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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**



**MASTER'S THESIS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

**GOTHIC LITERATURE EVOLVES INTO
POSTHUMANISM: JEANETTE WINTERSON'S
FRANKISSSTEIN AS A 21st CENTURY REWRITING OF
MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN***

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2025

COMMITMENT

I hereby declare that this thesis has been prepared in accordance with the academic and ethical principles of the Graduate School of Education at Manisa Celal Bayar University, Department of English Language and Literature. All information and literature used in the thesis have been properly cited, and the thesis is entirely my work. I confirm that I have provided references for all quotations and have not utilized any artificial intelligence or software that violates academic and ethical principles during the preparation of this thesis.

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ÖZET

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Jeanette Winterson'ın *Frankissstein: A Love Story* adlı romanı, Mary Shelley'nin kült eseri *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*'un posthümanizm ışığında yeniden yazılmış bir uyarlamasıdır. Bu yeniden yazım, yalnızca tematik bir güncelleme değil, aynı zamanda insan, beden ve zihin kavramlarını yeniden tanımlayan çağdaş bir edebi yeniden kurgulama olarak değerlendirilir. Shelley'nin gotik bilim kurgu başyapıtı, yapay zekâ ve yüksek teknolojinin çevrelediği yirmi birinci yüzyılda yer edinecek şekilde yeniden ele alınmıştır. *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, insan ve canavar temsillerini sorgulaması bakımından gotik bir romandan posthümanist bir bakışa geçiş adımı olarak değerlendirilebilir; aynı şekilde *Frankissstein: A Love Story* de insan ve yapay zekâ temsillerini ele alır. Gotik ve posthümanizm arasındaki bağlantıyı anlayabilmek için Hümanizm ve Transhümanizm temel tanımlarıyla bilinmelidir. *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, insanlarla hibrit robotlar ve biyolojik olmayan varlıklar arasındaki ilişkiye odaklanarak posthümanist bir çevreye uzanır. Her iki roman da ana karakterleri üzerinden insanların doğanın diğer formları karşısındaki üstünlüğünü ve yaratma ile dönüşme arzusunu sorgular. Dr. Frankenstein, kendisi için korku nedeni olan canlı bir varlık yaratırken; Victor Stein, robotlar üretmeyi amaçlayarak sibernetik bir yaşam boyutu kurgular. Winterson'ın romanı, siber uygulamaları bir yaşam tarzı olarak yücelten Victor Stein'a âşık olan trans birey Dr. Ry karakteri aracılığıyla posthümanist ortamı çeşitlendirir. Ry'nin bedensel deneyimi ve kimlik arayışı, posthümanizmin beden, zihin ve kimlik arasındaki sınırları sorgulayan doğasına doğrudan katkı sağlar. Mary Shelley, ilk gotik bilim kurgu romanı olan *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*'u yeniden kurgulayarak insanlığın geleceğiyle bağ kurar ve dönüşüm fikrini farklı bir bakış açısıyla yeniden sunar. Bu tez, gotik edebiyatın posthümanizm alanına dönüşümünü, Mary Shelley'nin romanından Jeanette Winterson'ın romanına geçiş süreci üzerinden inceler. Tez boyunca bu iki roman, gotik ve posthüman söylem çerçevesinde

karşılaştırmalı olarak ele alınacaktır. Bu bağlamda hem metinlerin içerdığı temalar hem de anlatı biçimleri posthüman teorinin sunduğu kavramsal araçlarla analiz edilecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Frankenstein, Shelley, Frankissstein, Winterson, gotik ve posthuman roman, yapay zekâ

