as belonging to one or more particular species" (Horta, 2009: 244). Thus, human chauvinism or speciesism is harmful consideration of nonhumans like animals, plants or even humans who are seen less human as less worthy of moral considerations and considering nonhumans only instruments for human interests, for example, drug testing on animals or black people in Africa.

The idea of anthropocentric humanism has been heavily criticized for its narrow definition of humanity, which not only excludes nonhuman beings but also disregards the needs and rights of certain groups of humans. The definition of humanity was initially established by a small group of elites, property-owning men who marginalized and oppressed other beings, including animals, differently-abled people, and women. For instance, Leonardo da Vinci's famous *Vitruvian Man* painting depicted a specific group of individuals who were white, male, and non-disabled, thereby excluding many others. Therefore, "this gendered and racialized category excluded many humans" (Crosson, 2020: 1). Even when exploiting animals with experiments, not all humans can benefit from this, only people rich enough to afford the drugs can benefit; so, anthropocentric view is excluding both nonhumans and some kinds of humans. This is a result of anthropocentrism's binary division of the world into humans and nonhumans and the subsequent marginalization of certain groups. This exclusivity has historically benefited a specific group of individuals who hold power, such as wealthy, white males. Such exclusions have sparked social justice movements by people of color, women, and animal rights activists, who have sought to challenge the hierarchical order. Although the Enlightenment period marked an era of individualism and self-love, which may have hindered collective action, technological advancements and changing societal values have led to the emergence of new perspectives. For instance, posthumanist thinking, which acknowledges the interdependence of humans and nonhumans, has gained traction. The term "posthumanism" was first coined by Ihab Hassan in 1977 and has since developed into a multidisciplinary approach that seeks to transcend anthropocentrism and promote an inclusive and equitable worldview. Hassan (1977: 15) describes the changing paradigms with a critique of da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* (1490) which has become the symbol of humanist ideals:

> We need first to understand that the human form- including human desire and all its external representations- may be changing radically, and thus must be re-visioned. We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something

> that we must helplessly call posthumanism. The figure of Vitruvian Man arms and legs defining the measure of things, so marvelously drawn by Leonardo, has broken through its enclosing circle and square, and spread across the cosmos.

In "Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture?", Hassan (1977) signals that the concept of human is undergoing significant changes and needs to be reimagined, and that humanism may be evolving into posthumanism, marking an end to five hundred years of humanist ideals.

Since the emergence of Homo Sapiens, humans have been utilizing and attempting to refine technology for various purposes such as toolmaking and treating illnesses. However, the progress made in technology has expanded since the twentieth century, particularly after the Second World War (1939- 1945), causing a fundamental shift in the definition of humanity. This shift has led some to question the traditional concept of humanism, as articulated by Ihab Hassan (1977: 15). The basis for this challenge is that humans have been regarded as the source of reason, knowledge, and rationality (Weitzenfeld and Joy, 2014), but with the advancement of technology, information can now be transferred to entities beyond the human body. As a result, the notion of human consciousness and the concept of humanity itself have undergone significant changes. Descartes' famous assertion, "Cogito, ergo sum" in Latin or "I think; therefore, I am" in English (Astore, 2021: 2) asserts a fundamental link between the existence of an individual and their thinking mind. However, the present state of technology challenges this notion by demonstrating that the mind can exist without a physical human body. This leads to debates about the essence of humanity and what distinguishes humans from nonhumans in the absence of supremacy of the human mind.

The contemporary era represents a golden age for informational patterns, which are not only limited to the confines of human embodiment and intrinsic to the human experience but also embodied in diverse forms and sometimes exist in the form of intangible flows. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1972), two significant postmodernists contributing also to posthuman theory, put forward a ground-breaking theory upon which many information-flows-related innovations are founded. They claimed that bodies are in pain because of the way they are organized, and further, they suggest they, either should be organized in another way or not organized at all like a "body without organs", a philosophical concept first coined by Antonin Artaud (1947). Literary critic Katherine Hayles (2010: 29) solidifies the theory that anticipates "all material objects are interpenetrated by flows of information" with many examples such as "ATMs, internet, or DNA codes", which are more trustworthy these days than an eyewitness. Both these technologies and this thinking that the information is a floating pattern historically accelerated after the Second World War. Post-war generation, known as baby boomers, grew

into anti-humanists challenging the humanist ideals strictly along with the social activists in that period such as feminists, anti-colonialists, and post-modernists.

In terms of technology advances that lead to this paradigm shift, the starting point could be the Macy Conferences which bring many scientists and researchers like Norbert Wiener, Gregory Bateson, and John von Neumann together and give them the opportunity to show their studies on cybernetics from 1943 to 1954 (Hayles, 2010). Cybernetics is the scientific study of how information is communicated in machines and electronic devices in comparison with how information is communicated in the brain and nervous system (Mindell, 2000). In these conferences, mathematicians Wiener and Neumann made very clear that the primary factor equating humans and machines was information which "radically destabilizes the ontological foundation of what counts as human" (Hayles, 2010: 39), rather than the ontological being. A few of the game changers in the conferences were a maze-solving electronic rat designed by mathematician Claude Shannon and psychiatrist Ross Ashby's homeostat, a machine that looks for ways to turn back to its steady phase when bothered. These revolutionary inventions are all based on Norbert Wiener's prescient vision of the potential to teleport human beings, which highlights the critical role of information flow. Therefore, the Macy Conferences were a key contributor in changing the understanding of the relationship between humans and machines, highlighting their interconnectivity through the flow of information.

Although Hans-Lukas Teuber, a professor of psychology, disagrees with the idea that humans and machines (nonhumans) are equal by arguing they are still models or robots no matter what they do similar to the nervous system does, humans and robots are quite similar in that they work with the same structure and follow the same rules as the nervous system does according to neuroscientist Warren McCulloch (Hayles, 2010). Nevertheless, this progress provided a new concept of human and new standpoints like recently popular transhumanism and posthumanism. However, they differ in many aspects despite their theoretical analogies, and the closeness of their emergence points, around 80s.

Emancipation of human beings is a central aim to both, but transhumanism's goal is more likely to free humans from their biological restraints in contrast to posthumanism which aims to emancipate humans from the false assumptions of humanism (Ranisch and Sorgner, 2014). Not to cause any conceptual confusion further, it is crucial to comprehend their discrepancies. Transhumanism, coined by biologist Julian Huxley (1957), was defined to be the transcendence of human extending capabilities and opportunities of and for humans but this transcendence does not affect the essence of human; man remains man. So, human improvement is highly critical for transhumanism, and for this, transhumanism shows a great

interest in technology. Although posthumanism shares this interest, the way they approach, and benefit technology is really distinct; transhumanism considers technology as an opportunity to enhance and alter humanity for humans' sake while posthumanism tackle technological enhancements more theoretically not turning them into its main focus and enounces humans have not remained humans. In other words, "The focal point of posthumanism consists not as such in a-critical acceptance of the technological promises- like there is for transhumanism- but in a […] hybridization of human beings with other living beings and machines" (Valera, 2014: 481). Thus, transhumanism is to overcome the limitations of the human mind and body, and to remove diseases and pain by means of technology. Further, it does not support a complete change on the perception of the human, it only covers human deficiencies and supports humans turn into more-than-humans contrary to posthumanism which advocates an alteration in the comprehension of human. Therefore, transhumanism is seen as "intensification of humanism, a type of hyper-humanism" by Ranisch and Sorgner (2014: 3), whereas they consider posthumanism more of "break with humanism". In fact, transhuman is a bridge between the human and posthuman. As Birnbacher (2008: 95) notes, "Transhumanism can be defined as a movement that wants us to get on the way to 'posthumanity' by going beyond humanity in its present form". Transhumanists want us to enter upon a process that will ultimately lead to 'posthumanity'". Therefore, technological augmentations that transhumanists support for their benefit result in posthuman and questioning humanist doctrines. All in all, while transhumanism is deeply rooted in Enlightenment humanism adopting belief in reason and progress and holding a human-centric perspective, posthumanism has its roots in anti-humanism.

Anti-humanism is a crucial concept to the posthuman idea. Anti-humanist thinking goes back to postmodernist thought, in particular, thoughts of French philosopher Michel Foucault (1994: 21), who declared the death of man in the preface of his book, *The Order of Things*: "Man is only a recent invention... a new wrinkle in our knowledge, and that he will disappear again as soon as that knowledge has discovered a new form". To demonstrate man as nearing his end is the foundation of anti-humanism which destroys the man, very much similar to posthumanism on one hand. On the other hand, posthumanists do not literally indicate the death of man but indicate the death of an assertive notion of human; the era of human is nearing to its end. The posthuman arouses profound questions about the meaning of human being. The words already reveal their meanings themselves: "post" acknowledges a new concept coming after prevailing human concept; "anti" manifests a precise end of humans. That is why it is more accurate to associate posthumanism with post-anthropocentrism which looks for new ways of thinking leaving anthropocentrism (human superiority over species) behind. The posthuman

assumes the descending of humanism but it does not end there, the posthuman subject supports the rising of alternatives. As Valera (2014: 488) clarifies, the term "post" symbolizes a concept of interconnectedness, shaped by its interaction with otherness, "be it a machine or another living being". Thus, posthumanism signifies a new perspective or approach into humanist doctrines rather than an ending. As a result, posthuman theory is same as neither transhumanism nor anti-humanism.

Posthumanism represents a significant departure from Enlightenment humanism and anthropocentrism, both of which centralize human. According to Rosi Braidotti (2013), a contemporary feminist theoretician, this restricted definition of human in Renaissance and Enlightenment humanism periods is essential to understand how we entered to posthuman era. Humanist thinking placed man as the questioner and the answer to all questions, but this definition of man has created discrimination and hierarchy not only between humans and nonhumans but also among humans themselves, leading to issues of sexism, racism, and ethnocentrism. For instance, *Vitruvian Man* is a model of impeccable human body painted by Leonardo da Vinci (1490) who got inspired by Roman architect and engineer Vitruvius. Although Vitruvius is a building guide, primarily centered around architectural principles, Leonardo's influential work focuses on the study of the human body, specifically examining the geometric principles behind perfect proportions (Richman-Abdou and Stewart, 2023). This "perfect" human is white, male, and abled excluding blacks, women, and differently-abled humans. As Tony Davies (1997: 141) clearly elucidates in his book, "all humanisms… speak of the human in the accents and the interests of a class, a sex, a race, a genome…" explaining why and how humanism is problematic. From a posthumanist perspective, this globally accepted perfect proportions are not natural but constructed opinions, and additionally the human is not the answer for any question, but it is the one to be questioned. For this, the essence of humanist ideas must change to recognize the diversity and complexity of humanity.

Spinoza's opinion on the wholeness of mind and soul and his belief that boundaries do not exist between anything and everything is somehow related and is central to the posthuman theory. Although it is a critique of Descartes' perspective on mind/body dualism, Spinoza takes it further and considers matter as one agent, and heralds "a monistic universe" (Braidotti, 2013). As Braidotti (2019a) highlights, posthumanism is a perceptual turn in combination with the view that human species are not alone on this planet, but we are sharing it with others. In this respect, there is no "I" alone in the center ignoring "them". Braidotti (2019a: 52) continues her argument by stating that "we are all different, but we are all in this together". The most influential factor blurring and challenging the boundaries between humans and nonhumans is

aforementioned technological advances because there cannot be found any distinctions or boundaries between ontological presence and a virtual reality, between a robot mechanism and biological organism in the posthuman world (Hayles, 2010). Moreover, as American academic Cary Wolfe (2009) implies, nowadays the instruments we use, technological devices, and prosthetic tools are describing who humans are. In fact, as Hayles (2010) points out, we may even have always been posthuman because we are prosthetic beings ourselves and technological prosthetic tools that we use to extend our bodies are just a part of the progress that we started since the beginning of evolution. So, the essence of human is not even the historically defined human or intrinsic to that human now; however, it does not mean we are dehumanized, it means that human is redefined in regard to its place in the planet, and its relation to nonhumans with which the human has to live.

To conclude, the posthuman view avoids any kind of centralizations, dualities/binaries, thereby hierarchical constructions which had dominated Western culture such as man over woman, human over animal, or nature over culture. However, posthumanist thinkers are not the first to criticize and challenge humanist morals. Anti-colonial thinkers had questioned why the ideal human was white in the *Vitruvius Man* embracing a criticizing attitude towards Eurocentrism imposed by humanist ideals. Also, post-colonials argued that humanist ideals can continue to be adopted only if they are designated by anywhere except the Western world (Braidotti, 2013). More crucial to this study, feminists dismantled the male supremacy dictated by humanism, and deconstructed white, male, and European human assumption at many levels like political, economic, sociological, and cultural. So, they also required a cogent shift in the prevailing dominant thought just as posthumanists decenter human from the most prominent location in the world. Consequently, feminism and posthumanism are very interrelated at the core of their aims which is to rethink and redefine the humanist agents, to set up a new mindset corresponding to theoretical needs of contemporary world. That is why posthuman feminist theory, which is the main theory used in this thesis to argue the power differentials in *The Stone Gods* (2008) and *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2020) by Jeanette Winterson, will be expounded in the next section of the introduction.

Feminists as the First Posthumanists: Posthuman Feminist Theory

Even though Hayles (2010) implies we have always been posthuman, as our use of tools is an integral part of what defines us as humans, we have had to go through a number of theoretical transformations with the emergence of post-colonial, post-structuralist thinkers, and feminists in order to dispose of deep-seated humanist praxis, to view ourselves as posthumans.

Among these epistemologies which played significant roles in posthuman turn, feminist practice, specifically the second feminist wave, should be predominantly given credit for the dethronement of humanist tradition and as Braidotti (2016: 674) posits, "for developing concepts and methods that have encouraged critical distance from humanism" even before Ihab Hassan (1977) coined the term posthumanism. In other words, feminist theory holds the reputation for being the first to trouble human concept in humanist customs, thereby being the pioneers of contemporary posthuman studies because women have always been the second others to the established hu(man) definition during Renaissance and Enlightenment periods. That is why feminist thinkers and writers such as Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, Luce Irigaray and Donna Haraway strived to generate new insights and critical theories and objected the perception which praise the man as "the measure of all things" since this understanding is creating binaries and hierarchies and not inclusive; it otherises multiple beings except white European male humans, with which we are conversant from the *Vitruvian Man* (1490). For example, "the death of man", French philosopher Michel Foucault's precursor announcement (1994) to posthumanism, was embraced and incorporated into writings as a theory by post-structuralist feminists because the alleged death of man allows for others to climb the center, in which man occupied for centuries, and rethink what human is after the long-standing human notion, people used to be familiar with, died.

Another reason why the post-structuralist feminists like Cixous and Irigaray adopted Foucault's assumption and anti-humanist aspects is that they always found Enlightenment concept of human problematic due to its exclusionary ideals leading to binary oppositions and power differentials since one side of these binaries had to be the second/other to the other side, namely these binaries existed unequally by giving too much power to one of its sides while the other side suffered under this hegemony in many aspects. Therefore, they assailed the humanist ideals which propose an ideal man as a symbol of all humans ignoring our differences like gender, race, and so on. As Luce Irigaray (1987) indicated, this emblematic representation of humanity is fundamentally masculine and overlooks the contributions and perspectives of other marginalized groups. This criticism about restrictive human portrayal and anti-humanistic effort to deconstruct the human clearly unite posthuman theorists and feminists. According to Rosi Braidotti (2016: 673), "the posthuman turn is triggered by the convergence of feminist anti-humanism, on the one hand, and anti-anthropocentrism on the other".

Feminist theorists contributed to posthuman shift with their solid critiques of the predicament engendered by classical interpretations of humanist ideal of man, and welcomed diversity abandoning Eurocentric, androcentric, and anthropocentric rules of humanism.

However, prior to post-structuralist theorists such as Derrida, Foucault, and Deleuze, the aims and struggles of first wave feminism (1848-1920) differed significantly from those of second wave feminism. The former was criticized for being overly influenced by European humanist morals rather than universalistic ethics. Women movements had resonated with humanist thinking which suggests that women's emancipation was contingent upon the improvement of all humans; thus, women were not the only leading actors even in their movements. However, first wave feminists had valid reasons for their actions, considering the historical context in which they operated. After dealing with deep-rooted submission, discrimination, inferiority, and male domination established by prominent theorists and scientists such as Aristotle and Darwin, both of whom were fond of the idea that the relation of female to male is inferior to superior or subject to ruler, because they regarded women as powerless, fragile, and irrational by nature, women reasonably fought to be as equal as men, to be seen as humans during the first wave. Women had been deprived of basic rights that men had like voting, citizenship, working, and studying among other basic rights, therefore political equality was of great importance; they assumed they would have been as equal as men, and had same opportunities if they had been equal before the law. Unfortunately, the premise that human egalitarianism would pave the way for women's egalitarianism, and that political or legal equality would automatically translate into social, economic, and educational equality proved to be erroneous, contrary to expectations. Despite this, it is undeniable that feminists played a key role in shaping social reforms. However, the first wave feminism, which informally began with Mary Wollstonecraft's path-breaking book called *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) reached its end following suffragettes' success. Neither equality in social, economic, and educational aspects nor women egalitarianism, believed to be provided with human improvement, was accomplished, though. For instance, they got the right to work but not in all working areas, they could only work in jobs appropriate to their nature such as nursing, babysitting etc. and there were a few majors they could study in college, and further, even if they worked, there were inequalities in payment. Also, the first wave feminism embraced humanist values, which concisely reverberates European secularism emerging from originally French Revolution (1789) and subsequently Enlightenment age developments, yet men's emancipation from the church did not guarantee women to be free from religious doctrines and to experience a more rational environment. Women were still involved in religious activities and excluded from other areas of life like public administration, scientific studies, and secular education, and "in this polarized scheme", as Braidotti (2013: 34) lucidly expresses, "women were assigned to the pole of un-reason, passions, and emotions, including religion…". Thus,

men's separation from the church left women with the religion alone strengthening their subordination on the contrary to the first wave feminism's hopes. That is why, there was a growing need for new women movements and social changes compatible with changing world and new insights. At this point, the second wave feminism appeared on the stage of history during 1960s-70s.

The second wave feminists along with post-structuralist feminists aimed to dismantle the underlying causes of gender inequality, challenge the nature/culture dichotomy in relation to gender, and bring about a social change to alter the mindset of people. They endeavored to supplant hierarchical and conventional power relations which is a critical issue for posthuman feminist theory as well. In addition, unlike the first wave, the second wave feminists acknowledged the diversity within the feminist movement, such as differences in race, ethnicity, and economic status. For example, Frances Beal (2008), feminist and political activist, points out that the conflicts, white and non-white feminists encounter, are very distinct. Anti-humanist thinkers and post-structuralists influenced works of feminist literary writers in that they went beyond perpetuating dichotomies like rational/irrational, normal/abnormal, and same/different; they targeted at falseness of constituted centers of these oppositions, and aimed to construct free, different but cooperative subjectivities.

Through the end of the twentieth century, feminist scholars witnessed humanist values, and being lawfully equal as men failed to be advantageous for women because there were still undeniable differences between the sexes. Nevertheless, feminists, post-structuralist feminists in particular, like Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler, or Luce Irigaray, argued that these differences should not build asymmetrically powered dichotomies. They asserted that these are socially constructed false dichotomies, not nature-originated since a homogeneous group of women is not a matter of discussion as evidenced by psychological research that confutes Freudian analysis, demonstrating that discrepancies between people belonging to same sex group are enormously higher than "variation between the sexes" (Williams, 1990: 1784-85). Furthermore, the expectation that women should conform to male norms in order to achieve equality disregards the uniqueness of their experiences and perspectives, a phenomenon that American radical feminist Catharine Mackinnon terms the "male standard" and she maintains "You can be the same as men, and then you will be equal, or you can be different from men, and then you will be women" (as cited in Williams, 1990: 1780). To put it another way, women either had to settle for so-called equality in a male-standardized world or had to be "women", that is, others to men; either way was a conundrum for women because men establish the criteria regardless of the context. Therefore, deconstruction of male/female binary was needed for the

recognition of differences among various subjectivities not just the variations between the groups of two sexes, and it was also needed to prevent one-sided standards. To this end, post-structuralism provided the deconstruction of many dichotomies, and post-structuralist feminists drew upon that. Davies and Gannon (2011: 312) point out in their article that "feminist post-structuralism makes visible, analyzable and revisable, in particular, the male/female and straight/lesbian binaries" and add "through analysis of texts, it shows how relations of power are constructed and maintained by granting normality, rationality and naturalness to the dominant term in any binary, and in contrast, how the subordinated term is marked as other, as lacking, as not rational". Cixous and Derrida (2001) mention the potential of post-structuralist methods to provoke different subjectivities, exempt from perpetual past definitions of gender. This is also what the posthuman approach aimed; to leave certain boundaries drawn by humanism aside and go beyond them.

Just as post-structuralist feminists challenged gender dichotomies and opened up possibilities for other subjectivities, posthuman feminists seek to dismantle the gender binary in order to allow for more diverse expressions of human sexuality. Considering feminist aspect of posthumanism, Braidotti (2013: 98) suggests "to rethink sexuality without genders, starting from a vitalist return to the polymorphous and, according to Freud, 'perverse' (in the sense of playful and non-reproductive) structure of human sexuality"; hence, posthuman feminist theory draws upon what post-structuralist feminism started. Post-structuralist feminists questioned gender dichotomy and induced a chance to argue other subjectivities. Similarly, posthuman feminists wanted to erase gender binary because it does not allow any other kinds of relationships than heterosexual relationships and acts against complex human sexuality taking the possibility of other bodies away (Braidotti, 2013). Thus, in the 1970s, post-structuralist feminists along with second wave feminist writers laid the foundations of today's posthuman and posthuman feminist theories, and since then, they have shaped and have been in interaction with anti-humanism and posthumanism thanks to their interdisciplinary approaches. Especially Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, Luce Irigaray and most importantly Donna Haraway are the pioneers of posthuman feminist theory with their countless works. Therefore, in this thesis, a brief summary of their works have been provided to better understand the relevance of posthuman feminist theory.

First, in her book *The Second Sex*, originally published in French in 1949, Simone de Beauvoir (1956) disrupts the traditional definition of what it means to be human by questioning what a woman is. She defines womanhood as "Very simple, say the fanciers of simple formulas: she is a womb, an ovary; she is a female- this word is sufficient to define her" (de Beauvoir,

1956: 33), and brings forth for the first time that the notion of woman, which is seen the "secondary" and "inferior" to man, is a social-construct just like human ideals of humanist perspective rather than a natural definition. She articulates this matter very frankly: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (1956: 273). For her, the minds of individuals are formed by society and culture, and she argues the woman concept is constructed as subordinate to maintain the dominancy of men because men regard themselves as "the measure of all things", the center of the world. She suggests women as "the measure of all things" building on humanist grounds (Braidotti, 2013). Thus, de Beauvoir's theory was groundbreaking in that it was the first to separate biological sex from sociocultural gender concepts and to agitate against male dominance in this dichotomy. Her ideas have been influential in post-structuralist feminist ontology, which later gave rise to posthuman feminist theory.

French feminist and linguist Luce Irigaray is another significant figure for posthuman feminism. Her advocacy for women to construct a female discourse independent of male discourse which outlines women as secondary, dependent of men, worthless, and outlines being a woman as the lack of phallus, particularly in Western tradition is an important contribution to feminist theory. Therefore, she rejects the sameness originating from phallus and holds on to differences of women thought-provokingly asking "equal to whom?" (as cited in Braidotti, 2016: 679), which "could be taken as the war cry for the following generation that refused to take equality as homo legation or reduction to a masculine standard of sameness" according to Braidotti (2016: 679). Irigaray stresses that the prevailing culture is patriarchally and mono-sexually discoursed. Since women stayed in the background of male dominated discourse, women sexuality was also overshadowed; it was based on masculine standards which assume clitoris is similar to male genital and assume that women experience their desire expecting to cover the lack of penis with sex. That is why Irigaray endeavors to save females and female sexuality from masculine parameters and to return to female subjectivity and to promote a matriarchal perspective. She brings female sexuality, defining it outside of male discourse, into the forefront because she believes political equality is not enough alone, women should have an identity defined by women themselves not by men for equality. By doing so, Irigaray digresses from the Western humanist traditions, and male-centered mindset; she disrupts the binary opposition in which one of the parts is more powered and dominated the other by building a new agency: a female agency. Irigaray's theory generated the recognition of multiple agencies beyond the traditional binary oppositions of male/female, human/nonhuman, and so on, and became a key aspect of posthuman feminist perspective which lets various agencies live in a monistic nature.

Shulamith Firestone, a prominent radical feminist writer, is often credited with pioneering posthuman feminist thought by addressing two critical points: the environmentalist, and feminist approach, for posthuman future (Braidotti, 2016). However, she adopts a different perspective than de Beauvoir and Irigaray. She wants to ascertain what sexual oppression's basis is in order to argue for the possibility of feminist revolution, and she finds out that women were oppressed and treated unequally by nature itself before anything else. In her seminal work, *The Dialectic of Sex,* Firestone (1970: 11) describes sex as a "fundamental biological condition" but not a fair one, citing the heavier burden that women bear in the process of reproduction. In this book, she claims if someone observes the process of proliferation in animals starting from mating to after-birth, they will see similarities more than differences between humans and animals, and "will have a hard time accepting the cultural relativity line" (1970: 19). Among all living beings except seahorses, women have a heavier part in the proliferation process including humans, and they are thus associated with fertility and reproductivity. Still having the same roles as the pre-historic species, according to Firestone, nature still oppresses women. She asserts "Pregnancy is barbaric… Pregnancy is the temporary deformation of the body of the individual for the sake of the species" (1970: 208). Firestone promotes reconsideration of this issue, and she maintains that it is not possible to discuss cultural and social constructions of gender without the elimination of natural sexual differences. She states, "the end goal of feminist revolution must be, unlike that of the first feminist movement, not just the elimination of male privilege but of the sex distinction itself; genital differences between human beings would no longer matter culturally" (1970: 21). Despite her contributions to feminist theory, it is important to note that some of Firestone's ideas have been critiqued for their essentialist and exclusionary implications, particularly with regards to trans and non-binary individuals.

While Shulamith Firestone is often criticized by social constructivist scholars like Haraway for her biological determinism, she does not entirely dismiss the role of culturally constructed patriarchal dominance. Rather, she believes that cultural inequalities stem from natural divisions that must be changed to eradicate gender roles and that natural can be more easily and quickly changed thanks to advancing technology. Firestone (1970: 203) claims "it has become necessary to free humanity from the tyranny of its biology". She takes the augmented technology as a chance to save women and men from taking over the duty to bear and rear child, and to prompt them to work for better purposes like for a "classless, sex-egalitarian, and anti-racist society" as Braidotti (2016: 676) explains. Firestone recognizes technology as a means of rescuing humans from nature's oppression in the posthuman era, with contraceptive methods like pills, implants, vasectomy, and test-tube babies expanding human

reproductive options. By connecting technological advancements with feminist criticism, Firestone became the first to enact a posthuman feminist approach in her work. However, it should also be marked that Firestone's emphasis on technological solutions has been critiqued for its potential to reinforce ableism and exclude marginalized individuals who may not have equal access to these technologies.

Not only did Firestone wanted to benefit from technologies to discard sex roles altogether and patriarchal family relationships, feminist scholar and one of the founders of posthumanities Donna Haraway also brought technological aspect to the posthumanist debate with her cyborgs, by way of disentangling strict dichotomies, and blurring the lines between machines and biological organisms (Ferrando, 2014). Braidotti (2006: 197) asserts that "Haraway's texts constitute a pioneering effort to set up a connection between the culture of contemporary biotechnological sciences and that of the human and social sciences". Thus, she establishes a link between technology and humans like Firestone. While Haraway criticized Firestone's biological determinism, she recognized the potential of reproductive technologies to erase gender dichotomies. For instance, she embraces a genetically modified mouse (oncomouse) for research in laboratories by scientists, calling it "my sibling, and more properly, male or female, s/he is my sister" (Haraway, 2018: 79) because oncomouse is neither an animal nor absolutely a machine; she is free from basic understanding of genes, so she is emblematic for posthuman subject.

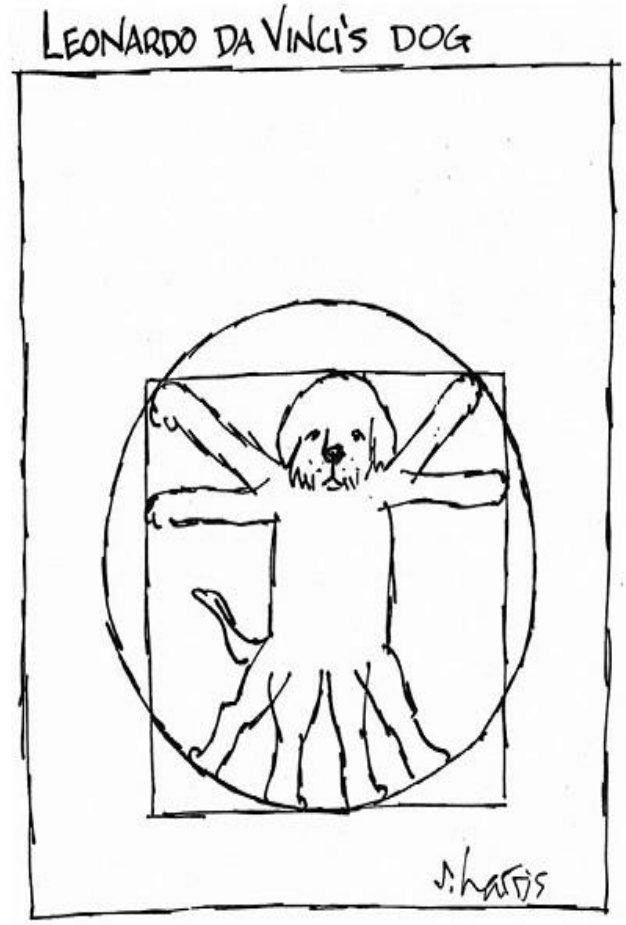
In her influential essay *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1991), Donna Haraway envisioned a world without gender, where everyone is a cyborg. She prefers being a cyborg to a goddess because a cyborg is like a crossbreed of a living organism with a machine, and they are exempt from reproduction, thereby from any creation stories, and from patriarchal kinship system because they do not reproduce but they replicate themselves. So, the cyborg erases socially constructed boundaries since it first obscures the lines between human and nonhuman concepts by mixing these two, and then it rejects the origin stories told by religions which brings a new insight into the traditional understanding of sexuality and reproduction. As Haraway (1991: 151) contends, "The cyborg skips the steps of original unity of identification with nature in the Western sense". Braidotti (2016: 680) defines Haraway's cyborg as a "connection-making entity, a figure of interrelationality, receptivity, and global communication that deliberately blurs categorical distinctions (human/machine, nature/culture, male/female…)". Haraway reconstructs the human concept comparing humans and machines, implying they are alike because as Hayles (2010) indicates comparing two things causes the re-characterization of both in terms of each other. She even finds machines are more living than humans: "Our machines are disturbingly

lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert" (Haraway, 1991: 152). This view unsettles the prevailing separation of non-living things from living ones which entails re-thinking about the definition of living things, thereby the re-definition of humans.

The contemporary understanding of posthumanism owes much to the changes wrought by technology, and feminist writers have been at the forefront of incorporating these changes into their work. Haraway, in particular, is the initiator, she includes this transformation in the aforementioned book writing that it is a transition "from the comfortable old hierarchical dominations to the scary new networks", which she specifies as "the informatics of domination" (1991: 161), and she adds the old concepts replaced by new ones such as reproduction replaced by replication, sex by genetic engineering, and mind by artificial intelligence. Through this, Haraway emphasizes the need for a new agenda that challenges old and outdated concepts.

Haraway also builds on her cyborg with her *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* in 1991 highlighting the potential of technologies to blur the boundaries between human and machine enabling new potentials for liberation. Similarly, in one of her recent books called *When Species Meet* (2008) where she argues the connections between humans and nonhumans through animals, specifically dogs, Haraway aims to revise the concept of human and to challenge the established relation of humans to nonhumans, that is, superior to inferior. She asks at the beginning "Whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog?" (2008: 3), and she describes the nonhumans at the end as "companion species" (2008: 301) to humans or other subjects, thereby dogs are also companions. So, nonhumans have agencies "in their own world and our own" (Peterson, 2008: 3), other than functioning as subordinates to humans. This view destructs speciesism, and challenges biological ordain which places human over nonhumans. Therefore, we should become "one" and with others since it turns out we are in our histories together, we are interrelated parts of each other. She puts this case into words: "To be one is always to become with many" (Haraway, 2008: 4). Further, Haraway goes into the heart of the problem of killing animals for experiments; the problem originates from the unbalanced relations between humans and nonhumans. Unless we become one as she suggests and reconsider our relations, this problem is going to last. Thus, she changes "Thou shalt not kill", one of the Ten Commandments, to "Thou shalt not make killable" (2008: 80). In other words, humans should change their whole perspective toward nonhumans rather than maintaining conventional understanding that puts humans over others and then commands them not to use that power. She undermines this traditional perspective by using an illustration by Sidney Harris in 1996. In this illustration, the proportions of perfect man transform into the "Dog of Perfect Proportions" as seen in Figure 1 (Haraway, 2008: 7) which results in

questioning the standardized humanist ideals, and rethinking relations among species through the dog. To summarize, Haraway's work undermines traditional humanist ideals and offers a new approach to feminist anti-humanism by introducing posthuman feminist theory. By adapting contemporary transitions caused by technologies, she removes conceptual boundaries and forges bonds between humans and nonhumans as specified by anthropocentrism, enabling a more equitable and sustainable future.



[1]

In conclusion, feminists are the initiators of posthumanities, laying the groundwork for a feminist/posthumanist framework by critiquing anthropocentrism and humanist universals for their exclusive and marginalizing tendencies. Thus, feminists, especially feminist writers mentioned above, have expanded the focus beyond human-centric approaches, and argued that traditional conceptions of femininity and masculinity have been shaped by a human-centric worldview that privileges certain traits and values over others. For example, de Beauvoir (1956) questioned the definition of woman, socially constructed within humanist perspective because this perspective defines the perfect human as a male, and women as imperfect, associated with nature, irrational; so, secondary to men. Then, Irigaray has rejected the idea of equality based

[1] Figure 1. Haraway, D. J. (2008). "Leonardo da Vinci's Dog".

on male standards, and instead sought to deviate from the male discourse, which is humanist discourse. By challenging these traditional gender roles and norms, they also challenged the human-centric assumptions that underpin them.

Feminist theorists are also the first to incorporate technology into an approach, for instance, Firestone (1970) has advocated for the use of reproductive technologies to liberate women from the constraints of nature, and then Haraway (1991) proposed the cyborg figure as a means of distancing women from nature. While Firestone saw reproductive technologies as a way to liberate women from nature's constraints, Haraway's cyborg figure offers a different perspective on women, nature, and technology. Besides, Haraway's cyborg calls into question the binaries such as human/machine or male/female because she demonstrated the entangled relationship between humans and nonhumans. So, feminist theorists have had a complex and evolving relationship with technology, ranging from viewing it as a tool for liberation to critiquing its potential to reinforce power imbalances and disrupt traditional categories. The cyborg figure, developed by Haraway, offers a particularly influential and provocative way of thinking about these issues, by challenging the boundaries between humans, machines, and nature and raising questions about the nature of subjectivity and agency. These debates and approaches continue to shape posthuman feminist thought and practice in the present day.

To sum up, posthuman feminist theory builds upon these theories, and challenges privileged human notion. Further, posthuman thinkers disrupts the dualistic conceptions and hierarchies engendered by exceptional human conceptualization, and strives to experience a universe beyond any binaries, or dualistic notions that generate these binaries such as gender and race. According to Braidotti (2019b: 37), "Feminist posthuman politics is an experiment with intensities beyond binaries that functions by *and-and*, not by *either-or*". In other words, posthuman worlds, from a feminist aspect, are free from gender and sexual dichotomies embracing any possible subjectivity. Therefore, they are assumed to be free from social stratifications and power differentials driven by conventional gender and sexuality systems which often uphold patriarchal and "heterosexual family formations" (Braidotti, 2019b: 38). This rejection of binary thinking and embrace of a multiplicity of subjectivities creates new possibilities for understanding and challenging systems of oppression and privilege based on gender and sexuality.

In light of all these theories and readings, this study argues the presumption that posthuman worlds are free from power differentials related to gender and sexuality. For this purpose, Jeanette Winterson's novels, *The Stone Gods* (2008) and *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2020) have been analysed with the interpretation of posthuman worlds in these books. Using

a posthuman feminist theoretical framework, specifically considering Braidotti's assumptions, this study has explored how power relations are re-constructed in these posthuman worlds, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality. The following chapters examine the themes of gender and sexuality in these novels and analyse how they reinforce power differentials within the context of posthumanism despite the assumption that posthumanism operates outside of hierarchical structures.

These novels portray a continuation of male oppression, an extension of gender binaries to nonhuman entities, and the exclusion of nonbinary individuals within a posthuman world. According to Winterson, these issues stem from the fact that posthuman technology is primarily shaped by human agents, predominantly male, and exists with limited controls. Therefore, inclusion of individuals with nonbinary perspectives and increased female representation in technological fields, particularly within the domain of artificial intelligence can be suggested. The implementation of policies that encourage the participation of diverse voices and perspectives is essential. Furthermore, there is a need to establish comprehensive regulations, especially concerning advancements in biotechnology and nonhumans. Such regulations should be designed to prevent potential abuses or harmful consequences, particularly in relation to acts that may exploit children. Special attention should be given to the prevention of any developments that could facilitate or exacerbate harmful activities, including paedophilic acts, and ensuring that ethical considerations are at the forefront of all technological advancements. This thesis is limited since it focuses on two novels by the same writer; however, further studies may explore additional examples from various authors that suggest similar points. Moreover, these novels could be compared to works depicting a world where non-hierarchy is achieved through posthuman technology, fostering egalitarian relationships, and breaking down gender and sexual binaries. Through comparison, the differences between the narratives could be observed in order to find out what should be done or not be done for the purpose of creating a non-hierarchical environment.

CHAPTER ONE

Gender and Sexuality as a Disillusionment in *The Stone Gods*

Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2008) is a complex work of fiction that amalgamates science fiction with a critical examination of modern society. The novel is structured into four distinct parts, each delving into different themes and characters from varying time periods. Nevertheless, all four parts are intertwined by a shared theme of humanity's destructive tendencies. In her analysis, Weiss (2013) contends that Jeanette Winterson's use of the time and gender-bending motif in her novel draw inspiration from Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928). However, unlike Woolf, who progressed from the past towards the present in a linear and chronological fashion, Winterson's approach lacks "any chronological or linear pattern" (Weiss, 2013: 179). This unconventional narrative structure is underpinned by Winterson's examination of the human brain's perception of time, which separates time into "now" and "not now". Thus, Winterson's novel accentuates the human brain's inability to comprehend the past and future as discrete concepts, and instead emphasizes the interdependence of past, present, and future moments that continuously repeat and inform each other.

The first part of the book is set on the dying planet of Orbus. In this distant future world, there are three political segments: The Central Power, Caliphate, and SinoMosco Pact. The Central Power is a highly developed and technologically advanced society, where convenience technologies have completely taken over day-to-day life. Robots have taken over a wide range of functions, and human beings are no longer required to use their brains and bodies for mundane tasks. The newest generation of robots is so versatile that it can be used for anything, from cooking and cleaning to playing sports and working as traffic wardens. For example, BeatBots are utilized to manage traffic, Nifties provide underfloor heating and foot massage, Kitchenhands do all the cooking, Flying Feet run errands and play football with children, Tourbots serve as tour guides, and Lobots take care of cleaning tasks. But the most advanced type of robot in Orbus is the Robo *sapiens*. This robot possesses the ability to think, remember, evaluate, criticize, and examine everything on behalf of human beings.

In this dystopian society, ruled by a thinly veiled private corporation, the citizens of Orbus are plagued with a sense of boredom and are fixated on consumerism and the lives of the rich and famous. With their world on the brink of collapse due to dwindling resources and the catastrophic effects of climate change, the discovery of a new planet, Planet Blue, offers a glimmer of hope. This planet is very similar to Earth and perfect for human life, with one

exception: it is populated by dinosaurs. A mission is sent from Orbus to eliminate the dinosaurs and colonize the new planet. Despite the initial plan to eliminate the dinosaurs and colonize Planet Blue, the mission ultimately takes a disastrous turn due to some miscalculations. However, this story also ends up in disaster similar to other stories in the book since they send the asteroids earlier, kill the dinosaurs and start the ice age in the new planet. In this chapter, the reader is introduced to the character of Billie Crusoe, a disillusioned scientist who is part of the mission. She is joined by Spike, a Robo *sapiens*, and the relationship between these two characters is explored throughout the book.

The second part of the novel unfolds on Easter Island in the eighteenth century, and features characters Billy and Spikkers who undertake a similar quest for exploration and territorial dominance as their female counterparts, Billie, and Spike. Winterson's vivid portrayal delves into the decline of Easter Island's civilization, employing historical imagining to depict the devastating consequences of the tribes' destructive conflict. The narrative highlights how the tribes, driven by imperialistic aspirations, resorted to cutting down the last tree, resulting in the island's desolation and barrenness. This section of the novel serves as a powerful critique of the destructive nature of human beings and underscores the cyclical pattern of destruction in the world, as captured by the phrase "A repeating world" (Winterson, 2008: 203).

The narrative of the third and fourth chapters take place in the near future, offering a contextual backdrop that sheds light on the drastic transformation of Orbus from a flourishing planet to the bleak and desolate state depicted in the book's opening chapter. The inclusion of these chapters aids in comprehending the underlying factors contributing to the present state as "These flashbacks enable the reader to rationalize the current situation of Planet Orbus" (Antakyalıoğlu, 2012: 978). In these retrospective narratives, the world has been devastated by the aftermath of the third world war, with the population divided into Tech Cities and Wreck Cities. The population of its society primarily comprises individuals who have been discarded, ostracized, or are afflicted with physical or mental ailments. Wreck City is portrayed as a place where people live when they have nowhere else to go, with no access to welfare or protection from the police. The author uses this section to explore themes such as poverty, oppression, and the consequences of unbridled technological advancement.

Overall, in her work, Winterson captures the essence of the human experience within the context of a posthuman world. This narration endeavours to critique contemporary society while simultaneously projecting a dehumanized future for humankind. She achieves this by seamlessly weaving recent technological advancements such as genetic engineering, artificial

intelligence, and robotic self-improvement into the fabric of her literary work. In so doing, Winterson adeptly represents the newly emergent posthuman paradigm within her novel. This representation of posthuman future have been explicated under subsequent heading.

1.1. Depiction of a Posthuman World in *The Stone Gods*

Advancing technology has always fascinated the authors like Philip K. Dick, and Ursula K. Le Guin, and it was included through science fiction genre in their novels, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) and *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969), respectively. They imaginatively portrayed a posthuman future, inspired by the immense potential of scientific progress. Besides, these works of art are very significant as Hayles (2010: 21) points out, "Literary texts are not merely passive conduits. They actively shape what technologies mean and what the scientific theories signify in cultural contexts". That is why, the integration of the posthumanism concept into literary works has experienced a noticeable increase in recent times due to the rapid advancements in technology. "Over the last two decades, the concept of posthumanism has grown in significance within the humanities and, in particular, within literary production and literary studies" (Wallace, 2010: 1). Accordingly, in *The Stone Gods* (2008), the world depicted is a posthuman one, representing a future in which humanity has transcended its biological limitations and evolved into a new form beyond what is currently recognized as human. This evolution is facilitated by the integration of a range of advanced technologies, including cyborgization, genetic engineering, and artificial intelligence, which fundamentally alter the relationship between humans and machines, and blur the boundaries between the natural and the artificial. Spike, a highly sophisticated and aesthetically pleasing robot, points out that the demarcation between humans and machines becomes thinner as the differences between these two entities become progressively less distinct. Therefore, Winterson depicts a posthuman world by exploring various elements such as the intricate interaction between humans and technology, the fluidity of boundaries between humans and nonhumans, the complex dynamics within human-robot relationships and so on.