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ABSTRACT

M.Sc. Thesis

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Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* is a posthumanist reimagining of Mary Shelley's iconic novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. This adaptation is not merely a thematic update, but rather a contemporary literary reconstruction that redefines the concepts of the human, the body, and the mind. The Gothic sci-fi masterpiece by Shelley has paved the way for a place in the twenty-first century, surrounded by artificial intelligence and high technology. *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, which is a gothic masterpiece of Shelley, can be evaluated to be a step from a gothic novel to a posthuman perspective since it scrutinizes the representation of the human and the monster, just like *Frankissstein: A Love Story* demonstrates the representation of the human and artificial intelligence. In order to understand the connection between Gothic and posthumanism, *Humanism* and *Transhumanism* must be understood with their basic definitions. *Frankissstein: A Love Story* is a rewritten version of Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, and it springs up to the present day to hold out a posthuman environment focusing on the relationship of human beings with hybrid robots and non-biological creatures. Both novels question the ascendancy of humans over other forms of nature through the main characters, as well as their ultimate desire for creation and transformation. Dr. Frankenstein creates a living being, which becomes a source of fear for him, and Victor Stein fictionalizes a cybernetic life dimension by creating robots. Winterson's novel variegates the posthuman environment by presenting the transgender Dr. Ry falling in love with Victor Stein, who dignifies cyber practices as a living. Jeanette Winterson connects the first gothic science-fiction novel, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, with the future of humanity by recreating the same idea of transformation from a different perspective.

This thesis investigates the transformation of gothic literature into the realm of posthumanism, focusing on the transition from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, to Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story*. Throughout the thesis, these two novels will be compared and contrasted in the frame of Gothic and posthuman discourse.

Keywords:

***Frankenstein*, Shelley, *Frankissstein*, Winterson, gothic and posthuman novel, artificial intelligence**

2025, 128 pages

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis aims to analyze the transformation of a gothic sci-fi novel, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), to a posthuman novel, Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019). These two novels have been compared and contrasted in previous thesis analyses. In contrast to those studies, in this thesis, the focal point is the transformation between genres, centuries, and characters from gothic to posthuman.

The analysis of the thesis will start with a detailed explanation of the gothic novel's features and posthuman theoretical background with generally referring to Rosi Braidotti, N. Katherine Hayles, and Donna Haraway. Following the background chapter, the selected novels of two pioneering female authors who have paved new ways in two male-dominated genres: gothic sci-fi fiction and posthuman fiction. Yet, in this thesis, rather than emphasising the significance of female authors in these genres, Mary Shelley's, and Jeanette Winterson's two crucial novels will be examined in the frame of transformation, change, and challenge brought into the literary world.

In the following second chapter, Mary Shelley's contribution to the fictional world, her style, narration, and novel, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), will be discussed in the frame of Gothic fiction. In the third chapter, the transformation from Shelley's gothic world to Winterson's posthuman world will be presented with some significant features of posthumanism. Finally, in the fourth chapter, *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) will be portrayed via posthumanist characters that are transhumanist figures presenting a futurist technological love and sexual intercourse. Briefly, Winterson, by rewriting Shelley's masterpiece from a female posthuman lens, has created human-like creatures, different from Shelley's grotesque monster. Namely, the grotesque sci-fi self-created monster has been transformed into a human-created post-trans creature trying to reunite mind and body that have been lost via technological devices.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Meryem AYAN, for her unwavering support, continuous motivation, and invaluable guidance throughout the entire process of this thesis. Her insightful feedback, constructive criticisms, and kind encouragement have played a crucial role in shaping the direction and quality of my research from the initial stages to the final version. Her academic mentorship has been truly inspiring, and I feel fortunate to have worked under her supervision.