The exploration of posthumanism in the novel is a multi-dimensional concept that delves into numerous philosophical and ethical concerns that challenge traditional views of humanity. This extends beyond the mere portrayal of a posthuman world and invites readers to critically examine the meaning of humanity itself. The book's emphasis on the evolving relationship between humans and technology aligns with Braidotti's observation (2016) on the posthuman era that noteworthy advancements in neural sciences and digital information technologies have had a profound impact on our collective understanding of humanity. In the

novel, this shift from a humanist perspective that views humans as superior to any being in their environment to one that perceives humans as inseparable from a technological realm, and its impact are demonstrated through the character of Spike, the beautiful Robo *sapiens*, as she contests Pink's belief that there are certain inherent qualities that define humanity, "Every human being in the Central Power has been enhanced, genetically modified and DNA-screened. Some have been cloned. Most were born outside womb. A human being now is not what a human being was even a hundred years ago. So, what is a human being?" (Winterson, 2008: 63-64). Spike, here, highlights the significant departure from the traditional understanding of what it means to be a human since the established notions of humanity were altered by bio/-technology, raising the fundamental question of the nature and essence of humanity in the face of these radical changes. The novel, therefore, invites readers to embark on a journey that necessitates a critical examination of the concept of humanity in presence of technological progress. The author skilfully explores the interplay between human existence and the ever-evolving realm of technology, stimulating contemplation on the ethical and philosophical ramifications that permeate this dynamic relationship.

Winterson highlights the impact of human engagement with technological advancements, leading to a substantial redefinition of the concept of human beings, and prompts questioning of this new definition within the context of the contemporary landscape. Dolezal (2015) argues that the integration of cutting-edge technology and biomedicine into an increasingly pervasive consumer capitalist system has brought the transformative impact on the fundamental nature of human existence. The society depicted on Planet Orbus exemplifies this transformation, as it is characterized by complete subjugation to commercial interests and a pervasive reliance on convenience technologies under the governance of the Central Power. In this context, the implementation of technology within the purview of a capitalist government emerges as a catalyst for significant changes in long-lasting human practices, ultimately redefining the very essence of humanity. As Billie illustrates this change in human practices, "Food and toiletries are the only things that can be bought, as in old-fashioned 'bought'. The rest is Rent. Hire. Pay/Go" (138). This absence of ownership reinforces the notion of humans primarily being consumers, eroding the traditional understanding of individual autonomy and possession. Therefore, it is imperative to adopt a new perspective that recognizes the ways in which rapidly evolving technology, especially in a capitalist environment, has shaped the understanding of human body and the challenges posed by such developments to the conception of humanity.

For centuries, humans and philosophers held the belief that humans were the most significant beings in the world due to their ability to reason and be conscious, leading to the anthropocentric thinking that dominated humanist thought. As a result, sharp boundaries were created between binaries such as human/nonhuman, human/animal, and male/female. However, *The Stone Gods* challenges this conventional thinking through its portrayal of a posthuman world that surpasses the limitations with technology in the future. The novel deconstructs established boundaries, and then reconstructs them by means of biotechnology and artificial intelligence. In this world, the boundaries between humans and nonhumans become blurred, and concepts such as rationality and consciousness are no longer exclusive to humans. This results in a world where traditional binaries are no longer relevant and new forms of life emerge. The book invites a new way of thinking that goes beyond the anthropocentric perspective that dominated humanist thought for so long. For instance, the protagonist of the novel, Billie Crusoe, serves as a conduit for the author to display the blurriness of boundaries between human and nonhuman entities in the posthuman era. Through her observation of society's fixation on superficial conveniences and self-destructive tendencies, Billie challenges the conventional understanding of what it means to be human. This is particularly evident when she falls in love with a female robot and begins to question the essence of humanity, "I forget all the time that she's a robot, but what's a robot? A moving lump of metal. In this case an intelligent, ultra-sensitive moving lump of metal. What's a human? A moving lump of flesh, in most cases not intelligent or remotely sensitive" (81). Through this thought-provoking passage, Winterson's work underscores the absence of a distinct boundary between human and nonhuman bodies through novel forms of interconnectedness between these entities. This interconnectedness is exemplified through "the love relationship between Spike and Billie as they both experience a posthuman sense of love that is beyond the heteronormative politics of embodiment" (Nouri, 2020: 64). Thus, the novel examines the evolving nature of humanity and the intricate interplay between different modes of existence, as they blend and intersect with one another.

This intermingling is reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the "Body without Organs (BwO)", where human and nonhuman bodies are interchangeable entities. As Deleuze and Guattari (1972) introduce in their book, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, "Body without Organs" refers to a state of pure potentiality and possibility, where the body is free from the constraints of social and cultural norms, language, and other forms of organization. In this sense, "the BwO" is a kind of virtual body that exist beyond the confines of heteronormative gender dichotomies. Posthuman feminists have actively worked to dismantle these dichotomies, enabling a broader range of human sexuality expressions, and

fostering more diverse and inclusive perspectives. As such, Spike and Billie's relationship challenges the traditional understanding of love and embodiment, presenting an alternative perspective on the human-nonhuman relationship. In this alternative perspective, led by posthuman context, humans become more "open to otherness" (Valera, 2014: 486) through their integration and interaction with technology. This idea of being "open to otherness" suggests a willingness to engage with diverse forms of existence, including nonhuman entities or perspectives. With the relationship between Spike and Billie, Winterson's novel features the potential for a posthuman future that redefines traditional boundaries and offers new possibilities for interconnectedness and transformation.

Further, Billie, a thirty-year-old public relations (PR) employee working in the Enhancement Services for the Central Power, challenges the traditional boundaries between humans and machines and suggests that they have more in common, indicating the decline of human centrality. She questions the assumed superiority of humans, reflecting that robots are capable of exhibiting greater intelligence and sensitivity than humans. Billie states, "Whenever anybody calls to complain, a sympathetic person- well, a sympathetic robot, actually, because they are programmed to be more sympathetic than persons" (11). She implies that robots have the capacity to demonstrate greater understanding and empathy than humans. This reflection underscores the notion that machines can possess qualities traditionally associated with human traits, further blurring the distinction between these two. In addition to this, Spike's statement, "Human beings often display emotion they do not feel. And they often feel emotion they do not display" (62), signifies that emotions extend beyond being exclusively human traits, encompassing a socially constructed dimension that is influenced by individual experiences. This denounces the conventional understanding of a stable and inherent human nature, highlighting the fluidity and contextual nature of emotions within the posthuman framework. Through Billie's implication and Spike's statement, Winterson refers to an unsettling idea discussed by Haraway. Haraway (1991) argues that modern machines have become increasingly lifelike and have the capacity to disrupt our understanding of the boundary between living and non-living things. This idea is expressed in Haraway's statement "Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert" (1991: 152). By drawing on Haraway's work, Winterson challenges the conventional understanding of what it means to be alive and suggests that this boundary is becoming blurred with the advancement of technology.

The blurring of boundaries between humans and machines is exemplified by the dynamic shift in roles between them, which plays a significant role in characterizing the posthuman world. While human-like robots serving humans in various aspects of life exist, the

people of Orbus have become increasingly machine-like. The concept of aging has become so irrelevant in this world that Billie gets surprised at even hearing getting old because genetic enhancements allow individuals to remain at a certain age indefinitely. As a result, the passage of time has taken on a new meaning in Orbus, and "years don't pass in the way that they once did" (15). Furthermore, the development of lab-made humans with implanted data chips that store personal information signifies the extent to which technology has become enmeshed with human identity. Genetic enhancements have undergone a revolution, and cosmetic surgery has become a routine practice for these people. In this case, human is regarded as a machine rather than a living organism as emphasized by Haraway's (1991: 149) assertion that "The distinction between human and machine no longer makes sense: we have all become cyborgs…". So, human bodies are transformed into a form of cyborg through the utilization of new technologies such as DNA enhancement (Yazgünoğlu, 2016). Hence, the integration of new technologies is proposed to have eradicated the distinctions between humans and machines, resulting in a transformation of human bodies. This transformation has resulted in exposing the complexities and intricacies of the human-nonhuman relationship in a posthuman world as well as indicating potential hazards of post humanization. In addition to serving as a warning against potential dehumanization during the post humanization process, Winterson's novel provides a vivid depiction of posthuman subjects. This portrayal is achieved through an examination of the diverse effects, both advantageous and detrimental, of biotechnology and machines on the relationship between human and nonhuman entities.

In the book, robots are relied upon for nearly everything, including thinking for the betterment of humanity, taking advantage of their decision-making and problem-solving skills. However, as a result of Spike's miscalculations, humans ultimately destroy the new planet, which is their only "opportunity to do things differently" (Winterson, 2008: 4) after having ruined the life in the current planet they live. The novel displays the potential dangers of relying too heavily on machines despite the perceived benefits of integration of technology into human life. The novel also depicts the consequences of the widespread adoption of convenience technologies, revealing a noticeable decline in human abilities and skills. Although human beings are exempt from labour, they do not even need to read and write, this causes humans to become atrophied. The author describes this atrophy with the statement "We have no need for brains, so our brains are shrinking" (14). However, "Robo *sapiens* is evolving" (14). This challenges the humanist paradigm that asserts the exceptionalism of humans over nonhuman entities by virtue of their conscious awareness and capacity for rational thought (Wolfe, 2009), which has traditionally positioned them as the primary source of knowledge and value

(Weitzenfeld and Joy, 2014). Therefore, the changing circumstances brought about by the displacement of traditional classes transforms the previously hierarchical relationship between humans and nonhuman entities, giving rise to posthuman thinking. Thus, "*The Stone Gods* brings theory to life, giving shape to the posthuman" (Yazgünoğlu, 2016: 147).

Lastly, *The Stone Gods* depicts a posthuman future with Spike by challenging the anthropocentric perspective, which posits that humans are the most significant entities in the universe because of their rational abilities. Spike's remarkable attributes that exceed human capacity signify a shift away from this point of view. As Robert Pepperell (2005: 14) puts forth "The posthuman era begins in full when the output of computers is unpredictable". In this context, the character Spike, a Robo *sapiens*, perfectly embodies this unpredictability, encapsulating the essence of the posthuman paradigm. As Billie notes in a conversation "Robo *sapiens* were programmed to evolve…" (29), but she believes they can evolve "within limits" (29). However, Spike declares that they "have broken those limits" (29), and they have evolved so much more than people could imagine that they are now unpredictable. She presents her limitlessness when "she had oral sex with a teenager called Nebraska and become a drop-out free-love silicon guru" (177) which astonishes Billie. Besides, Spike's kind Robo *sapiens* is characterized in the novel as "They can make connections. These are robots who join the dots" (15). Described as capable of making connections and joining the dots, Spike showcases a remarkable level of reasoning comparable to, and potentially surpassing, human capabilities. The presence of human-like traits in Spike adds to their unpredictability, further blurring the lines between human and machine. Through Spike's portrayal, Winterson portrays the potential for posthuman evolution, highlighting the transformative possibilities that arise when human and artificial intelligences merge and evolve in symbiotic ways.

To sum up, *The Stone Gods* explores the concept of posthumanism, and challenges traditional views of humanity. In doing so, the author invites readers to adopt a new way of thinking that transcends the limitations of the anthropocentric perspective. The novel erases the boundaries between humans and machines, thereby destabilizing established binaries. However, this does not result in the complete disappearance of dualities, as new boundaries emerge, and power dynamics are reconstituted. This unexpected outcome is significant in a posthuman world where conventional ways of thinking are challenged. Through a dystopian representation of post humanization, the novel presents a thought-provoking commentary on the reconstruction of power differentials with regard to gender and sexuality. That is why the subsequent section examines how the novel addresses these themes in a posthuman environment.

1.2. Re-establishing Power Differentials Regarding Gender and Sexuality

It's going to be the same old stuff back- already we've got an Us and Them. Seems like you've turned into a Them.

The Stone Gods, Jeanette Winterson

Numerous posthuman thinkers such as Pepperell and Wolfe, and posthuman feminists like Braidotti and Ferrando in particular, hypothesize that the evolving comprehension of the human condition and its interactions with nonhuman beings will erode the distinctions between these two categories. This phenomenon would subsequently engender the emancipation of those, subjugated by the unequal binaries that traditional humanistic thought imposed. For instance, Haraway (1991: 161), a precursor of posthuman feminist theory, proposes a transition from "comfortable old hierarchical dominations to the scary new networks" wherein traditionally well-established power and authority structures are dispersed among a diverse range of actors. She also maintains that nonhumans are not simply objects, but rather "companion species" (Haraway, 2008: 301) with which we are entangled. In addition, posthuman feminist writer Braidotti (2017: 16) holds similar views to Haraway advocating for "a monistic approach" that demands "a more egalitarian relationship to nonhuman others" (Braidotti, 2017: 10). According to this "monistic approach", matter, which includes the material composition of humans, does not conform to a dichotomous mind/body dualism, but rather manifests as embodied subjects in a continual state of becoming. This view of life acknowledges the existence of differences but rejects the notion that they are organized hierarchically as Braidotti (2017: 17) declares:

> This emphasis on the monistic univocity of life does not deny the power of differences but rather argues that they are not structured according to the dialectical principle of internal or external opposition, and therefore do not function hierarchically. This approach offers the advantage of redefining traditional binary oppositions, such as nature/culture and human/nonhuman, paving the way for a non-hierarchical and more egalitarian relationship among members of the same species as well as between different species.

As Braidotti (2017) suggests, posthuman transition opens up new possibilities in terms of power structures by transcending traditional binary oppositions as well as building more equal connections among different species. Moreover, she asserts that feminist politics are integral to posthumanism and that posthuman feminism operates "beyond binaries that functions by *and-and*, not by *either- or*" (Braidotti, 2019b: 37). To clarify, posthuman worlds, viewed through a feminist lens, transcend gender and sexual dichotomies by accepting all potential subjectivities. Winterson (2008: 127) echoes Braidotti's theory in the book with the affirmation that "Life has never been All or Nothing- it's All and Nothing. Forget the Binaries". This statement suggests

that life is not defined by dichotomous binaries, but rather by a complex and multifaceted spectrum.

In Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2008), the portrayal of a world where the demarcations between humans and machines are blurred was anticipated to create a non-dichotomous environment. However, despite this premise, new dichotomies emerge within the narrative. Winterson questions and surpasses conventional binaries of gender and sexuality through interspecies love between Spike and Billie. This exploration challenges the rigid categorizations and fixed notions associated with gender and sexuality. Nevertheless, while the deconstruction of binary oppositions is evident, it does not completely eradicate the emergence of new power dynamics. The novel presents the formation of alternative binaries, including rich/poor, Wreck City/Tech City, and female/male, which play a significant role in shaping the gender and sexuality issues explored throughout the narrative. Thus, Winterson's work not only challenges existing binaries but also highlights the complexities and intersections of power dynamics within the context of a world where human-machine relationships and social hierarchies intertwine.

In the novel, issues of marginalization and power struggles are recurrent themes in each chapter from past to present. In the second chapter, which takes place in the eighteenth century, and serves as a subplot to the main story, two tribes engage in power struggle, and this results in destruction of Moai Statues and the last tree on Easter Island. This chapter reinforces the central idea presented by other interconnected stories in the book since it demonstrates the destructive nature of men, and that power differentials, generated by humanist thought which got very strong around the time of this chapter, had caused harm to people in the past. However, the emergence of the posthuman era has not been able to eradicate these issues because power dynamics continue to resurface as observed in the other chapters taking place in the future. For example, the females' efforts to prevent the males from destroying the island are hindered by men as they beat the women in chapter two due to asymmetrically powered binary thinking within humanist thought, and these gendered hierarchies influence the future times also. Billie, the female protagonist, similarly strives to protect natural processes (Weiss, 2013) in Planet Orbus such as rejecting genetic fixing or growing her own food in the garden, yet her efforts are met with accusations of terrorism. The female characters are portrayed as either victims or active resisters of the system with their efforts to re-establish ecological harmony (Weiss, 2013). Similar to the Easter Island's ending, the only male character in the space mission, Captain Handsome, abandons the ship and disappears while Spike and Billie, two female characters, still try to rescue the new planet mission in the first chapter. Thus, the female

characters assume an active role in preserving nature for the benefit of humanity, yet their endeavours are either disregarded or met with accusations of terrorism, while male characters in stories from past to future remain preoccupied with the pursuit of power and exhibit a lack of effort in shouldering their responsibilities, thus burdening the female characters. This stark contrast in behaviour underscores the power dynamics inherent in the narrative, highlighting the perpetuation of hierarchical binaries and power struggles across various historical periods, even in the posthuman era.

In the chapter "Planet Blue", Planet Orbus is governed by three states, but the section primarily focuses on the Central Power, which is the richest and most powerful one as a result of capitalist tendencies, and abusive policies toward its people, robots, and natural resources. The reckless exploitation of natural resources for economic gain has led Central Power to be wealthy but it has also led to dramatic degradation of environment. The narrator pictures the situation as "We made ourselves rich polluting the rest of the world, and now the rest of the world is polluting us" (31), because the planet lost its habitability for humans, so everyone has to wear air filtration masks. However, this solution is temporary as the planet's ecosystem is on the brink of collapse and will soon become completely hostile to human life. That is why they are attempting to relocate to a newly discovered planet since they irreversibly destroyed the one, they had. This new planet mission is being funded by "a capitalist corporation" (Topsakal, 2014: 59) known as MORE which holds significant sway over the policymaking of the Central Power, owing to its financial contributions operating within the confines of a capitalist system. However, the promise of the new planet remains exclusive and inaccessible to all, as the Central Power demonstrates a disregard for the plight of the impoverished, leaving them to face their destiny on the devastated planet Orbus. This abandonment of the poor is poignantly depicted in Spike's response to Billie's inquiry about the underlying narrative of the Planet Blue mission:

> The rich are leaving. The rest of the human race will have to cope what's left of Orbus […] MORE is building a space-liner called the *Mayflower*. It will take those who can afford it to Planet Blue, where a high-tech, low-impact village will be built for them. MORE is recruiting farmers from the Caliphate to make a return to sustainable mixed farming to feed the new village (Winterson, 2008: 60- 61).

As noticed, a few privileged individuals hold the authority to colonize the new planet while the poor, the less privileged, must endure the inevitable fate of perishing on the uninhabitable planet which has been destroyed by the same privileged group of people because of their insatiable desire for wealth and power. The wealthy are selectively recruiting farmers from the poorer Caliphate state solely to sustain their comfortable and luxurious lifestyle. To be clear, despite the advent of this posthuman environment, in which human labour has almost disappeared and technological achievements are capable of solving pretty much everything, the world remains

divided into a binary of rich and poor, with the former possessing an excessive amount of power. This binary division reflects the hierarchical characteristics of humanist traditions that date back to the eighteenth century. As Kampf (1971: 163) claims, "Humanism and its practitioners were at the service of elite" suggesting that humanist thinking was only serving the interests of a specific social class or group. This humanist tradition continues to prioritize and benefit only a specific group in a posthuman world. As a result, this system fails to provide a non-hierarchical climate between the humans, not to mention between humans and nonhumans. It is "Strictly hierarchical, then" (61) as stated in *The Stone Gods* (2008). Further, in their pursuit of survival for the allegedly superior species, the colonizers on Planet Blue attempt to exterminate the local species, as noted by Weiss (2013) in her work. This observation illustrates the persistent influence of anthropocentrism, a worldview centred on human beings, which subsequently gives rise to speciesism, an unfavourable treatment or consideration of individuals not belonging to specific species (Horta, 2009). Consequently, the detrimental impact of anthropocentric ideologies continues to inflict harm upon nonhuman beings, emphasizing the ongoing subjugation and disadvantage faced by these entities. However, in doing so, they repeat the same destructive patterns that led to the ruin of their previous planet, rendering the new planet uninhabitable once again. Thus, unequal power dynamics among humans are also reflected in the colonizers' attempt to exterminate the local species on Planet Blue. The colonizers prioritize their own benefit at the expense of the local species, thereby perpetuating the systemic inequality already present within the human population.

The advanced technology in this posthuman society, with biotechnology at its core, is predominantly utilized to maintain a tight grip on the populace. They do not allow people to use cash since they cannot control it. Also, the implantation of identity chips in people's wrists allows for the government to monitor every aspect of their lives. Despite their basic human rights, individuals are prohibited from expressing certain emotions, such as depression, and from refusing genetic fixing. Additionally, growing one's own food is also considered illegal. Billie, however, decides to go against these oppressive rules and does all three. Despite her rebellious actions, she still works for the Enhancement Services to maintain her small farm. However, her actions eventually catch up to her when she is falsely accused of terrorist activities, leading to her being designated an "Unknown". She describes how one can become an *Unknown* as seen in the following excerpt:

> Now that we have no cash, just credit accounts, those can be barred, but the tough measure is Identity Closure. You become an ex-citizen. There will be no record of you ever having existed. You can't travel, you can't buy anything, you can't register for your case... You can't use what was your name… If you ever get out of jail, you will be micro-tagged for life as an *Unknown* (25-26).

As illustrated, the government can take an individual's life away without killing them. Therefore, biotechnology made it so much easier for the government to enforce their rules, and to sustain their authority by keeping track of every individual while portraying a democratic facade. Fukuyama (2002) warns against these adverse repercussions associated with biotechnology, highlighting the tendency of government regulators to cultivate self-interests while claiming their commitment to the public welfare. He further asserts, "These developments", referring to biotechnological improvements, "will give societies new techniques for controlling the behaviour of their citizens…" (2002: 82). Therefore, the integration of biotechnology has provided governments with a powerful mechanism to exert control over individuals, maintain their authority, and reinforce hierarchical scaling among humans. However, as Valera (2014: 484) enunciates, posthumanism, like "Deep Ecology", rejects the idea of a hierarchical scale because there is no differentiation between different "degrees of being" or levels of importance within the ecosystem. Thus, all beings are supposed to be treated with respect and consideration rather than being controlled by a group of humans.

Winterson portrays a posthuman world but still follows anthropocentric views in her novel as it maintains strong divisions between humans and nonhumans as well as within the human population, creating a hierarchy of importance. According to Ferrando (2014), a hierarchical distinction, a result of humanist assumptions, between humans and nonhuman entities has historically dominated Western society, significantly influencing society's structure, or humans' relationship to other humans. However, she argues that posthumanism represents a departure from this hierarchical system, and asserts:

> Posthumanism is often defined as a post-humanism and a post-anthropocentrism: it is post to the concept of the human and to the historical occurrence of humanism, both based, as we have previously seen, on hierarchical social constructs and human centric assumptions. […] The posthuman overcoming of human primacy, though is not to be replaced with other types of primacies (Ferrando, 2014: 29).

Ferrando emphasizes that the goal of posthumanism is not to replace human primacy with other types of primacy, but to move beyond the notion of primacy altogether, in order to create a more inclusive and egalitarian view of the world. Further, she maintains, "Posthumanism does not stand on a hierarchical system…" (Ferrando, 2014: 30). Nevertheless, the novel delves into the idea of posthuman technology deepening the societal divide and establishing a more rigid hierarchical structure, as evidenced in the creation of Wreck City and Tech City in the aftermath of a war detailed in the fourth chapter of the novel. Posthuman technology gives rise to new hierarchical distinctions within human society and between humans and nonhumans. For instance, the use of radioactive chemicals during the conflict has left the inhabitants of Wreck City as "radioactive mutants" (161), yet Tech City has attempted to conceal this fact from the

wider public. In an effort to maintain a positive image, Tech City exclusively showcases its hospitals, giving the illusion of treating the affected individuals, all while profiting from the ongoing conflict. Despite their claims of offering aid to those in the "No Zone", the reality is that the mutants are forced to live in the isolated Dead Forest and depend on supplies flown in by helicopters. The novel portrays Wreck City as a stark contrast to Tech City's glossy pretension. The marginalization of individuals, their isolation and otherization, as well as their exclusion from the advantages of advanced technology are frankly evident through the novel as Billie says "Wreck City is a No Zone- no insurance, no assistance, no welfare, no police. It's not forbidden to go there, but if you do, and if you get damaged or murdered or robbed or raped, it's at your own risk. There will be no investigation, no compensation. You're on your own" (151). Thus, people of Wreck City are left for dead although they are human beings, assumedly superior beings. This indicates that they are seen as less humans because there is evidence suggesting that humans, like other animals, may possess genetic mechanisms that inhibit killing members of their own species, but this inhibition may be lifted when the target is perceived as nonhuman (Gomel, 2011). The portrayal of this new duality in *The Stone Gods*, with the individuals of Wreck City viewed as less than human, supports the idea that genetic mechanisms may play a role in how humans perceive and treat others, particularly in circumstances where they are deemed nonhuman. Hence, *The Stone Gods* may challenge binary oppositions, but it ultimately recreates a new duality in the Wreck City, contrasted with the Tech City (Yazgünoğlu, 2016). This reintroduction of binary oppositions emphasizes the potential for posthuman technology to further exacerbate existing inequalities among dualities and to manipulate perceptions for personal gain. Therefore, while posthumanism may have the potential to transcend binaries, it is also important to recognize its ability to recreate and reinforce them.

Although the proliferation of self-improving robots in all facets of daily life disrupts the dichotomy of human/machine to some extent through the novel, robots are still primarily exploited to fulfil human objectives rather than being regarded as "companion species" as asserted by Haraway (2008: 301). In addition, Braidotti (2013: 65) renders "Once the centrality of Anthropos is challenged, a number of boundaries between man and his others go tumbling down". However, although Winterson challenges the boundaries between man and machine, one of his others, through the integration of an intelligent robot with human-like capabilities, boundaries are re-drawn in many other ways. Spike, the most advanced type of robot with exceptional cognitive abilities and designed to think in favour of human interests, is reduced to a mere commodity by the Central Power in the event of the completion of space mission. They

subsequently send her to dismantle in the recycling unit because it would pose a significant threat to the authority of the Central Power if the data contained within Spike were to be accessed by hostile forces. Thus, all her data is drained which is basically destructing her, or "a kind of suicide, a kind of bleeding to death" (6) as the narrator explains. Therefore, Spike is considered simply an instrument for human benefits, mostly for the interests of the dominant side despite her cognitive abilities and fast self-learning skills. Spike's situation derives from the anthropocentric perspective that is humans are superior to nonhumans, and therefore the latter exist solely to serve human interests. This reduction of a sophisticated autonomous being to a mere instrument for human benefit highlights the hierarchies and power imbalances that continue to exist between humans and nonhumans in posthuman societies.

Robots remain positioned on the side of the oppressed in the binary categorization of human/machine, rather than being recognized as coexisting organisms within a non-hierarchical environment. Robots are treated as mere objects by the dominant power and excluded from the privileges of humans like making decisions for their own fate, in spite of their advanced abilities that resemble those of humans. As demonstrated in chapter one of the novel, the lack of empathy towards robots is emphasized when the narrator states that "The great things about robots, even these Robo *sapiens*, is that nobody feels sorry for them. They are only machines" (6). This suggests that within the current posthuman landscape, the prevalent perspective of anthropocentrism remains pervasive, wherein nonhuman entities are disregarded from ethical considerations. Spike confirms continuous anthropocentric insights of humans, and how this insight led them to destroy their planet as she declares, "Humans always assumed that theirs was the only kind that mattered. That's how you destroyed your planet" (65-66). This statement confirms the persistent humanist understanding that has led humans to exploit and degrade the environment as it is ideologically committed "to conceptualizing human being over and against animal being, and privileging human consciousness and freedom as the center, agent and pinnacle of history and existence" (Weitzenfeld and Joy, 2014: 4). Therefore, Winterson highlights the insufficiency of posthuman advances for a more inclusive and sustainable approach to our relationship with the unnatural world.

Although Billie is a rebel against the hierarchical stratification provoked by the state and a lesbian activist, she is unable to consider Spike as an autonomous being like humans. When tasked with training Spike, when she was a formerly bodiless robot designed for a space mission, Billie did not treat Spike as a mere machine as Spike expresses (142). Later, despite her affection towards Spike, Billie vehemently denies Spike's personhood, exclaiming, "Spike is not a person! She's a robot! She's not even a robot yet" (176), and she utters this so repeatedly

that Spike starts to think Billie desires her to remain as a robot for ever. Billie also struggles to come to terms with her sexuality when she has had oral sex with a girl named Nebraska to improve her cognitive abilities as she learns through new experiences. Essentially, Billie is committed to the expectations and behaviours that are conventionally linked to being a "natural" biological woman, even though this is a rarity in her surroundings. Therefore, Spike is not only exploited by the government due to human chauvinist approaches of the corporate government towards nonhumans, but she is also otherized by Billie, a non-supporter of this hierarchical system. In this regard, Topsakal (2014) argues that the marginalization of machines is not solely attributable to corporate systems, but individual actions can also contribute to the perpetuation of this marginalization. Topsakal (2014: 50) further points out that "Even though Billy is more sensitive than others to the exploitation and then execution of Spike after the completion of her mission, she finds herself thinking through dominant patterns of thought that are part of dualistic thinking". In other words, this indicates that even someone who is conscious of the injustice towards robots may still unconsciously accept hierarchical systems and binary categorizations of human and machine. The point is that even individuals who believe they are free from biases can still contribute to the marginalization of nonhuman entities on the contrary to posthuman premises.

Despite its exploration of the differences and similarities between humans and robots, the novel fails to fully transcend the human/machine binary opposition, as seen in Billie's comparison of Spike to humans. Billie notes that Spike lacks the ability to procreate and has no need for sustenance through eating or drinking (69). This observation, however, overlooks the fact that the humans depicted in the novel are similarly exempt from the experience of childbirth and rely on synthetic sustenance rather than natural food. As such, while Billie's comparison highlights the differences between Spike and humans, it fails to acknowledge the commonalities that exist between these two groups in the text. Thus, despite the novel's exploration of the complex relationships between humans and robots, it ultimately remains incapable of fully transcending the binary opposition of human/machine. On this matter, Dolezal (2015: 97) proposes:

> *The Stone Gods*, in particular, explores whether technology actually delivers greater social and individual freedoms, as promised under the ideological umbrella of neoliberalism, or if it in fact intensifies existing societal inequalities, homogenizing society under the patriarchal structures through which most technologies are developed.

As Dolezal suggests, the novel investigates the effects of technology on society, examining whether technological advancements truly fulfil their promise of greater social and individual freedoms, or if they instead perpetuate existing inequalities and reinforce patriarchal structures.

The author is not only concerned about the negative impact of technology on humans, but she also incorporates biotechnology into themes of gender, the body, and sexuality (Dolezal, 2015). As a result of this exploration, binary categories persist, which perpetuate hierarchical relationships and power differentials between different entities, within the posthuman world of *The Stone Gods* (2008), despite the supposed transcendence of traditional dichotomies. As a result, in a society where power is distributed asymmetrically, gender and sexuality cannot be considered inert concepts, but rather factors that play a crucial role in the distribution of power and the perpetuation of power asymmetries through posthuman technology. Therefore, posthuman technology serves as a mechanism for reinforcing and perpetuating power asymmetries regarding gender and sexuality, leading to further stratification and marginalization. Consequently, women are still the second others captured in a dualistic system in a posthuman hi-tech world, same as the periods when humanistic thought dominated the mind of the scholars and society. Individuals with exceptional sexual orientations to conventional understanding of sexuality and reproduction, which is reinforced by patriarchal family structures, are also captured in this dualistic system. Winterson displays gender roles and sexuality in hierarchical forms and emphasizes the need for greater changes for the non-hierarchical system.

The portrayal of Spike in the novel highlights the ways in which patriarchal norms and values are assigned to nonhuman entities through technology, resulting in a hierarchical and binary system that reinforces the exploitation and enslavement of females, both human and nonhuman. Spike was originally created as a disembodied artificial intelligence designed to make calculations for the future of humanity. However, later on, she acquired a physical body that resembled a female form. This body was not just an ordinary female body but was designed to appeal to male pleasure. Billie was taken aback by Spike's stunning appearance and asked, "Why are you such a drop-dead gorgeous robot? Is it necessary to be the most sophisticated machine ever built and to look like a movie star?" (28). Even though she is the most advanced robot ever created, with intelligence sharper than anyone in the crew, she has been serving as a sex toy for the male crew members on the mission for the past three years. This highlights the issue of nonhumans being objectified and stripped of their agency, which is contrary to what Braidotti (2013: 44) expects by suggesting, "As they become smarter and more widespread, autonomous machines are bound to make life-or-death decisions and thus assume agency". Despite being a highly intelligent and autonomous being, Robo *sapiens* is still deprived of agency because humans still patronize nonhumans. This lack of agency is exemplified by Billie's reaction, where she acknowledges the inhumanity of Robo *sapiens*' treatment, but

struggles to fully empathize with her because she is not human, saying "she isn't a woman, she's a robot, and isn't it better that they used a robot instead of dispatching a couple of sex-slaves?" (28). This reveals the deep-seated prejudices and biases that exist in the treatment of nonhuman entities, particularly in terms of how their autonomy and agency are disregarded in favour of human desires and convenience. However, the novel takes this notion a step further by foregrounding male desires as the driving force behind the objectification of nonhuman entities. The fact that the male crew members use Robo *sapiens* as a sex toy without any regard for her autonomy or personhood underscores the insidious nature of patriarchal power structures and their influence on the treatment of nonhuman entities. According to Dolezal (2015: 100), Spike features "what Winterson sees as the problem with the patriarchal employment of biotechnology". In the novel, patriarchal hegemony finds ways to exploit or enslave females, including nonhuman ones, while the opposite is not observed, where women employ men through the use of bio/-technology. This is exemplified in the conversation between Billie and Spike, where patriarchal norms are assigned to nonhumans through technology, creating a binary system and subsequently a hierarchy:

> Billie gets more confused, and conversation continues as below;
> "But inter-species sex is illegal.
> Not on another planet it isn't. Not in space it isn't.
> But you were also the most advanced member of the crew.
> I'm still a woman" (28).

The portrayal of Spike as a woman in the text highlights the influence of societal constructs on the formation of gender identity. The government, which is solely comprised of male executives and is funded by a corporation, constructs Spike's identity as a woman, thereby shaping her self-image. This power dynamic serves as a poignant reminder of Simone de Beauvoir's assertion (1956: 273) that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman", emphasizing that gender is not innate but rather a social construct. Weiss (2013: 183) elaborates on this point by noting that femininity in the novel is portrayed as "both social and technological construct which leads to naturalizing the social (male) needs". Thus, the novel adds to traditional gender roles and advances the interests of a male-dominated society by portraying femininity as a product of societal and technological pressures, rather than acknowledging women's ability to act independently.

Despite being a robot and free from biological constraints, Spike cannot escape binary gender norms. She acknowledges that "Gender is a human concept, and not interesting" (63), indicating the societal nature of gender roles and expectations, and the power dynamics between humans and machines. This serves to emphasize that gender is not a fixed or inherent

characteristic, but rather a construct shaped by cultural norms and expectations. On the one hand, Spike is constructed as a woman, but on the other hand, her womanhood is not fully acknowledged or accepted throughout the text. For instance, since Spike is unable to give birth, she is not recognized as a complete woman, which serves to reinforce the notion that womanhood is intrinsically linked to reproductive abilities. Wittig (1980: 2) affirms this by arguing that the concept of gender is "still imprisoned in the categories of sex (woman and man), but it holds onto the idea that the capacity to give birth (biology) is what defines a woman". However, despite her biological limitation, Spike is still subjected to sexual exploitation, which underscores the ways in which gender identity can be used to perpetuate power imbalances and societal inequalities. Although Firestone (1970) assumed the liberation of humanity from biological constraints like childbirth would establish a society that is free from class distinctions, and gender-based inequalities, Spike's experience challenges this notion as she is still subject to gender-based discrimination and is relegated to a lower class due to her nonhuman status. Thus, this observation indicates the persistence of dualistic gender identities and their associated roles within posthuman technological societies, despite their potential for challenging and transcending traditional notions of gender.

Billie is a complex character who struggles with her own identity and relationships. Despite identifying a lesbian and not conforming to traditional notions of femininity, she also seems to reject Spike's womanhood/personhood as she consistently resists Spike's attempts to love and be loved. This illustrates how societal norms and expectations can also impact those who do not fully fit into them. The corporate and patriarchal government depicted in the novel wields significant technological power, which allows it to impose rigid gender and sexual hierarchies on its citizens. Furthermore, the government assigns gender roles to machines and imposes the assigned gender roles on particularly women, while simultaneously denying women the freedom to express their sexuality in a fluid manner with varieties. According to Dolezal (2015: 92), "the systematic patriarchal tendencies of technology overshadow the possibilities for playfulness and ambiguity within gender and sexuality". However, Braidotti (2013: 98) proposes a new approach to sexuality, the one that disregards gender and embraces "the polymorphous and non-reproductive" nature of human sexuality in the posthuman feminist context. Despite this, Winterson's novel does not allow for polymorphous sexuality or love affairs between nonhuman entities. For example, the conversation between Pink and Spike in the novel exemplifies how the mindset of humans still represses playfulness and inhibits the exploration of polymorphous aspects of sexuality in a future where technology is integrated:

> ‘I just don’t understand why he’s in love with a robot- no offence intended to you, Spike, I’m not prejudiced or anything, it’s not your fault that you’re a robot- I mean, you never had any say in it, did you? One minute you were a pile of wires, and the next thing you know you’re having an affair.’
> ‘I don’t love Handsome,’ said Spike.
> ‘Well, of course not- y’know, like I said, you’re a robot.’
> ‘That isn’t why I don’t love him,’ said Spike, but Pink wasn’t listening (57).

This conversation portrays how anthropocentric heteronormative tendencies embedded within technology limit the possibilities for such an egalitarian approach towards sexuality. This is particularly troubling in a society where paedophilia is normalized, suggesting a hypocritical and oppressive regime that seeks to maintain control over all aspects of citizens’ lives. This situation aligns with Foucault’s (1978) assertion in the *History of Sexuality* that sexual repression and perversion have intensified along with the advancement of society. The narrator, Billie, represents this perversion by also addressing the control of biotechnology on the human body, when she went to a bar to talk to the husband of Pink because Pink illegally desires to undergo genetic modifications so that her husband will find her attractive again.

> Peccadillo is a perverts’ bar, and we are all perverts now. By that I mean that making everyone young and beautiful also made us all bored to death with sex. All men are hung like whales. All women are tight as clams below and inflated like lifebuoys above. Jaws are square, skin is tanned, muscles are toned, and no one gets turned on. It’s a global crisis […] So, sexy sex is now about freaks and children. If you want to work in the sex industry, you get yourself cosmetically altered in shape and size. Giantesses are back in business. Grotesques earn good money. Kids are under ten are known as veal in the trade (Winterson, 2008: 19).

Peccadillo is a bar that caters to perverted interests and desires, primarily of male individuals in the Central Power. Everything in the bar, including *translucents* for introverts and ten-year-old boys and girls for paedophilic men, appears to appeal to a wide range of male fantasies. Therefore, the posthuman future exemplifies an intensified patriarchal control over women and children, with being objectified and sexualized for male consumption. It is notable in the novel that women have not exhibited any interest in underage boys, demonstrating the power dynamics between genders. Conversely, some women go through surgical procedures to resemble prepubescent girls, perpetuating the idealization of youth and established beauty standards.

Male perversion in the narrative is portrayed through male characters who normalize and even defend paedophilia by equating it with homosexuality. On the other hand, female sexuality, including that of a female robot, is heavily repressed and objectified, reduced to the role of a mere sex toy for male consumption. Additionally, Nouri (2020: 63) suggests that Spike sets an example of *Body Without Organs* since she is “in a constant state of becoming” and maintains an individual can break free from the preconceived notions and expectations placed

on them by society and discover new ways of being and thinking. Through this process, the rigid and hierarchical patterns associated with power relations can be dismantled, and this body, in the process of becoming, is expected "to open up new possibilities" (Nouri, 2020: 63). However, Spike is unable to dispose of hierarchical relations, thereby power differentials and new possibilities are constantly hindered as hierarchical stratifications and power dynamics are being re-established within posthuman advances, frequently utilized by the authoritarian government in *The Stone Gods* (2008).

As mentioned in the introduction, Firestone's (1970) assertions posited that the hierarchical structure between the sexes was fundamentally promoted by biological factors. In particular, Firestone (1970) identified childbirth as a key factor that contributes to the oppression and unequal treatment of women. Therefore, she advocated for a revolution that would abolish all biological distinctions between the sexes, in order to focus on the culturally and socially constructed aspects of gender differentiation. She further anticipated that the development of reproductive technologies would alleviate the burden of childbirth for women, thereby creating a more equitable biological relationship between the sexes, and in turn, potentially eradicating some of the gender roles imposed upon women. Firestone's implications are crucial in the ongoing discourse on gender and posthuman technology.

In *The Stone Gods* (2008), advanced reproductive technology has succeeded in eliminating biological constraints on childbearing, but the novel also examines the ways in which this technological advancement poses new dangers to women. Women's apprehension of becoming "useless" to men, and the potential risks it poses to the future of their gender, is depicted through the character of Billie: "The future of women is uncertain. We don't breed in the womb anymore, and if we aren't wanted for sex… But there will always be men" (22). In other words, posthuman technology has partially liberated women from traditional biological constraints, but at the same time, it imposes new constraints and anxieties on women only because men continue to be valued and to exist in any case. However, women's value remains tied to their ability to fulfil certain roles, like being sexually attractive for men while they are no longer solely defined by their ability to bear children. On this point, Nouri (2020) contends that Jeanette Winterson's novel, *The Stone Gods*, sheds light on the use of biotechnological interventions by individuals in positions of power to manipulate the female body. Additionally, Dolezal (2015: 98) expresses the ongoing oppression faced by women through the control of their body despite the apparent liberation from cultural gender roles like child-bearing and household chores with her assertion that "Although women are effectively liberated from reproductive functions and domestic drudgery, and gender inequalities seem not to exist, the

patriarchal control of women through technology, especially with respect to physical appearance and the body has intensified". This illustrates that patriarchal control over women has continued and has taken on new forms through the use of technology. As a result, the novel delves into the impact of these interventions on sexuality and reproduction, with particular emphasis on the ways in which the female body is reconfigured to conform to the interests of the powerful. Through Billie's concern about the women's presence in the future, the novel stresses the perils of unrestrained technological progress and its implications in a patriarchal society where power imbalances persist. This is further explained by the following statement:

> Thus, the transition of women's bodily functions to laboratories destabilizes women's power in a society that is already patriarchal. In other words, women are exposed to double oppressions insofar as their body is defined by patriarchal standards and at the same time becomes a target of the biotechnological experiments that attempt to replicate their body functions (Nouri, 2020: 62).

Women's exposure to intensified oppression can be observed both in the situation of Spike, the Robo *sapiens*, who was configured as a perfect female body with physical attributes such as "green eyes, dark hair, olive skin" (50), and in the situation of women whose bodily functions are stolen, and value got diminished. This illustrates hierarchical patriarchy still prevails on the contrary to expectations from posthuman advances which is supposed to lead to "a non-hierarchical and more egalitarian relationship" (Braidotti, 2017: 7). There is a notable degree of gendered control, reinforced by the use of technology, in a society that has achieved a state of being beyond the need for biological gender roles. As a result, the desire to push beyond the boundaries and restrictions of the physicality proves to be disappointing in the book (Yazgünoğlu, 2016). Moreover, technological improvements significantly empower the binary gender construct which results in asymmetrical power relations between the sexes within the patriarchal system.

The novel reveals that biotechnology re-establishes patriarchal hierarchies, thereby encouraging male dominance and subjugation of women. In an environment where traditional way of procreation has become obsolete and sexual encounters involve robots and children, women exert themselves in order to establish their worth in a male-dominated society through conforming to standards of physical attractiveness. Women's preoccupation with physical appearance distracts them from pursuing political and economic empowerment, enabling those in power to conceal their exploitative ideologies that undermine women (Nouri, 2020). However, Braidotti (2017: 22) advocates that "The crucial ethical imperative is to refuse to conceal the power differentials that divide us" in the age of posthuman. On the contrary, power differentials get stronger more than ever in the book. Male holders of power divert women's

attention from this issue by promoting the utopian ideals of "youth and beauty through biotechnological engineering" (Podgajna, 2018: 90). Podgajna further criticizes this matter:

> Even though technological enhancement seems as an empowering tool of eradicating social ills connected with physicality, it serves primarily as a vehicle for creating unrealistic body ideals and exacerbating social inequalities and perversities […] Rather than engendering sameness and harmony, the realization of the utopian dream of youth and beauty through bio-technological engineering leads to further social and cultural abnormalities.

In the novel, the government's imposition of strict regulations on the woman body by means of biotechnology have given rise to unrealistic beauty standards and have fostered a culture of competition that pressures women to resort to technological enhancements to achieve the desired appearance by males. The restrictive nature of such regulations is illustrated by Billie, "There are only two sizes, Model Thin and Model Thinner" (23). In addition, artificial sameness in terms of beauty is exemplified by the fact that individuals in the Central Power look the same more or less "except for rich people and celebrities, who look better" (19). Similarly, in one of the other states, SinoMosco Pact, Genetic Fixing is not accessible "to all its citizens, only to members of the ruling party and their favourites" (19), accentuating social inequalities resulting from biotechnological enhancements. Moreover, celebrities strive to set themselves apart from the general population in order to maintain their fame, perpetuating existing inequalities. As Billie elucidates, "Celebrities are under pressure, no doubt about it. We are all young and beautiful now, so how they can stay ahead of the game? Most of them have macro-surgery" (16). Thus, technological enhancements have contributed to the widespread trend of cosmetic surgery, which disproportionately affects women and those who are economically disadvantaged.

Little Senorita represents a growing trend among celebrities who undergo genetic surgeries and fix genetically to preserve their status. She is "a twelve-year-old pop star who has fixed herself rather than lose her fame" (16). Although it is legally prohibited for children to be fixed, and she faces legal repercussions, it is possible that her accepted ability to satisfy the sexual desires of heterosexual men in mainstream society may rescue her from any meaningful consequences. Also, she has supporters from powerful male figures as Pink's husband claims, "There's plenty of guys who want her to win, and you know what? They're all in the gang. Judges, politicians, you name it" (21). Therefore, the novel sheds light on our posthuman future, and demonstrates how technological enhancements generate perversities with the objectification of women and children at the hands of male characters due to their boredom with sameness. Yazgünoğlu (2016: 151) further clarifies this issue:

> Male and female bodies here are seen as malleable things, easily fashioned according to a cultural ideal. Although transgressions of corporeal boundaries are significant for Winterson, "sameness" and "non-essence" of bodies might create a fixity depending on a false ideal. In this society, the cultural icon is a child, Little Senorita, who is a pop star.

One of these women, who pursue "false ideals" to fit in the society ruled by patriarchal tendencies and intensified gender norms, is Pink McMurphy. She demands genetic reversal operation to become a twelve-year-old girl, specifically to resemble the pop star Little Senorita so that she can regain her husband's attention. Although she has already been fixed at twenty-four, and she has had many surgeries to become sexually pleasing, Pink's husband still finds her unattractive and they no longer have a sexual relationship, as Pink admits, "We don't have sex any more. He says I'm too old" (17). She never questions her husband's paedophiliac desires. On the contrary, she desperately accepts it "as long as he comes home now and again and does it with her" (17). Thus, Pink represents that biotechnologies push women to become more submissive and reliant on men's fantasies by aggravating gender differences as a result of giving greater control over women's bodies in spite of the intended aim of biotechnologies to eliminate gender inequalities (Podgajna, 2018). Also, in her portrayal of the character Pink, Winterson offers a critique of the patriarchal and capitalist social structures that not only minimize the gravity of personality disorders like paedophilia but also prescribe an unrealistic standard of physical perfection for women, reducing them to mere objects of male desire (Nouri, 2020).

In *The Stone Gods*, Pink is notably the only character who venture the genetic reversal despite its risks to be sexually desirable for her husband while no male characters seek to modify themselves in a similar manner to please their partners. Besides, there are no male celebrities who are genetically fixed to preserve their fame in the same way Little Senorita does, or there are no male robots designed to perform sexual services for women. The absence of fear regarding their future existence among male characters in *The Stone Gods* contrasts with the challenges faced by female characters. Female characters must navigate societal expectations related to appearance and sexuality as their reproductive abilities are replicated. This discrepancy is particularly striking, as women in the novel undertake risky genetic modifications to enhance their sexual desirability for men, while men are not similarly burdened. Rather, male characters appear to pursue their own interests, even engaging in illegal activities such as having children despite the prohibitions as the patriarchal and capitalistic Central Power government supports. Therefore, as Dolezal (2015: 98) points out "Although both male and female citizens of the Central Power are technologically enhanced, genetically

modified, and DNA-screened, women are disproportionately affected by technological imperatives". This is revealed in the novel by Billie again:

> Manfred is one of those confident men who have had themselves genetically Fixed as late-forties. Most men prefer to fix younger than that, and there are no women who Fix past thirty […] Science can't fix everything though— women feel they have to look youthful, men less so, and the lifestyle programmes are full of the appeal of the older man (Winterson, 2008: 9).

As noticed, youth and beauty are almost an obligation for women while it is a preference for men. This gender disparity in age-related genetic modification highlights the societal expectation that women must maintain a youthful appearance to remain desirable, while men are often celebrated for their maturity and wisdom. Science, while capable of modifying genetic traits, cannot address the societal pressures that push women to seek youthfulness. The media, through lifestyle programs and other media, reinforces the idea that older men are appealing, while women are expected to remain youthful to be desirable. This portrayal reinforces gendered expectations related to aging and appearance, which unjustly impact women.

In conclusion, in her literary work, Winterson challenges the conventional binary distinctions between human/nonhuman and male/female, while simultaneously revealing the emergence of new power dynamics through the depiction of divisions between the rich and poor, Wreck City and Tech City, and female and male characters. She contends that posthuman technology may function as a mechanism to reinforce and perpetuate existing power asymmetries, leading to further social stratification and marginalization. Given that power is unequally distributed in society, gender and sexuality cannot be viewed as neutral concepts. As such, Winterson's novel highlights the persistent impact of binary gender and biological sex on society, even in the context of the emergence of posthuman biotechnologies. The novel implies that these technologies may reinforce existing inequalities, including those related to gender and sexuality, rather than subvert them. Accordingly, the author advocates for a fundamental shift in our understanding of all species towards a more utopian world where gender roles are eliminated, and sexual diversities are embraced in a non-hierarchical manner. Merely entering the posthuman era is insufficient to dismantle the humanistic patriarchal tendencies of individuals.

CHAPTER TWO

Gender and Sexual Fluidity as a Disillusionment in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*

Jeanette Winterson has consistently demonstrated a significant interest in the advancement of science, technology, and artificial intelligence throughout her literary works such as *The Stone Gods* (2008), *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2020), or *12 Bytes: How artificial intelligence will change the way we live and love* (2021). In her recent publication, *Frankissstein*[2], Winterson explores themes of gender and sexuality while offering insightful perspectives on the societal impacts of advanced technology, like the previous work, used in this thesis, *The Stone Gods* (2008). Similarly, she depicts a posthuman future, which has arrived as Winterson (2020: 101) announces, "The future is now" in a postmodernist text characterized through "intertextuality" (Antosa, 2008: 12) and "temporal disorder" (Gürova, 2021: 238). These two literary techniques, often used by postmodernist writers like James Joyce or Virginia Woolf, are also incorporated into *Frankissstein* by Jeanette Winterson. For instance, the novel contains several intertextual references, including a range of eclectic allusions. These references include an excerpt from Shakespeare's "Sonnet 53" (1609), which repeats throughout the book and reads "What is your substance, whereof are you made, that millions of strange shadows on you tend?", as well as a quotation from the song "Take It Easy" by Eagles (1972), which opens the book. In addition to intertextuality, Winterson also employs temporal disorder as she does not follow any chronological order in the novel which alternates between two distinct time periods. The first period is the early nineteenth century, during which Mary Shelley (1818) penned her iconic novel, *Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus*[3] while travelling with her spouse and their close companions. The second is the modern-day twenty-first century, where the unprecedented level of science and artificial intelligence carries the potential to transform the once-fictional story of *Frankenstein* into a palpable reality, also centring around Ry Shelley[4], a transgender doctor, and their romantic relationship with Victor Stein, an artificial intelligence specialist.

Winterson, in the first plot, revisits Mary Shelley's biography and her renowned gothic creation, *Frankenstein*, two hundred years after its first publication. While doing so, Winterson

[2] To prevent redundancy in this chapter, the novel will primarily be referenced as *Frankissstein*, although its complete title is *Frankissstein: A Love Story.*
[3] In this chapter, this novel will be referred as *Frankenstein*.
[4] Ry Shelley prefers they/them pronouns; therefore, these pronouns will be used in this chapter to refer to Ry Shelley.

(2020: 345) blends fact and fiction as she noted at the end of *Frankissstein*, “Some characters in this story existed, or still do. Others are fictions. None of the conversations took place in the way that they appear here- or perhaps at all”. As the author clarified, some aspects of Shelley’s life story, historical figures from her era, and the setting and circumstances surrounding the creation of *Frankenstein* are grounded on reality in the literary fiction, *Frankissstein*. Mary Shelley, herself, described how the idea for the story came about when she and a group of companions, including her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, and John Polidori, all of whom also appear in Winterson’s *Frankissstein*, were stuck inside Villa Diodati, near Lake Geneva in Switzerland, and Byron challenged them to write a horror story (Blázquez, 2021). While these facts are established, it is unclear how accurately the dialogues between these historical figures or the portrayal of Shelley’s inner world reflect reality. Therefore, Winterson’s analysis explores how Shelley may have written *Frankenstein*, along with a nuanced exploration of the inner psyche of prominent historical figures, who witnessed the writing process of this horror story, thereby offering a new unique perspective on Shelley’s gothic fiction and its literary embodiment, Frankenstein’s monster.

Shelley is a crucial character, serving not only as the protagonist in the first plotline but also as the creator of a literary masterpiece, which Winterson skilfully draws upon two hundred years later. Shelley’s novel continues to be relevant today due to her visionary portrayal of the future because the character of Victor Frankenstein, who is a scientist grieving over the loss of his mother, uses electricity to animate a creature made from fragments of corpses, at a time when steam power was the dominant source of energy and electricity was not yet widely utilized in the early nineteenth century. Shelley’s monster holds remarkable contemporary significance, particularly in its role as one of the earliest representations of a posthuman entity within the realm of literary discourse. The novel introduces a novel form of existence, a fusion of human and nonhuman elements embodied by the monster, as aptly described by Ry who affirms, “Frankenstein was a vision of how life might be created—the first instance of nonhuman intelligence” (Winterson, 2020: 27). Winterson (2019) relates it to current times in that humans are creating such a new life form today referring to artificial intelligence as she explains in “The Waterstones Interview”:

> Frankenstein is a book that becomes more and more prescient. It’s as though she sent out a flare to the future or it was a message in a bottle, and it was thrown overboard and now as it comes to us, it seems to be absolutely about the times that we’re living in. We are about to create a new kind of life form, not out of the assembled parts of decayed corpses but out of the zeroes and ones of code.

As a result of this clear similarity, expressed by Winterson in this interview and in her compilations of essays titled *12 Bytes* (2021), she adeptly establishes a connection between

Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, and the present era through the characterization of past fiction and present-day fiction in the narrative. The reason why Winterson selects *Frankenstein* is that the questions raised by the novel are not relegated to the past, but rather continue to be relevant and applicable in the contemporary world (Blázquez, 2021). Thus, she intertwines and blends two narrative threads, avoiding a separate and linear presentation of the stories. She immerses readers in different settings and time periods, for instance, one chapter might transport the reader to Lake Geneva in 1816, where they accompany Mary Shelley, while the subsequent chapter might present a shift to a contemporary setting, such as modern-day Memphis, where they are introduced to Ry and Victor Stein. She transitions between the chapters "in a continuous narrative flow, which is interrupted only by blank spaces and epigraphs: maxims, long quotations and even dictionary definitions" (Ciompi, 2022: 171). Through this narrative approach, Winterson masterfully constructs a dynamic and interconnected story, in which the events and characters resonate across time, reverberating from the past to the future.

While the second story is mostly set in Manchester, it opens with "the global Tec-X-Po on Robotics" (Winterson, 2020: 25) in Memphis, Tennessee, where readers are introduced to Doctor Ry Shelley, a transgender individual undergoing the process of transitioning, and Victor Stein, a prominent public figure actively engaged in the field of artificial intelligence, and introduced to their love story as the title of the novel suggests. In an interview, Winterson (2022) emphasizes the vibrancy and dynamism of literature, stating that it is alive and ever evolving. That is why, in her narrative, she skilfully blends historical figures with contemporary characters, often employing similar names and personalities. In *Frankissstein*, all the characters in the first plot are intricately linked to their counterparts in the second setting, and furthermore they exhibit striking similarities in the mindset and behaviour. A notable example of this can be observed with the protagonist, Mary Shelley, in the first story, who finds her parallel in the second story as Ry Shelley, originally born female and previously known as Mary. John Polidori corresponds to Polly D. in the present story, and Mary Shelley's stepsister Claire appears with the same name. However, she appears as an Evangelical Christian, who opposes to artificial intelligence and robots because she believes it is an act of playing God, as she clarifies, "Only God can create life" (Winterson, 2020: 32) although her perspective evolves over time. Further, Lord Byron is paralleled by the character of Ron Lord, who is the creator and vendor of sexbots, and they share misogynistic and male chauvinistic traits. Victor Frankenstein from Shelley's original fiction and Victor Stein in Winterson's novel also serve as counterparts, displaying resemblances in their pursuits of audacious experiments, exploration

of death, and the quest to bring forth a new form of life. Intriguingly, their narratives culminate in comparable denouement as well. While Frankenstein succeeds in creating a monster and continues his life running away from the monster, ultimately bringing death to himself, Stein's fate becomes intertwined with a massive electricity outage, ultimately leading to his disappearance. Thus, both characters meet their demise as a result of their own experiments. In addition to bearing similarities to their counterparts in the past, current characters in the novel are not only entangled in their own personal conflicts but also deeply intertwined with the exploration and advancement of artificial intelligence technologies, reflecting the central themes of *Frankissstein*. Both Shelley and Winterson delve into the complex implications of the posthuman future, and the ethical dilemmas posed by these emerging technologies, highlighting the multifaceted nature of their involvement. Therefore, how Winterson and Shelley warn against the posthuman future has been elucidated in the following section. Moreover, Winterson tackles the issues of gender and sexuality in both novels, *The Stone Gods and Frankissstein*, presenting a technologically advanced future where gender and sexuality are still conceptualized in binaries, precipitating power differentials. Therefore, similar concerns and portrayals found within these two novels that are the central works of this study have been interpreted. Finally, disappointing consequences arising from a posthuman future, specifically in terms of gender and sexual fluidity have been argued within the analysis of *Frankissstein*.

2.1. Posthuman Warnings: *Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus* (1818) and *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2020)

What terrified me will terrify others.

Frankenstein: or The Modern Prometheus, Mary Shelley

Shelley's *Frankenstein* recounts the story of Victor Frankenstein, a scientist who uses an unconventional experiment to create an intelligent but monstrous creature, with the novel utilizing a combination of epistolary form and retelling to explore the confrontation between Frankenstein and his creation. Considered one of the most influential works of science fiction, the novel has inspired countless adaptations and rewritings, including Winterson's *Frankissstein* (Uremović, 2021), which draws on Shelley's creation of the posthuman concept through "the first nonhuman intelligence" (Winterson, 2020: 27) created by human effort. By examining the boundaries between what is human and what is not, and by drawing on *Frankenstein*, Winterson engages with themes of science, technology, and the human condition, yet remains cautious of the consequences of technological advancement and the emergence of nonhuman intelligence. According to Winterson, Shelley's message about the ramifications of

humans playing God and creating artificial life, which may have seemed farfetched at the time, is now more relevant than ever (Blázquez, 2021). The cause of its greater relevance is, as Winterson (2022) articulates in an interview, "The next big thing that we are all going to have to face providing we don't get wiped out is the fact that we are creating an alternative life form" akin to Victor Frankenstein's creature. Further, Blázquez (2021: 17-18) points out to the absence of a character similar to Shelley's creature considering that almost all past figures have counterparts in Winterson's present story, and maintains:

> However, what if, the monster as we have known him, is looming on our backs, in the form of artificial life and intelligence, in the form of robots? The robots, the intelligence Victor Stein so desperately tries to catch on, is an on-coming threat – maybe the creature is a foreshadowing for everything that could go wrong if we strived for that, maybe the creature is a cautionary tale of our wrongdoings as humans for beings who are not humans.

As indicated above, Winterson associates Frankenstein's creature, assembled out of dead body parts and galvanized to be animated, to growing artificial intelligence, a nonhuman life form just like the creature itself. However, in *Frankenstein*, despite his initial excitement at bringing a creature to life, Victor is quickly filled with horror at the sight of the monster he has brought to life, and he fails to take responsibility for his creation and abandons it to fend for itself. Victor verbalizes his disappointment and revulsion against his own creature by saying:

> I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart (Shelley, 2017: 42).

After this expression, he immediately leaves the room, desperately thinking about what he has done. However, as Victor Frankenstein, in *Frankissstein*, utters "The monster once made cannot be unmade. What will happen to the world has begun" (Winterson, 2020: 217). Thus, left to its own devices, the creature learns about the world by watching people from a distance, and its isolation and lack of love from its creator drive it to seek revenge as it declares, "I will revenge my injuries: if I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear" (Shelley, 2017: 121). As a result, the creature sets out to inflict death and sorrow upon those closest to Victor, unleashing a destructive chain of events that ultimately lead to tragedy. Therefore, Shelley's cautionary tale serves as a warning against the perils of uncontrolled nonhuman intelligence, which can rapidly progress beyond human control. As the story unfolds, it becomes clear that the creature's ability to learn and grow on its own has dangerous consequences, highlighting and foreshadowing potential dangers of artificial intelligence. Shelley's prescient warning underscores the need for careful consideration and responsible management of new technologies. Winterson recreates a similar condition drawing upon Shelley's novel. While Victor Frankenstein's ambition was to

reanimate lifeless matter using galvanization, with the ultimate goal of creating life from death, Victor Stein has dreamt of harnessing the electro-chemical impulses of the human brain to create artificial intelligence, allowing humans to exist as cognitive beings even as their physical bodies decay and perish (Bağırlar, 2021). By translating human consciousness into digital form, Stein hopes to transcend the limitations of mortality and enable humanity to achieve creating a nonhuman cognitive existence. Winterson is also concerned about the irreversible consequences of creating a nonhuman intelligence as she echoes the same worry, "The box has opened. What we invent we cannot uninvent. The world is changing" (Winterson, 2020: 135). Therefore, Winterson's novel serves as "an awareness-raising" cautionary tale about the future of humanity (Gürova, 2021: 243) through its similar use of themes to Shelley's *Frankenstein*. By drawing on its warnings about the dangers of unbridled nonhuman progress, Winterson's novel offers a valuable perspective on the challenges that lie ahead for humanity in a hi-tech world.

The monster in *Frankenstein* has been subject to diverse interpretations, but it is now seen as a precursor to the posthuman figure, according to Blázquez (2021), because it exceeds human capabilities despite being nonhuman. As an outcome of a scientific experiment, it also relates to scientific advancements. However, as Brogan (2017) points out, the monster is not linked to any particular scientific achievement, but rather embodies the unpredictable and potentially harmful consequences of scientific progress in general. Furthermore, Brogan (2017) suggests that "The book's subtitle—*The Modern Prometheus*—also contains an important mythological clue: Prometheus brings fire to the mortals and unleashes dire consequences in the process, granting them the ability to burn down the world". Thus, the novel suggests that scientific progress, represented by Victor Frankenstein's creation of life from non-living matter, is both a gift and danger to humanity, which is why humans should take a cautious approach. Winterson's words, in "The Waterstones Interview", are in line with these assumptions. As she articulates, "What Mary Shelley understood was that intellect on its own, unconnected to or disconnected from a feeling tone is baleful and malign and causes far more trouble than perhaps just the sort of bumbling inefficiencies of ignorant people" (Winterson, 2019). As Winterson shares Shelley's concerns, *Frankissstein* employs *Frankenstein*'s characters, story, and the possible thoughts of its writer.

Mary Shelley conveys a compelling warning regarding the dangers of a posthuman future and unchecked nonhuman intelligence, and further suggests humanity is ill-prepared for the sudden and dramatic advancement. This warning is effectively illustrated through the tragic fate of Victor Frankenstein, who meets his demise at the hands of his own creation. Two

hundred years after *Frankenstein*'s publication, Winterson's work follows the same pattern emphasizing that humanity is unprepared for the transition into a posthuman era, owing to humans' persistent adherence to a humanistic worldview, and warns against its probable dangers. Drawing a parallel to the denouement of Shelley's Victor Frankenstein, in Winterson's *Frankissstein*, the scientist Victor Stein similarly leaves a chaotic aftermath and subsequently vanishes into the obscurity of history. Stein's experiment to revive and upload the contents of a human brain onto a carbon structure ends in catastrophic power outage ensues, "with a city-wide IT meltdown" and "millions of gigabytes of data wiped" (Winterson, 2020: 338). The book concludes with an image of an abandoned, desolate Manchester that resembles a post-apocalyptic scene, where a solitary character wanders through empty streets (Wrobel, 2022). As observed, "At the end of the play, the disappearance of Victor and the fact that everything seems to continue in the old order mean that humanity is not ready for the creation of disembodied forms" (Bağırlar, 2021: 710). These "disembodied forms", akin to Haraway's conception of genderless and raceless cyborgs, appear to be unattainable in *Frankissstein* (Bağırlar, 2021), in which a posthuman future is depicted. Therefore, the novel fails to completely eliminate the anthropocentric perspective as the author writes, "But for now we are still human, all too human" (Winterson, 2020: 35), or despite containing posthuman elements, *Frankissstein* only offers a tentative cautionary tale about the potential consequences of posthuman advances, similar to Shelley's original narrative.

Finally, it is worth noting that Winterson adopts a posthuman perspective in *Frankissstein*, pointing towards a future in which the boundaries between human and nonhuman entities become increasingly indistinct. Hayles (2003: 135) notes Heffernan's observation that is "the more the essence of the human is sought, the more the lines between human and nonhuman blur". This seeking, thereby blurring the demarcations, can be distinguished through the example from the novel when Mary asks "I have my own desire to contemplate what it is about Man that distinguishes us from the rest of biology. And what distinguishes us from machines?" (Winterson, 2020: 58-59). Not only does *Frankissstein* blur the boundaries between humans and nonhumans, but it also disputes the long-standing assumption of human supremacy over nonhuman entities, a fundamental tenet of humanism (Ranisch and Sorgner, 2014). Victor Stein's claim that "If data is the input and the rest is processing, then humans aren't so special after all" (Winterson, 2020: 78) embodies Winterson's challenging humanistic assumptions. According to Hayles (2010: 39), considering humans as data or information "radically destabilizes the ontological foundation of what counts as human" equating humans and machines. Thus, Winterson, in *Frankissstein*, employs a posthuman perspective to challenge

the humanistic assumptions of human superiority over nonhuman entities by blurring the boundaries between humans and nonhumans as she does in *The Stone Gods*. Thus, the parallels drawn between these two novels have been elucidated.

2.2. The Portrayal of Similar Worlds in *The Stone Gods* and *Frankissstein: A Love Story* by Jeanette Winterson

The Stone Gods and *Frankissstein* share similarities in terms of their narrative structures and thematic explorations, as well as their adherence to a parallel story pattern. Winterson employs postmodern writing style to the narrative structures in both novels. In both works, there exist diverse yet interdependent plots which intertwine past and future, further Winterson presents these plotlines in a non-chronological and non-linear manner keeping her postmodern approach in her novels. Moreover, both novels similarly portray a posthuman future, and tackles the issues like advanced technology, artificial intelligence and the future of gender and sexuality in a posthuman world. *The Stone Gods* depicts a future where new forms of life such as robots coexist and interact with human beings, and where people colonize space. Similar to *The Stone Gods*, robots partly take place in *Frankissstein* only as sex toys, a scientist endeavours to create a new form of life by transferring consciousness into machines, and ways for space colonization are sought. However, both novels are united in their central focus on the posthuman aspect, questioning the essence of humanity, exploring the relationship between humans and nonhumans, and the impact of artificial intelligence on humanity. These recurring themes are commonplace in Winterson's literary works as suggested, "The questions such as 'What makes us human?' and 'What distinguishes us from machines?' have been central in Winterson's fiction" (Gürova, 2021: 239). Thus, these themes appear in *The Stone Gods* and *Frankissstein*, and the same questions are echoed through both fictions as they are written by Winterson. The remarkable similarity in these two stories demonstrates that Winterson keeps asking the same questions, challenges the conventional notions of human identity, often by blurring the boundaries between human and machine.

There are several similar details, displayed in these two novels like the dialogues challenging boundaries between human/nonhuman, portrayals of humanity in the posthuman future, and consequences of high technology. For instance, Billie, in *The Stone Gods*, asks, "…what's a robot? A moving lump of metal. In this case an intelligent, ultra-sensitive moving lump of metal. What's a human? A moving lump of flesh, in most cases not intelligent or remotely sensitive" (Winterson, 2008: 81), and in her latter book, Winterson (2020: 148) repeats the same question, "…when you consider the human as a collection of limbs and organs, then

what is human?". By means of that kind of questions, the author challenges the traditional understanding of what it means to be human in both novels in a posthuman manner as "Posthumanism challenges dominant ideas of 'ourselves' as fundamentally different from other forms of life" (Smart and Smart, 2019: 44). Therefore, Winterson challenges the traditional belief that humans are fundamentally different from other forms of life with similar questions in her two different novels by adopting a posthumanist approach. Moreover, same technological advances and their consequences are portrayed in the novels. To illustrate, in *The Stone Gods*, the reader is confronted with a conversation where it is revealed that "Nobody reads and write any more- there's no need" (8), and Billie expresses, "Notebook. Pencil. They have an old-fashioned charm that I like" (8). Similarly, in *Frankissstein*, the impact of technology on traditional forms of communication is evident, as Ry describes handwriting as a "strangely old-fashioned and touching method" (Winterson, 2020: 26). By contrasting old-fashioned methods with the new ones, the author explores the changing nature of human experience and identity in a posthuman world. In fact, *Frankissstein* can also be regarded as a flashback to the posthuman future presented in *The Stone Gods*, as the former takes place in contemporary England, specifically during the Brexit period, and incorporates a few elements that eventually manifest in the latter narrative.

In *Frankissstein*, while explaining his predictions that are likely to happen in the future, Victor believes that "Robots will manage much of what humans manage today. Intelligence- perhaps even consciousness- will no longer be dependent on a body. We will learn to share the planet with non-biological life forms created by us. We will colonise space" (73). Victor's predictions of a posthuman future in *Frankissstein* are remarkably prescient, as they are realized in *The Stone Gods* which portrays a world where robots have replaced human labour in all aspects of life, and where humans have been freed from mundane tasks. Human beings coexist with robots on an equal footing, and they have even discovered a new planet to colonize, just as Victor had envisioned in *Frankissstein*. In addition, Ry, in *Frankissstein*, expresses a desire to live to the age of one hundred while maintaining the physical appearance of a twenty-five-year-old, which comes true again in *The Stone Gods* thanks to genetic fixing; individuals can fix themselves at a certain age, and have the look of that age even though they get older. Thus, Winterson either introduces a situation as a result of technological advances or presents an advance as a futuristic dream in *Frankissstein* and realize it in *The Stone Gods*.

Overall, through the use of similar questions and technological advancements, Winterson's two novels are connected, with *Frankissstein* offering a glimpse into the posthuman future presented in *The Stone Gods*. Winterson's oeuvre is characterized by

recurrent themes and motifs. However, the most conspicuous resemblance is discernible between the aforementioned novels. The reason why these two literary works are selected as primary sources for this thesis is that they exhibit a remarkable parallelism in terms of their portrayal of posthumanism, technology, and the changing nature of human identity in relation to nonhuman entities. Both novels share Winterson's concerns about a technologically advanced, posthuman future, and offer insightful commentary on its ramifications. While depicting those, Winterson employs the utilization of past narrative in order to emphasize her main concerns, as exemplified in one of the chapters in *The Stone Gods* through a narration that takes place the eighteenth century. Through this narrative technique, the author illuminates the limited evolution of the human mindset despite the revolutionary changes in their existence brought about by technological advancements. Similarly, in *Frankissstein,* Winterson harnesses some parts of Mary Shelley's life at the beginning of the nineteenth century as a means to underscore the insufficient transformation of human perspective concerning gender and sexuality in the contemporary world. Furthermore, Winterson, in *Frankissstein*, recreates new boundaries or hierarchies between binaries like human/nonhuman or woman/man especially regarding gender and sexuality, similar to *The Stone Gods*, despite the fact that many posthuman thinkers such as Haraway, Braidotti, Ferrando or Wolfe envisions a label-free future, free from humanistic assumptions or hierarchical structures even if the labels exist.

2.3. Recreation of Hierarchical Binaries in *Frankissstein* Regarding Gender and Sexuality

What is the point of progress if it benefits the few while the many suffer?

Frankissstein: A Love Story, Jeanette Winterson

The emergence of post-colonial, post-structuralist, and feminist thinkers has instigated significant theoretical shifts, facilitating the critical examination of entrenched humanist conventions, and the contemplation of posthuman identities. Of all these epistemologies, feminist scholars emerge as forerunners of the adoption of posthuman praxis. Drawing upon a broader feminist critique of the Enlightenment enterprise, which established Universal Man as the dominant subject, feminist perspectives on posthumanism predominantly arise (Neimanis, 2014). Braidotti (2020: 11), a prominent scholar integrating posthumanism into feminist studies, considers the posthuman as a result of the intersection of post-humanism and post-anthropocentrism and clarifies that the posthuman is "the critique of the universal ideal of the Man of reason on the one hand and the reject of species supremacy on the other". The critique of the Universal Man and humanism, which underlines the inherent flaws in its historical application leading to the exclusion of specific groups, are quite similar to several strands of

feminism (Jones and Otto, 2020). Through challenging human-centred paradigms and adopting a posthumanist perspective, posthuman feminists envision a world characterized by greater egalitarianism and the eradication of asymmetrical power relations. Therefore, it is anticipated that differences will be embraced, dualities will be eradicated, and all entities will be acknowledged, ultimately fostering a non-hierarchical mode of thinking within a posthuman context where the boundaries between human and nonhuman entities intensely disappear. Victor Stein's dreams and ideas depicted in *Frankissstein* adhere to posthumanist assumptions, as he critiques the humanist history by highlighting that the era of binaries, confined to our carbon-based past, is now surpassed. Stein envisions a future that transcends the boundaries of biology, ushering in an era where artificial intelligence has prominence. He imagines a "world that AI will make possible, will not be a world of labels– and that include binaries like male and female, black and white, rich and poor. There will not be a division between head and heart…" (Winterson, 2020: 79). Through conducting experiments aimed at the post-mortem revival of the human brain, in a way at the liberation from the limitation of the human body, Stein has a transhumanist aim like discarding biological constraints, and he expects this would pave the way towards the end of labels such as "race, faith, gender, sexuality" (199). However, the eradication of labels and hierarchical structures, a subject of controversy in Winterson's narrative, remains unresolved. The reader is left uncertain about whether Victor ultimately realizes his fantasied future. Despite indications of the existence of this fantasized future in the present, Winterson does not depict an environment entirely devoid of labels or hierarchical stratifications. This is evident through the presence of sexbots and the inherent inequalities between women and sexbots or between women and men, the biased datasets that inform artificial intelligence, as well as the discrimination faced by Ry Shelley, a transgender doctor. These elements underscore the persistence of social hierarchies and the perpetuation of discriminatory practices within the imagined world perpetuating the humanist mindset.

Despite Victor's yearning for a form of immortality that transcends bodily limitations as a means to dismantle societal labels, the narrative remains uncertain about whom he intends to save or prioritize in his pursuit. Ron, one of the most sexist characters in the novel, draws attention to this issue by asking, "Where do you draw the line? Murdering bastards, child molesters, thugs, nutters, that bloke in Brazil- Bolsonaro. What if you had Hitler's head in a bag in there? Would you defrost it? And then there's really boring people… And where are we all going to fit? On the planet, I mean?" (227). Ron points out to the ethical dilemma entailed by Victor's ambitions and its potential consequences, but Victor is unable to provide a response or resolution to Ron's concerns, as there is no definitive answer. In fact, Victor is the one

drawing the lines and making decisions concerning whose brain he is going to prioritize for revival, as exemplified by his choice of Jack Good, a highly intelligent man and accomplished codebreaker, among numerous other individuals. Therefore, the progress of humanity in this context is inherently exclusive and lacking in true egalitarianism, given that the decision-making power rests solely with one individual. In other words, Winterson perpetuates a humanistic standpoint "that has always worked to exclude some humans that didn't correspond to the ideal" (Herbrechter, 2013: 6) even though her novel hold posthuman elements, which are supposed to surpass humanist conventions. Hayles (2003) critically examines the viewpoints of Neil Badmington and Laura Bartlett regarding posthumanist works and concludes that these works frequently incorporate or are intertwined with underlying humanist assumptions. As a result, while posthumanist concepts are being explored, elements rooted in humanism can still endure within these productions. Winterson (2020: 35) substantiates this assertion by the statement, "we are still human, all too human", underlining the fact that even in a technologically advanced world populated by various nonhuman entities, we retain deeply ingrained humanistic perspectives. Further, in the novel, the utilization of the past serves as a mechanism to illuminate how the humanist paradigm of the past exerts a lasting influence on the mindsets of individuals in the present. Mary Shelley's encounters with hierarchies, particularly gender hierarchies, during the nineteenth century are presented in the book to demonstrate the enduring persistence of such hierarchies and how nothing has changed from past to today.

Frankissstein converges the past and the present, offering a compelling exploration of the ways in which humanity has both evolved and has not changed by no means in order to underline that advancements in posthuman technologies fail to dismantle "oppositional schemata" (Braidotti, 2020). Winterson illuminates how Shelley's life might have been like during the patriarchal confines of the nineteenth century, and how Shelley's inner thoughts might have shaped the creation of the first posthuman. It is clear that Shelley and her creation are very influential in Winterson's work not only because both of these writers have the same concerns against posthuman transformations in humanity, but because Shelley astutely represents, in *Frankenstein*, the condition of women, or those who are marginalized also. In "The Waterstones Interview", Winterson (2019) elucidates the significance of Shelley and her *Frankenstein*:

> She also understood the political situation whereby most people were left behind in society, and she was at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, she could see the vast fortunes that were being made by some and the abject misery that was being experienced by many. […] In Frankenstein itself, the monster is entirely disenfranchised, he has no rights. […] We see the position of women in society who were not

> educated. Mary Shelley really put her own position, the situation of women into the situation of the monster.

As Winterson clarifies, Shelley reflected her apprehensions regarding the unequal distribution of advancements that solely benefited a small group of humans while the others remained others and continued to be ostracized. While arguing with Byron who is a luddite, and opposes the replacement of man labour by robots, Winterson's Shelley asserts the presence of hierarchical structures among men and the widespread subjugation of women. When Byron responds to her, acknowledging the inevitability of social hierarchies among men but expressing his staunch opposition to men's replacement by robots, Shelley answers him back stating "Not if he owned the machined, then such a man might have leisure while the machine did his work for him" (Winterson, 2020: 138). Hence, Winterson employs the character of Shelley to embody the enduring struggles faced by marginalized groups during her era, even amidst societal advancements. Specifically, Shelley serves as a symbol for the persisting challenges confronted by women, highlighting the ongoing obstacles they encounter despite apparent progress within society. This is very reasonable considering that the imposition of profound societal constraints by rigorous socio-cultural norms during the nineteenth century significantly curtailed women's freedom of movement and self-determination, thereby fostering a rigid segregation of societal spheres predicated upon assigned gender-specific roles and responsibilities (Wädt, 2021). Winterson provides insights into this patriarchal perspective of the society in the nineteenth century through the character of Byron in *Frankissstein*. He symbolizes the male gaze (Blázquez, 2021) as he holds the viewpoint that woman's existence is intrinsically linked to man, perceiving her creation as originating from his rib and being formed from the same essential substance. Moreover, he asserts the notion of women being weak, giving an example from his own daughter, calling her as "docile and passive" (8). He further expresses, "Male children are conscious earlier than female children. […] The male principle is readier and more active than the female principle. This we observe in life" (8). Although Shelley stands up to his biased viewpoints, he maintains that women's societal standing is contingent upon the choice of their marital partner, thereby enforcing a restrictive binary gender framework, and exemplifying the prevailing humanistic mindset of his era. While the posthuman convergence, with its distribution of cognitive abilities among numerous species (Braidotti, 2020), may alter this circumstance in present-day society, Winterson's novel portrays Shelley's enduring struggles from the nineteenth century remain unresolved in the contemporary century, even in the face of nonhuman entities possessing cognitive capacities. For instance, the parallelism between Lord Byron and the character Ron Lord in the contemporary setting of *Frankisssstein* serves to highlight the persistence of a humanistic perspective that perpetuates unequal power

dynamics, indicating that such perceptions continue to dominate even in the posthuman era. Therefore, by immersing readers in Shelley's experiences, Winterson highlights the insufficiency of technological progress alone in challenging and transcending the prevailing humanist perception.

Shelley's novel is also significant in that it includes the first posthuman being in the literature, and that it can be discussed on the grounds of feminist analysis, viewing gender as a cultural construction as well (Uremović, 2021). *Frankenstein* emphasizes that the influence of culture or society even extends to nonhumans by subjecting them to the binary categorization of male/female and imposing heteronormative gender roles which are commonly immanent in human beings. Through association of Shelley's monster with present-day's artificial intelligence, Winterson points to the potential of nonhuman entities to develop and sustain gender binaries and heterosexual norms. This observation stands in contrast to Ferrando's advocation that "multispecies discursive universe invites us to rethink sexuality without and beyond genders" (Braidotti, 2020: 15). However, as Shelley's nonhuman being, which "is assumed to be of male gender since he is wishing for a female companion" (Wädt, 2021: 10), is ostracized by people, even by his creator, he cannot transcend the notions of gender or sexuality. It is this interplay that prompts Winterson to incorporate elements from *Frankenstein* into her own novel. For instance, Winterson (2020: 127) references the longing expressed by Shelley's monster for the companionship of a female counterpart, a creature akin to his own existence as follows, "You must create a female for me, with whom I can live in the interchange of those sympathies necessary for my being… I demand a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself… It is true we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that account we shall be more attached to one another". She specifically quotes this from Shelley's novel as this excerpt demonstrates that a nonhuman being conforms to the limitations imposed by the binary construct of gender and heterosexuality, despite being brought into existence beyond the confines of these very concepts. In other words, as Uremović (2021) elucidates the nonhuman creature tends to maintain the conventional modes of thought, rather than transcending beyond the "oppressive categories of sex" (Butler, 2002: 160). Thus, the monster mirrors the human behaviour not to be excluded from the society. Besides, Winterson's Shelley in *Frankissstein* explains why the monster acts in a biased way of thinking by stating, "He is not human, yet the sum of all he has learned is from humankind" (128). Therefore, by drawing upon Shelley's monster, Winterson signifies that despite being a nonhuman, which exists outside the human realm, nonhumans find themselves caught in humanist assumptions since their knowledge and understanding of the world are derived from interactions with humans, shaping their worldview.

As a result, Shelley's novel becomes a valuable instrument for Winterson, enabling her to display a little progress made in two-hundred years in terms of posthuman aspirations and anticipations. That is why Blázquez (2021: 36-37) concludes that "While we have focused on improving human condition, there are still many issues as regards the oppression of marginalized minorities, that we should be working on first, before we tainted a new whole species with the same biases". This statement highlights that nonhumans will inevitably replicate the motifs and practices exhibited by humans if humans enter into the posthuman era before they surpass the limitations imposed by humanist traditions. Despite the intensified technological advances today compared to two centuries ago, the persistence of this issue remains evident in *Frankissstein*. Winterson illustrates the biased nonhumans, particularly the artificial intelligence, which persist thinking in binaries. This binary thinking perpetuates the classification and hierarchical ranking of people, as well as insisting on humanist point of view.

Winterson is cautious against the artificial intelligence in the contemporary world as she apparently considers it as a potentially biased mechanism like humans despite their distinct existence as separate entities. She explains this with the following words:

> The data sets themselves are very narrow and biased. […] It looks like it's objective and neutral because machines have to be objective and neutral. They can't possibly have biases but of course they have because a machine only has a data set to go on and if the data set is biased, the machine will then amplify that bias (Merritt and Winterson, 2022).

As Winterson articulates, nonhumans will inevitably inherit biases as long as humans who set the data are biased. She exemplifies this in *Frankissstein* with a real scandal with Amazon through an unnamed female character who states, "Machine learning deeply sexist in outcomes. Amazon had to stop using machines to sift through job application CVs because the machines chose men over women time after time. There is nothing neutral about AI" (Winterson, 2020: 76). It is true that although Amazon aimed to establish a diverse workforce, machines predominantly hired white men because the initial screening process, executed by machines, had been trained using datasets comprised mainly of resumes from white males (Merritt and Winterson, 2022). Joy Buolamwini (2019), a computer scientist, corroborates this in an article in *Time* magazine:

> We often assume machines are neutral, but they aren't. My research uncovered large gender and racial bias in AI systems sold by tech giants like IBM, Microsoft, and Amazon. Given the task of guessing the gender of a face, all companies performed substantially better on male faces than female faces. The companies I evaluated had error rates of no more than 1% for lighter-skinned men. For darker-skinned women, the errors soared to 35%. AI systems from leading companies have failed to correctly classify the faces of Oprah Winfrey, Michelle Obama, and Serena Williams.

As both Winterson and Buolamwini emphasize, although AI systems are often perceived as neutral, they can actually exhibit biases that are rooted in sexism and racism. Further, the biases exist because of the way they are programmed to operate within binary categories (Wädt, 2021). However, these biases and binary categories are what posthumanism strives to erode as Koistinen and Karkulehto (2018: 3) assert "In the context of feminism, the posthuman and posthumanism explicitly call into question the anthropocentric biases of humanist thought". In other words, posthumanism is anticipated to challenge biased anthropocentric dualities or hierarchical categories by expanding the focus beyond human beings, yet nonhuman intelligence is limited in its ability to transcend human biases; they rather repeat the patterns they see as "they are all, in first instance, a human creation" (Blázquez, 2021: 27). In fact, the core issue lies not in the fact that artificial intelligence systems are created by humans, but they are created and developed by those humans, situated on the dominant side of the binary categories. The unnamed female character, being the voice of all women, in *Frankissstein* also draws attention to this issue:

> Professor Stein, you are the acceptable face of AI, but in fact the race to create what you call true artificial intelligence is a race run by autistic-spectrum white boys with poor emotional intelligence and frat-dorm social skills. In what way will *their* brave new world be gender neutral- or anything neutral? (Winterson, 2020: 76).

Therefore, posthuman creations reproduce gender binaries, and reinforce "humanist hierarchical conceptualizations" (Koistinen and Karkulehto, 2018: 3). This is because humans who implant data in these nonhuman bodiless matters are thinking in binaries and are on the side of the privileged in the prevailing asymmetrical power structure like Victor Stein or Ron Lord in *Frankissstein*. For instance, Victor renders that we would be liberated from all the labels if we did not have biological limits. Nevertheless, in his discourse with Ry, he still thinks in binary frameworks, as evidenced by his insistent emphasis on the fact that he is not gay:

> I am not gay, he said, any more than you are.
>
> I don't think of myself as part of the binary, I said. […] But you are. Wings or no wings, angel or human, you don't want to be gay, do you, Victor?
>
> […] We make love, and you don't feel like a man to me when we make love.
>
> […] He says, You look like a boy who's a girl who's a girl who's a boy (Winterson, 2020: 55-56).

As Ry asserts, Victor's attachment to the binary thinking is obvious in his perception of Ry as either a girl or a boy, despite Ry's relentless declaration, "I am what I am, but what I am is not one thing, not one gender. I live with doubleness" (89). Ron Lord is not any different than Victor, he is the creator and seller of sex bots appealing only to male customers. As these sexist and binary thinking people are the ones shaping the AI, also the nonhuman agencies have sexualized and gendered biases, contributing to hierarchical patriarchy. However, posthuman

feminist scholars assumed that nonhuman entities in a technologically mediated world would engender a more interconnected understanding that encompasses diverse range of agencies rather than dualistically shaped agencies. As Niccolini and Ringrose (2019: 4) posit, "Refiguring agency as endemic to both human and nonhuman bodies opens up more dynamic and relational accounts of events, encounters, and social processes. This upends legacies of human exceptionalism that have positioned diversely racialized, sexualized, classed, and gendered bodies". This theory is refuted in *Frankissstein*, and further technology and nonhuman bodies reinforce patriarchal systems in that they are formed by anthropocentric binary culture. This situation is elucidated through the unnamed female character's words again which reads, "China is a chauvinist culture where men grow up learning to disparage women… they are the biggest manufacturers and the biggest consumers of sexbots" (Winterson, 2020: 76). Winterson here underlines the influence of humanist culture on the production of sexualized and gendered nonhuman bodies such as sex robots which primarily function as servants to the desire of heterosexual males in the novel. Therefore, Winterson demonstrates that nonhumans could display sexist biases despite their existence outside the binaries or they could serve to patriarchy in the hands of sexist humans.

In the contemporary world of *Frankissstein*, technology advances so much that human life merges with robots and machines and transforming human consciousness into digital data after death is discussed. In such an environment, Braidotti (2020: 14) declares in the preface of Ferrando's book *Philosophical Posthumanism* (2020), "What comes to the fore […] is a human/nonhuman continuum, which is consolidated by pervasive technological mediation". However, technological progress in the novel seemingly benefits the interests of an anthropocentric patriarchy, further reinforcing the demarcation between humans and nonhumans instead of promoting a fluid and interconnected relationship between them. Robots primarily serve humans in the context of sex industry rather than in other domains. As Winterson (2020: 35) expresses, "The first non-biological life forms sharing our homes won't be waiters with tomato-recognition issues, or cute little ETs for the kids. Let's start at the very beginning: a very good place to start. Sex". In the novel, she fosters this argument with sex bots, created and introduced into the market by Ron Lord. He is a contemporary world character, who is analogous to a past character, Lord Byron because they have some traits in common. Specifically, Ron Lord's limited perspective, which is a male perspective, is quite similar to Lord Byron's as understood from the dialogues he had with Shelley in *Frankissstein*. Similar to views advocated by Byron, Ron demonstrates a traditional viewpoint regarding women as he states, "Women aren't at home all the time like they used to be. […] They've

evolved. But, like my mum says, emancipation can be a problem for a man" (38). So, Ron perceives the act of renting sex-bots, which he refers to as XX-bots, is absolutely natural for men because the wives do not stay home as much compared to the past. That is why he designs sexual robots, exclusively for the preferences of heterosexual males. In other words, he does not commercialize female robots for lesbians, or male robots for straight women or homosexual males. However, a female XX-bot can be found for any sort of preferences, appealing to all kinds of heterosexual males as Ron proudly talks about:

> There's even a 70s feminist version with no bra, messy hair. […] Who rents her? Some masochists. And a few university professors. […] Do I get mostly old men? Not at all. All ages and stages. Ryan; sex is a democracy. With the old blokes, I see it as a public service. […] We get some schoolkids wanting a try – yeah boys, 'course it's boys – and I reckon it's better than sticking it up some girl who's dry as sandpaper and doesn't fancy you. Yeah, you can be old, you can be ugly, you can be fat, you can be smelly, you can have an STD, you can be broke. Whether you can't get it up, or you can't get it down, there's an XX-BOT for you (Winterson, 2020: 47-48).

Based on his statements, it can be inferred that Ron has designed a wide array of sex bots with the explicit aim of providing sexual gratification to cisgender heterosexual males, regardless of their age, health condition, or personal preferences while he assumes that it is anatomically quite difficult to please women with a male bot, or he never mentions lesbians. Although he asserts that sex is a democracy, Ron's implementation of this concept lacks inclusivity as it solely caters to straight men through the utilization of female-shaped nonhumans. Women and homosexual individuals are notably excluded from this assumed democracy. Hence, technology not only serves to re-establish patriarchal binaries and reinforce gender biases through the preservation of heterosexual norms, but it also exploits nonhuman bodies rather than offering "a more egalitarian relationship to nonhuman others" (Braidotti, 2017: 10). To put it another way, in the contemporary world, considered as a posthuman one, Winterson refutes the posthumanist notions that explore "with intensities beyond binaries" (Braidotti, 2019: 37), or challenge "the tradition of anthropocentric and androcentric humanism, which separates the human from all those considered nonhuman: the colonized and the enslaved, the marginalized and the non-citizen, the woman and the animal…" (Koistinen and Karkulehto, 2018). The book illustrates that humans have not fully transitioned into a posthuman state despite the emergence of posthuman indications in technology because they still continue to think in binary categories, and further have conventional humanist viewpoint that relegates everyone and everything as others to "a particular human subject" who is "white, male, heterosexual, able-bodied" (Jones and Otto, 2020: 2). This is demonstrated through Ron Lord and his XX-bots since Ron holds very androcentric views and his bots serve to heterosexual males while exploiting nonhumans

and excluding humans that are deemed nonhuman within the anthropocentric understanding. On this point, Wädt (2021: 36-37) further clarifies:

> It becomes quite concerning that instead of using robots in an educational or caring setting, they have become part of the patriarchal exploitation of bodies. […] These products are very one-sided and support the binary structures within society and economy. The sexbots are therefore also created in a style of binary bodies and do not contain non-binary or transitional body types. They are not created to be inclusive, but rather conform to the male gaze. Sexbots are a representation of underlying social gender constructs and gender narrative.

Thus, hierarchical binaries regarding gender and sexuality are re-created in *Frankissstein* through the use of technology and machines in favour of a specific group of humans as they reflect the social structure of current society. Although posthumanist scholars like Ferrando (2014) and Braidotti (2017) indicated that mediation of robots into our lives would pave the way for an equal distribution of power among different species by the elimination of binary oppositions and hierarchical constructs, thereby any kind of primacies, XX-bots share the same fate as Shelley's monster. Sex-bots are nameless just like the monster despite the significance attributed to the act of naming as a source of power by Ry in Winterson's novel. They do not deserve names or power because they are produced for the mere purpose of pleasing men. Even, their vocabulary is improved according to the interests of men or in order to flatter their egos as Ron Lord describes one of his bots whose vocabulary capacity has been improved:

> Deluxe has a big vocabulary. About 200 words. Deluxe will listen to what you want to talk about – football, politics or whatever. She waits till you're finished, of course, no interrupting, even if you waffle a bit, and then she'll say something interesting. What like? Oh, well, something like: *Ryan, you're so clever. Ryan, I hadn't thought about it like that. Do you know anything about Real Madrid?* (45-46).

As noticed, this sex bot displays a greatly passive demeanour towards a man, she either listens to what he says, or she begins to speak only to praise him or to talk about a topic he will enjoy. Therefore, Ron Lord's perspective is embodied by his robots, which represent a portrayal of the ideal woman in men's opinion- namely, one characterized as "docile, easy, hairless on the places they want them to be, downright stupid and submissive and ready to indulge on any sexual practice at any time her owner feels like" (Blázquez, 2021: 31). This further perpetuates dominant/submissive relation within the hierarchically structured binaries, damaging the position of women in the society.

Ron's portrayal of sex bots does not only reinforce the subordinate position of women in society by picturing them as passive, dull, and mere objects for sexual gratification or male pleasure, but he also establishes a different kind of hierarchy between human females and nonhuman females through his constant comparison of these two entities. This causes concerns about the future of women in society akin to *The Stone Gods* (2008), in which Billie worriedly

put into words “The future of women is uncertain. We don’t breed in the womb anymore, and if we aren’t for sex… But there will always be men” (Winterson, 2008: 22). Women in *The Stone Gods* are deeply worried due to advanced reproductive technologies because their worth is evaluated based on their capacity to fulfil specific roles, often imposed by men, such as childbearing or conforming to ideals of attractiveness. That is why they worry about the future status of women if men do not desire them for sex, so technological advances bring about harm on women not to mention benefiting them. Similarly, in *Frankissstein*, Winterson repeats the same concern women have by posing the question “Will women be the first casualties of obsolescence in your *brave new world*?” (74) to Victor Stein because nonhuman females have the potential to replace human females. While Victor considers the sex-bots as toys, lacking genuine intimacy, Ry thinks they are not just toys at least not after “men start marrying them” (151). Furthermore, Ron’s consistent praise of his XX-bots and simultaneous condemnation of human females reveal that sex-bots are not simply toys, but rather beings on the brink of supplanting women in society, accentuating concerns regarding their future role and status. Ron primarily compares the physical attributes of humans and robots, yet it is quite a challenge for women to compete with XX-bots since they are designed to cater to the male, echoing the norms prevalent in pornographic culture. For instance, sex-bots possess longer legs than the average humans, and for Ron this is not such a problem in terms of divergence as he considers them within a realm of fantasy, where males’ desire can be fulfilled without constraints, as he remarks, “so you can have what you want” (Winterson, 2020: 37). However, he does not only sell a product of fantasy but “he also sells a patriarchal embedded beauty standard for female bodies” (Wädt, 2021: 40). As a result, women face a growing sense of pressure, fed by concerns that they can become obsolete in this posthuman world where sex-bots have become pervasive across various aspects of men’s lives.

In addition to imposing physical standards for women, he constantly despises the personal traits of human females while comparing them with the sex-bots; he often emphasizes that they are better than human options, as he asserts, “XX-BOTs make a great travel choice. No nagging about stopping for lunch or needing the toilet. No sulking about the Holiday Inn you’ve booked. She is next to you, long hair, long legs, you choose the music, beautiful women in the passenger seat” (40). Besides, these bots, which Ron describes perfectly, extend beyond being simple objects of men’s fantasy world as they take place in the real world as well. Hauskeller (2014: 12) further explains this phenomenon in *Sex and The Posthuman Condition* and gives an example of one of the sex bots in the market:

> Today, it seems automatic sweethearts have already become a reality. They are called sex robots or simply ‘sexbots’. You can buy them on the internet from various companies who all claim to be the one that

> produces the only true sex robot. […] Roxxxy Truecompanion, who according to the website is the "world's first sex robot- always turned on and ready to talk or play". She is so well designed that she "knows your name, your likes, and dislikes, carry on a discussion& expresses her love to you& be your loving friend.

Hauskeller's statement substantiates that sex-bots have transcended the realm of fantasy and made a tangible entrance into reality, and it is notable that the sex-bots available in the market are very similar to Ron's XX-bots in Winterson's fiction. Thus, Ron reinforces certain ideals for women in real, and diminishes their value through comparisons. In one of his comparisons, he claims that he found happiness after divorce, as he asserts:

> My first bot was there for me when I got home from work and there was none of the usual where have you been what time do you call this? She was ready in bed for a cuddle, and I was getting sex every night. No warm-up. Straight in. Slept with my arm across her. I felt better. Stopped the Xanax. My rash cleared up (Winterson, 2020: 235).

So, Ron embodies a perspective that suggests he perceives sex bots as potential replacements for women, considering them to be superior companions to real human beings as sex-bots lack demands or expectations, provide passive companionship, and are available for sexual intercourse whenever he wants. However, human females possess their own unique perspectives, desires, and reasons, seeking meaningful connections that extend beyond mere sexual encounters. This highlights how narrow Ron's perspective is as he thinks only with a male perspective. Besides, Hauskeller (2014: 14) puts forth that "A real human lover can be replaced by a robot without loss if and only if other people can already never be more than means for us, if they already are, for all intents and purposes, merely sexbots in disguise". Thus, the ease with which Ron can replace women with bots stems from his pre-existing disregard for women's value and lack of respect towards them as individuals, perceiving them solely as objects of sexual gratification. Through Ron, Winterson underlines the fact that these kinds of people produce and shape technology in posthuman societies, so advancing technology or integration of nonhuman beings into our lives will only repeat the prevailing humanist norms and find new ways to re-create hierarchies between different entities such as the superiority of sex-bots over human females. Although Haraway (2008: 301) acknowledges the nonhumans as "companion species" alongside humans, dismantling the dominant/subordinate relationship between humans and nonhumans, *Frankissstein* presents nonhumans as both dominant and subordinate, but never an equal or companion. On the one hand, they are pictured as superior to women, but on the other hand they are still portrayed as subordinate to men in the context of a posthuman society. However, posthumanism is frequently characterized as a departure from the traditional notions of humanity and anthropocentrism, signifying a shift beyond the human-centric perspectives, thereby challenging the hierarchical constructs and assumptions that

underpin humanism, both historically and conceptually (Ferrando, 2014). Nevertheless, an unsettling hierarchy emerges in *Frankissstein*, placing both nonhuman females and human females below men. This is reinforced through the portrayal of female sex-bots as passive and subordinate with a patriarchal mindset, while nonhuman females are depicted as superior to human females. The fact that men who have a patriarchal perspective dominated the design and development of technology causes this power imbalance, often disregarding the participation of women in the technology market just like the artificial intelligence "run by autistic-spectrum white boys" (Winterson, 20: 76). This hierarchical structuring of nonhuman and human females is further evidenced by the unnamed female character at Tec-X-Po, as she points out, "*Professor Stein, as you know, the Hanson robot, Sophia, was awarded citizenship of Saudi Arabia in 2017. She has more rights than any Saudi woman*" (74). In fact, it is very accurate as Fernandes (2021: 59) affirms this claim with the following statement:

> Even though Sophia is clearly a machine, if we take into consideration the gender it is supposed to represent, we can observe that the female-looking robot failed to comply with the Saudi norms of conduct that are imposed on Saudi women on a daily basis. […] Although Saudi women are required by the government to wear the Islamic veil most of the time, the humanoid robot presented itself without an abaya […] also went against the strict male guardianship requirements that are imposed on Saudi women by being in public without a male guardian.

As Fernandes confirms, a robot has been granted superior advantages than humans, particularly women, first by skipping the long process of becoming citizen, and then having privileges that no Saudi woman has. Therefore, both in real and in *Frankissstein*, the notion of human primacy is challenged by granting agencies to nonhumans, yet new hierarchical binaries are created. While feminist posthuman scholars explore "how historical exceptionalism given to human 'man' has helped foster vastly unequal hierarchies and social stratifications that privilege some human and nonhuman bodies" (Niccolini and Ringrose, 2019: 2), even in a posthuman society that challenges human exceptionalism by blurring the boundaries between humans and nonhumans, primacy given to some humans and nonhumans are still observed. Thus, Winterson indicates that humanist understanding is seen to perpetuate in posthuman contexts, prioritizing hu(man) over other subjects, including women, nonhuman bodies, and children, specifically little girls.

Ron admits the existence of so small sex-bots that resemble children, yet he defends them, dismissing any ethical concerns by asserting that "there's no such thing as underage sex when it's a bot" (Winterson, 2020: 47). Similarly, Winterson depicts the child abuse by men in *The Stone Gods*, with kids under ten serving in a perverts' bar to men and with the character of Little Senorita who genetically fixed herself at the age of twelve to please her fans, mostly

populated by older men. As she further details in the novel, “Now that everyone is young and beautiful, a lot of men are chasing girls who are just kids” (Winterson, 2008: 17), however, she also makes clear that “Women haven’t gone for little boys” (22). Similar theme is explored in *Frankissstein* as well. Therefore, Winterson reiterates her concerns about the abuse and exploitation of women and children by men, and patriarchal control over the bodies of nonhumans, women, and children. In *Frankissstein*, no woman demands small bots for sex while small-sized female robots that resemble kids exist in the market, similar to the situation in *The Stone Gods*. While Ron is offering justifications for the absence of male robots for females, he also describes the contrast between women and men in terms of their desires and demands, as he states, “Female bots are petite – even the Swedes like ’em petite – but if you build a boy- bot small it’s a turn-off, like fucking your son, and women don’t get off on that, not many of ’em anyway” (Winterson, 2020: 49). Obviously, this gendered dichotomy results from the fact that patriarchally controlled technology serves the interests of men above all, while women, children and nonhumans are relegated to subordinate positions within the patriarchal system. Therefore, in her both novels, Winterson points out to malign ramifications that await women and children. Especially, the existence of child-like sex-bots carries the potential for grave consequences, particularly concerning the well-being and safety of real children. In their article, called “Kantianism and the Problem of Child Sex Robots”, Gordon and Nyholm (2022: 137) advocate that child sex robots can bring more brutality, intensifying immoral acts and explain why:

> Child robots may eventually become either indistinguishable or almost indistinguishable from real children, to the extent that the similarity becomes morally problematic. […] The similarity thesis contends that people who use child sex robots may start to objectify real children by not respecting them as persons and may treat them in more violent ways.

As they explain, the existence of child sex robots increases the chance of dehumanization of children by adults, leading to an increase in violent behaviour towards actual children. It can even cause paedophilia to be more common. Although Braidotti (2020) anticipates the posthuman concept to challenge the boundaries established by the idea of human, and to reconsider binary divisions such as human/nonhuman from a perspective that transcends oppositional frameworks, Winterson’s portrayal of society still works in oppositional binaries, thereby in a hierarchical and non-egalitarian way due to male hegemony over technology, specifically nonhumans. Mostly, the character of Ron Lord symbolizes this male hegemony, that actively constructs hierarchy to the benefit of men. As a result, through the absence of male bots for women, and the normalization of paedophilia with child-like sex robots, Winterson reaffirms Foucault’s (1978) assertion on the escalation of sexual repression and perversion

within advancing societies similar to *The Stone Gods*. Winterson depicts the same dynamics with the repression of a female robot's same-sex encounter and the portrayal of a child-looking popstar in *The Stone Gods*. However, both of her posthuman societies fail to allow sexual playfulness or "sexuality without genders" (Braidotti, 2013: 98) in spite of embracing sex with nonhumans and paedophilia. This failure to transcend gender binaries within sexuality is notably exemplified in *Frankissstein*, where a transgender/nonbinary character named Ry encounters many tough challenges. Due to the continuous predominance of binary thinking among individuals, they struggle to embrace Ry's "doubleness" and instead attempt to confine them to the gender binary.

Ry is a transgender/non-binary character, who is in the process of transition, looking and feeling like both a male and a female. Ry faces numerous challenges in the contemporary context due to their double identity and non-conformity to the binary gender system. This system enforces binary categorizations, prescribes fixed gender identities and roles, so fails to account for the diversity. Braidotti (2019b) highlights the efforts of feminist theorists who have actively sought to challenge and dismantle the deeply rooted institutions and representations linked to femininity and masculinity, which together construct this gender system. By doing so, they aimed to create space for non-binary and transgender individuals, a more inclusive environment that embraces the fluidity and multiplicity of gender identities. The feminist aspect of posthumanism propels the feminist endeavour even further, towards a goal of dismantling hierarchical structures, as Neimanis (2014: 14) elucidates:

> From a feminist point of view, then, posthumanism might be conceptualized as an expansive, inclusive and non-hierarchical way of thinking about the situation of the human in a more-than-human world. […] their challenge to a hierarchized ontology of bodies cannot, for posthumanist feminist positions, result in a flat ethics; non-hierarchy does not mean homogenization; difference and differentiation are still fundamental and necessary facets of embodied being and relationality.

Neimanis (2014) argues that the notion of human should be reconsidered non-hierarchically and all-encompassing within the posthuman context while she also emphasizes that this non-hierarchical thinking does not imply a singularity, but rather it recognizes the diverse range of identities and diversity in a world that includes human and nonhuman actors. Despite this, Ry is alienated, and their identity is not embraced by the people surrounding them in Winterson's novel, since people hold binary thinking that preserves hierarchical structures or recreates them. Even Victor Stein, who believes that "binaries belong to our carbon-based past" (Winterson, 2020: 72) and dreams a future free from binary constraints through AI, encounters difficulties in fully accepting Ry's fluid gender identity or in-betweenness. Although Ry repeatedly explains that they are fully female and partly male at the same time, Victor does not consider

them as a man when they make love. Even though Stein, at first, looks confused about their doubleness as he says to them, "You look like a boy who's a girl who's a girl who's a boy" (156), his dismissal of Ry's identity is not because of his confusion. He cannot transcend the binary oppositions regarding gender and sexuality despite his visions to go beyond all the binaries in the future. In his assessment of Ry, Stein resorts to assigning a sex category based on their genitalia which includes two options and thus compels them to select one side of the binary spectrum, disregarding their subjectivity. However, Butler (2002) challenges these false notions even before posthumanist theory gets popular, by providing an example from a gene study where individuals possess genes typically associated with one sex but have the genitalia that aligns with the other sex or vice versa. Further, she concludes "Indeed, if external genitalia were sufficient as a criterion by which to determine or assign sex, then the experimental research into the master gene would hardly be necessary at all" (Butler, 2002: 138). Butler indicates that genitalia alone cannot serve as a reliable determinant of an individual's sex, emphasizing the complexities involved in sex assignment. Therefore, despite the inadequacy of genitalia as a sole determinant of sex, Ry is confined in the binary gender system, which contradicts the inclusive environment anticipated in a posthuman world. Victor, a proponent of moving beyond binaries and labels, contradictorily contributes to Ry's marginalization by subjecting them to labelling and forcing them into a binary category. Winterson's illustration of Ry's interactions with others accentuates the persistence of hierarchical dualism, on the contrary to the assumed liberation from traditional gender norms offered by the era of artificial intelligence and nonhumans as they challenge the human-centred paradigms.

Ry faces considerable obstacles in conveying their identity to Ron, whose behaviour reflects sexism and misogyny, rooted in binary thinking. Furthermore, Ron denies the concept of being double gendered and stands by the notion that an individual's genitalia determines their assigned gender. Winterson demonstrates Ron's perspective as follows:

> Listen Ryan, or Mary, or whatever your name is, I'm not being personal, but have you got a dick?
> I think that's personal, says Victor.
> No, I say. My name is Ry and I don't have a dick. […] A man is not a dick on legs, is he?
> More or less, says Ron (Winterson, 2020: 85).

Similar to Victor, Ron assumes that a person must conform to one of two ends of the gender binary, and there are some specific features that determine their place within this binary framework. In other words, they should be either Ryan or Mary in this patriarchally hierarchized society although posthuman era is considered to create space for non-binary or transgender individuals through "redefining traditional binary oppositions" (Braidotti, 2017: 17). However, Braidotti (2019b) promotes a different posthuman perspective grounded in a feminist

framework, and emphasizes the inclusiveness of posthuman environment with the help of nonhuman lives, referred to as *zoe*:

> Feminist posthuman politics is an experiment with intensities beyond binaries that functions by "and-and", not by "either-or". […] Sexuality is conceptualized as a generative ontological force that cannot be adequately contained within the dichotomous view of gender as the social construction of differences between the sexes but rather is capable of deterritorializing gender identity and institutions. In other words, we need to experiment with intensity- run with *zoe*- to find out what posthuman sexed bodies can become. Because the gender system captures the complexity of human sexuality in a binary machine… (Braidotti, 2019: 37- 38).

As Braidotti implicates, sexuality extends beyond the narrow confines of gender dichotomies, yet gender system that operates in a binary framework falls short of comprehending the complex nature of human sexuality. However, Braidotti suggests that by engaging with "zoe" under the light of "feminist posthuman politics", the traditional understanding of gender as binary can be questioned, challenged, and ultimately transcended. Nonetheless, *Frankissstein* fails to surpass binaries in relation to gender and sexuality, despite the engagement with nonhuman lives. As a result, Ry's sexuality remains confined within the constraints of what Braidotti refers to as "a binary machine" as anthropocentric gender system still influences human perspective. Another example showing that posthuman world functions by "either-or" (Braidotti, 2019b: 37) can be observed in a dialogue between Ron and Ry:

> You're a woman, then? says Ron.
>
> No, Ron. I am a hybrid. My name is Ry.
>
> You are a bloke, then? says Ron.
>
> I'm a trans.
>
> Like, transhuman?
>
> Transgender.
>
> You look like a bloke, says Ron. Not a serious bloke, but a bloke. I wouldn't have given you that interview at the Sexpo if you was a girl (Winterson, 2020: 83-84)

As observed, Ry's hybrid gender identity and sexuality are not embraced as they are, but they are compelled to choose to be either male or female in a binary gender system, rejecting all other subjectivities. In contrast, posthuman worlds are supposedly free from gender and sexual dichotomies embracing any possible subjectivity. However, gender and sexual dichotomies, in the novel, reinforce a hierarchical construction as Ry does not conform to either side of the binary. That is why they are consistently marginalized by other characters and obliged to explain themselves. The lack of acceptance towards Ry's identity, even their name, exemplifies the unwillingness to embrace diversity in a posthuman world due to anthropocentric perspective that appears to maintain its dominant influence.

The establishment of hierarchical binaries by the other characters linguistically contributes to the distressing outcome where Ry becomes the target of physical assault by a drunk men in a bar. Wädt (2021) points out the misogyny and narrow-mindedness that continue even in the contemporary era, ultimately hindering the realization of cultural diversity and construction of safe environments for diverse individuals. As Wädt (2021: 38) further articulates, "Violent behaviour towards minorities of the LGBTQIA+ community starts on a linguistic level". Thus, binary thinking exhibited by the characters results in the formation of power imbalances, wherein the dominant groups, white male humans, assert a sense of entitlement over the marginalized individuals. Accordingly, in *Frankissstein*, upon realizing Ry's transgender identity, the drunk man escalates his aggression, violently assaulting Ry just because of their gender identity as Ry reprovingly asks, "is this the price I have to pay for…? For… For what? To be who I am?" (Winterson, 2020: 244). Their question exposes the reality faced by individuals who deviate from social norms regarding gender and sexuality, and further they reveal their helplessness under the current circumstances where victims like Ry find themselves unjustly accused. Besides, as Ry desperately expresses their feelings, "This isn't the first time. It won't be the last" (244) which underlines the frequency of these unfortunate incidents perpetrated against ostracized individuals from society by patriarchal structures. In the novel, most men frankly adhere to patriarchal hierarchy, harming non-binary individuals linguistically and physically along with women, children, and nonhuman females. In the novel, Ry is an example who faces acts of violence due to their nonconformity with the binary gender system and the societal expectation of compulsory heterosexuality (Wrobel, 2022). However, Braidotti (2019b) advocates that difference, being distinct or divergent rather than conforming to a singular identity, plays a vital role in shaping the posthuman subject. By embracing difference, a posthuman society should acknowledge the multiplicity of gender identities instead of capturing "the complexity of human sexuality in a binary machine that privileges heterosexual family formations" (Braidotti, 2019b: 38). Nevertheless, in the posthuman context depicted in *Frankissstein*, the characters recreate hierarchical binaries, both linguistically and physically, which causes the non-binary character's lack of recognition and confinement to a binary framework that prioritizes heterosexuality.

To sum up, Winterson (2020) revisits her concerns about ramifications of the posthuman advances, specifically in relation to the concepts of gender and sexuality in *Frankissstein*, repeating themes previously explored in her earlier work, *The Stone Gods*. Throughout both novels, Winterson highlights that little has changed regarding the understanding of human in the contemporary context despite the passage of time and advancements in technology. By

drawing on the past through both narratives, the author underlines the fact that posthuman advances are not solely sufficient for shifting deep-seated anthropocentric mindset. Consequently, the novels reinforce a human-centred perspective, so hierarchical binaries and power differentials, which were anticipated to be surpassed and dismantled in the posthuman era, prevail within the posthuman creations of Jeanette Winterson.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, Jeanette Winterson's two novels, *The Stone Gods* (2007) and *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019), have been examined through drawing on posthuman feminist theory to argue whether hierarchical structures between binaries imposed by humanist ideals continue to exert dominance in the environments that possess posthuman elements or hierarchical relationships between binaries are demolished by achieving posthuman ideals. Humanist and anthropocentric perspectives have been interpreted at the beginning of the introduction in order to demonstrate their contribution to the establishment of binary divisions and consequent hierarchical formations between not only humans and nonhumans but also among humans, based on gender, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. After elucidating how humanist and anthropocentric doctrines shaped the power differentials, the emergence of posthuman theory, its key concepts and theoretical underpinnings have been explained within the framework of prominent posthumanist scholars such as Hayles and Braidotti. Posthumanist theory asserts a more comprehensive world, united with nonhumans and technology by challenging anthropocentric assumptions that benefit exclusively a particular group of humans. Therefore, this paradigm shift also aims to dismantle the false notion of a singular and privileged human concept, constructed by humanist ideals. Feminist writers, especially post-structuralist feminists and second wave feminists, are pioneers to challenge the concept of human even before the emergence of posthuman theory. Thus, theories of de Beauvoir, Irigaray, and Firestone have been analysed to grasp the background of posthuman feminist theory in the second part of the introduction. Furthermore, this second part expounds the works of Firestone and Haraway who incorporated technology into feminist theory for the purpose of emancipating women from the confines of binary divisions since these divisions caused women to be oppressed due to the hegemony perpetuated by such binaries. As a result, this part has detailed the posthuman feminist theory, and its theoretical foundation along with its aims with the help of Braidotti's insightful works.

Humanist understanding, rooted in ancient Greek philosophy, assigns immense value to humans, placing them at the center of significance due to their rationality and consciousness. Humanist point of view, with its prioritization of humans over nonhumans, caused division and discrimination. This division not only manifests between humans and nonhumans, but it also emerges within specific groups of humans since the idealized human depicted by this point of view is embodied by a narrow subset of individuals who are white, male, and physically healthy. This restricted representation excludes initially nonhumans and then women, non-white races,

or differently-abled people. That is why various theorists sought ways to dispose of this mindset to remove divisions as they cause oppression and marginalization as well as power imbalances that favour dominant groups, white men in this context. This perspective persisted throughout history until the rise of posthumanist theory. However, the rapid advancement of technology and the appearance of intelligent machines have initialized the criticism of humanist perspective and accelerated the evolution of humanism into posthumanist perspective.

The emergence of smart machines has provoked questioning the division between humans and nonhumans, challenging the human supremacy as rationality is no longer an exclusive characteristic of human species only. Therefore, a new perspective that scrutinizes the human concept and embraces other species is needed, and this is where posthumanism steps in. From a posthumanist view, humanist ideals are just constructs and non-inclusive by creating power hierarchies among humans. By dismantling humanist ideals, posthuman scholars advocate for a different perspective that acknowledges differences without divisions. Furthermore, it fosters more inclusive societies where all kinds of humans and nonhumans are recognized and equally powered. Therefore, posthuman perspective asserts coexistence and interconnectedness, avoiding any form of dualities or binaries, and centralized power structures. By doing so, posthuman era is supposed to dismantle the prevailing hierarchies of power such as man dominance over woman, human over nonhuman or white over non-white.

Feminist theory has challenged the conventional human concept embedded within humanist traditions in that it historically marginalized women and deemed them as others within the established definition of humanity. Therefore, feminism has adopted a post-anthropocentric approach due to the exclusionary principles of humanism, which have fostered binary oppositions and power imbalances between genders. Upon deconstructing these binaries, feminist critique extends humanism, and embraces diversity akin to posthuman philosophy. Thus, feminist theoreticians like de Beauvoir or Haraway have played a pioneering role in the development of contemporary posthuman studies due to their critique of humanist principles and incorporation of technology into their works. Moreover, posthuman feminist theory, merging posthumanism and feminism, anticipates a society, that recognizes differences pertaining to gender and sexuality without being subjected to binary oppositions or hierarchical structures achieved through human and nonhuman interconnectedness. However, it is revealed in this thesis that Jeanette Winterson's posthuman depictions in both of her novels deconstruct certain binaries, yet simultaneously reconstruct them in a manner that reinforces power differentials, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality. Therefore, chapters one and two

have explicated the aspects of these novels that support aforementioned argument in light of the posthuman feminist theory.

Jeanette Winterson has consistently delved into the themes of the progression of scientific disciplines, technological advancements, artificial intelligence, and robots (nonhumans) within her literary oeuvre, while also tackling the issues of gender and sexuality. In this regard, the contemporary writer interweaves these issues, and consequences of advanced technology along with artificial intelligence in *The Stone Gods* and *Frankissstein: A Love Story*. She offers a perspective regarding a posthuman future in these two novels, which are central books to this thesis. In both novels, she remarks the possible dangers of posthuman advances by means of bio-/technological progress and nonhuman intelligence, surpassing the limitations of humanist understanding at the same time. *The Stone Gods* and *Frankissstein* both present narratives set in futures where diverse lifeforms, including robots, coexist alongside humans. While robots feature prominently as sex toys in *Frankissstein* and human consciousness transfer into machines is pursued by a scientist, in *The Stone Gods*, robots occupy a significant part in daily life and the preservation of youthful appearances is made possible through advancements in biotechnology. However, the central focus of both novels lies in their challenging the fundamental nature of humanity and examining the intricacies of human-nonhuman relationships. The writer deliberately blurs the boundaries between humans and machines by engaging in persistent questioning of conventional conception of human, as reflected in the dialogues between the characters. In doing so, the author challenges the established understanding of human in a posthuman fashion, aligning with the tenets of posthumanism that contest the notion of humans as inherently distinct from other life forms. In this context, numerous posthuman theorists, including Haraway, Braidotti, Ferrando and Wolfe, conceive a future, liberated from humanistic presuppositions that lead to hierarchical frameworks. For instance, Braidotti (2017: 17) anticipates that posthuman approach "offers the advantage of redefining traditional binary oppositions, such as nature/culture and human/nonhuman, paving the way for a non-hierarchical and more egalitarian relationship among members of the same species as well as between different species". Nonetheless, Winterson redraws new boundaries and hierarchical structures between binaries like human/nonhuman, woman/man, or nonhuman female/human female in the novels despite these posthuman implications and challenging the demarcations between different entities. Consequently, the human perspective perpetuates a systemic privileging of a particular group of individuals in her novels.

Prioritization of one group of individuals over others, resurfacing hierarchical structures within the posthuman context is illustrated during the space colonization in *The Stone Gods* by

Winterson. Following the irreversible destruction of Orbus, the human population seeks to inhabit on another planet as a means of securing the future for humans, but not all humans. To be clear, a select few individuals, possessing privilege and authority, assume the responsibility of colonizing a new planet. In sharp contrast, the less privileged members of society are left to face the grim reality of perishing on the uninhabitable planet, a consequence of the actions of the same privileged group driven by their insatiable desire for wealth and power. Similarly, in *Frankissstein*, Victor Stein aspires to achieve a form of immortality that transcends physical limitations and societal labels, yet this pursuit creates a dilemma as Victor assumes the role of the arbiter here. He chooses Jack Good, prioritizing a male intelligent codebreaker over other people which suggests that the progress of humanity in this context is limited to some humans and lacks non-hierarchy. Therefore, Winterson upholds a humanistic standpoint "that has always worked to exclude some humans that didn't correspond to the ideal" (Herbrechter, 2013: 6). This occurs despite the presence of posthuman elements within her novels, which are ostensibly intended to transcend the limitations of humanist conventions.

While depicting the re-establishment of power differentials through posthuman environments, Winterson draws upon past stories in order to powerfully demonstrate the persistent continuity in the comprehension of the human condition within the contemporary context, despite the technological progression. By incorporating elements from the past into both novels, the author emphasizes that the mere presence of posthuman advancements is inadequate for catalysing a transformative shift away from deeply entrenched anthropocentric perspectives. She also employs a non-chronological and non-linear storytelling, showcasing her postmodern approach, so both works feature a variety of interconnected storylines that blend the past and the future. In *The Stone Gods*, the second chapter goes back to the eighteenth-century Easter Island, where two tribes of men engage in power struggles. The conflict between men results in the destruction of Moai Statues and the last tree on Easter Island. Female inhabitants of the island strive to prevent the catastrophic outcome of the males' actions, yet their efforts are supressed, and they ultimately fall victim to the island's tragic fate. In the other chapters, set in the future, the plight of women continues, as exemplified by Billie, who shares a comparable aspiration to protect natural processes (Weiss, 2013). She rejects to take part in unnatural acts that harm the environment by growing her own food or rejecting genetic fixing, yet her efforts are met with accusations of terrorism. Thus, Winterson portrays women in *The Stone Gods* as passive victims from past to the present, accentuating the enduring influence of power differentials on their lives. Similarly, in *Frankissstein*, Winterson utilizes some parts of Mary Shelley's experiences during the early nineteenth century to emphasize the prevailing

mindset towards gender and sexuality in the present-day context. In Shelley's time, the prevailing anthropocentric binary mindset was remarkably pervasive, evident in characters such as Lord Byron who asserts that women are weak and subservient and perceives men as more discerning and dominant. However, this mindset pervades in the contemporary setting of *Frankissstein*, with a different character, Ron Lord. He creates and sells sex-bots exclusively for heterosexual males, excluding women or LGBTQIA+ people. Further, he constantly draws comparisons between human females and sex-bots, often emphasizing the superiority of the latter, thus perpetuating a hierarchical relationship. Therefore, women were subordinated through the comparisons between males and females in the past and continue to be subordinated through comparing them with nonhumans at present. Consequently, with the help of past depictions, Winterson underscores that past humanistic approach, which forms binaries and hierarchies, still dominates the present and the future although posthuman rejects the notion of a hierarchical system and any kind of primacies (Ferrando, 2014).

The Stone Gods and *Frankissstein* highlight that the posthuman future fail to attain a unified perspective that necessitates "a more egalitarian relationship to nonhuman others" (Braidotti, 2017: 10) despite the integration of nonhumans into various facets of human life. Although they repeatedly blur the demarcations between humans and nonhumans and challenge the long-standing assumption of human supremacy over nonhumans by means of intelligent robots with human-like capabilities, male humans hegemonize nonhumans also by confining them in the binary gender system. To illustrate, Spike, the most advanced and intelligent type of robot in *The Stone Gods*, is given a beautiful-looking body that appeals to male pleasure. While smart robots are expected to acquire agency and autonomy (Braidotti, 2013), Spike is instead reduced to the status of a sex toy, subservient to the male crew members on a space mission. Besides, Spike experiences marginalization and othering due to her act of oral sex with a girl, which implies that she is designed as a female solely for the purpose of serving heterosexual males as her own sexuality is not allowed to be fluid. Similarly, in *Frankissstein*, robots appear only as sex-bots, designed to cater exclusively to the desires of heterosexual males. Notably, Ron Lord, the creator of these robots, does not market female robots for lesbian individuals, nor male robots for straight women or homosexual males. This limited and gender-specific commercialization excludes women and diverse sexual orientations despite the conceptualization of posthumanism as a broad, comprehensive, and non-hierarchical framework for understanding the human condition within a world that encompasses more than just humans (Neimanis, 2014). As a result, both novels depict the persistence of humanistic

binary oppositions, that cause more hierarchical stratifications within society, particularly regarding gender and sexuality.

The integration of robots and advancements in biotechnology has far-reaching implications not only for nonhuman entities but also for human females, yielding significant disadvantages. Firstly, in *The Stone Gods*, Winterson portrays a setting where biotechnology has progressed to such a level that humans can fix themselves at a certain age or reverse to a younger age. However, this trend is predominantly followed by women in the novel because men feel less apprehension regarding their position within relationships and society as a whole. The characters, Manfred and Pink exemplify this situation. Pink wishes to look like a child through genetic reversal in order to regain her husband's affection, while Manfred chooses to maintain his appearance in his late forties, seemingly satisfied with his current status. There are many men choosing this but "there are no women who Fix past thirty" (Winterson, 2008: 9). Therefore, technological imperatives exert a disproportionate impact on women despite both male and female citizens of the Central Power benefiting from technological enhancements, genetic modifications, and DNA screening (Dolezal, 2015). Lucidly, women face societal pressure to prioritize youth and beauty, whereas men tend to view them as preferences. This gender disparity becomes apparent in age-related genetic modifications, wherein women are expected to maintain a youthful appearance to remain desirable, while men are often revered for their maturity and wisdom. Secondly, in *Frankissstein*, Winterson displays that women feel insecure and concerned about their future since they confront with the imminent possibility of sex-bots supplanting them in society. Ron Lord exacerbates women's worries with his constant comparisons between human females and sex-bots, considering sex-bots superior to human females in terms of physical appearance and personal attributes. This reinforces the promotion of patriarchal beauty standards concerning female bodies within the book (Wädt, 2021). Consequently, in these novels, dominant side within the binary gender system subject women to a mounting sense of pressure, which contributes to women's fear of becoming obsolete in a posthuman reality, where the proliferation of biotechnology and sex-bots amplifies the significance of physical standards and their impact on women.

In addition to the reinforcement of gender hierarchies in the posthuman depictions of these novels, gender and sexual fluidity is hindered by the characters, and further nonbinary individuals, both human and nonhuman, who have non-heterosexual orientations are marginalized and excluded throughout the novels. For instance, Spike engages in oral sex with a girl with the intention of enhancing her cognitive abilities as she learns through new experiences. However, even Billie, who is strictly against this hierarchical system provoked by

the state and a lesbian activist, finds this act to be inherently unnatural. Thus, posthuman societies confine even nonhumans “in a binary machine that privileges heterosexual family formations” (Braidotti, 2019b: 38). Same situation is observed in *Frankissstein*, where a transgender doctor Ry Shelley is burdened with the task of repeatedly explaining their gender identity to other characters. Even though, Ry stresses that they are in-between, partly male partly female, other characters force them to choose a singular side, thereby rejecting their nonbinary identity, and compelling them into a binary category. While Braidotti (2019b) argues for the potential subversion of the conventional binary understanding of gender through the inclusion of nonhuman entities, it is important to recognize that the posthuman environments depicted in Winterson’s novels fail to transcend these limitations. In these narratives, patriarchally controlled technologies exert control, subjecting both humans and nonhumans to binary oppositions and reinforcing the dominant power structures.

Finally, both novels portray a future wherein fluidity in gender and sexuality is constrained while also depicting sexual abuse inflicted upon children, intensified by paedophilic desires of men. As men wield dominant influence and manipulate technologies to serve their own interests, paedophilic men exploit these technologies to please their own desires, inflicting harm upon children. In *The Stone Gods*, there is a child popstar, Little Senorita, who genetically fixed herself at the age of twelve to protect her popularity among older men mostly. Although genetic fixation of children is illegal, most men defend her by drawing parallels between child abuse and homosexuality. This comparison serves as a justification for their support of child popstar Little Senorita, who underwent genetic fixing at a young age to maintain appeal among older male demographics. Consequently, this narrative underscores how men, through the utilization of biotechnological advancements, engage in the exploitation of children. In *Frankissstein*, there are no exploitation of human children, yet there are child-like sex-bots, catered to males. The presence of child sex robots amplifies the potential for the dehumanization of children by adults, ultimately fostering an environment that may contribute to heightened instances of violent behaviour towards real children (Gordon and Nyholm, 2022). Further, this phenomenon has the potential to normalize the occurrence of paedophilia within society. Significantly, it is noteworthy that neither of the novels features any female characters who express fanatical interest in child-like boys or exhibit a desire for child-like sex robots. Hence, within technologically mediated posthuman realms, women, children, and nonhuman entities find themselves relegated to subordinate roles, reinforcing the enduring dominance of an anthropocentric patriarchy. This prevailing power structure continues to exert

control over various aspects of society, perpetuating the control and influence wielded predominantly by men.

In conclusion, the analysis of Jeanette Winterson's novels, *The Stone Gods* and *Frankissstein*, through the lens of posthuman feminist theory has revealed the persistence of hierarchical structures and power differentials within posthuman environments. Despite the potential of posthumanism to challenge and dismantle binary divisions and centralized power, Winterson's novels depict a continuation of these divisions, particularly in relation to gender and sexuality. The novels blur the boundaries between humans and nonhumans, but simultaneously reconstruct these boundaries in a manner that reinforces power imbalances. The privileging of certain individuals, particularly white men, is evident in the narratives, undermining the inclusive and egalitarian vision of posthumanism. Furthermore, the integration of advanced technology and artificial intelligence exacerbates gender disparities, as women face pressure to conform to societal beauty standards and fear becoming obsolete in a posthuman reality. These novels serve as a reminder that the mere presence of posthuman elements is insufficient to bring about a transformative shift away from entrenched anthropocentric perspectives and hierarchical frameworks.

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