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ABBREVIATIONS

Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus → *Frankenstein*

Frankissstein: A Love Story → *Frankissstein*



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INTRODUCTION

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818), a gothic science fiction novel, serves as a timeless meditation on the limits of human ambition and the dark consequences of defying natural boundaries. The narrative of the novel portrays a world where the pursuit of knowledge and power leads to monstrous, tragic endings. Jeanette Winterson has rewritten the novel under the title *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) as a posthuman novel, reawakening the story of Shelley with the hum of machines and the pulse of artificial life. In sum, Shelley's gothic fiction has been transformed into a posthuman novel with gothic features in Winterson's masterpiece. To begin with, Gothic novels and posthuman novels aim to challenge the traditional notions of human existence. This thesis explores how Mary Shelley's 19th-century Gothic tale *Frankenstein* has been reimagined as a posthuman novel in the 21st century by Jeanette Winterson in *Frankissstein*, offering a comparative analysis through the framework of posthumanist theory. What makes this paper different from the other theses, written about this specific novel, is that it integrates both literary analysis and contemporary posthumanist theory to argue that Jeanette Winterson's novel does not merely update Mary Shelley's novel, but rather deconstructs and reimagines the gothic genre itself in response to modern technological and philosophical concerns. Additionally, the other theses written about these two novels, which belong to different centuries, do not discuss how a gothic novel has evolved into a posthuman novel. This indicates that the gothic tradition becomes a crucial framework for understanding posthuman narratives in the 21st century.

Even though Mary Shelley produced numerous novels incorporating gothic elements during the 19th century, her first novel, *Frankenstein*, remains one of the most iconic and enduring examples of gothic literature. Rather than selecting one of her other works, this paper focuses primarily on this novel as it is the novel in which Mary Shelley most profoundly engages with the themes of creation and scientific ambition as well as the boundaries of humanity, which are the questions that have since become central to posthumanist discourse. Unlike her other novels, such as *The Last Man* (1826), which explores themes of plague and human extinction, or *Mathilda* (1959), which investigate psychological trauma and taboo relationships, Mary Shelley's first novel stands out for its lasting impact on cultural, philosophical, and literary

discussions surrounding artificial life, technological intervention, and the nature of human identity. The continued relevance of the novel allows for an examination of how gothic literature serves as a precursor to posthuman narratives, bridging the anxieties of the past with contemporary concerns about artificial intelligence and the limits of scientific exploration.

The 19th century was a period of time in which scientific discoveries increasingly challenged traditional religious beliefs, leading to a shift in focus from spiritual explanations to materialist understanding of life. As a result, “It is no surprise that *Frankenstein's* creature, a monster of matter without any metaphysical counterpart, is dreamt of during this period” (LeCussan 107). Mary Shelley’s first novel not only reflects these changing philosophical and scientific paradigms but also intertwines deeply with her own experiences. Mary Shelley’s life was marked by loss and intellectual exploration, which are significant elements that would later shape the thematic concerns of her masterpiece. Mary Shelley’s relationship with the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, with whom she had an affair, led the couple to flee England, accompanied by Lord Byron. It was during their stay near Lake Geneva in 1816 that Shelley conceived her novel, a year that is famously known as “the Year Without a Summer” (Shelley 118) due to the volcanic eruption of Mount Tambora. In the middle of the spooky atmosphere of relentless storms and darkened skies, related to the elements of Gothic fiction, the group engaged in discussions on the latest scientific advancements, particularly the experiments of Luigi Galvani, an Italian scientist who used electrical charges to induce muscle contractions in deceased frogs. Dr Siv Jansson gives an information about it in the introduction part of the novel saying that “Galvani’s revivifying of dead tissue seems to have had the most obvious impact on *Frankenstein*: in 1791, he experimented on animal electricity which was substantially produced from the brain and conducted to muscles and other organs through the nerves” (xi). In addition to this, it is written in Brendese’s article that “Shelley drew from Rousseau, Locke, and Étienne Bonnot de Condillac to formulate her account of the Creature’s development, for tracing him in stark opposition to Hobbes’s dark view of human nature” (5).

On Mary Shelley’s head, some speculative questions about whether or not electricity could be harnessed to reanimate the dead took their place. It was during this night that Lord Byron proposed a ghost-story competition to keep them from getting

bored, challenging each member of the group to compose a horror tale. Shelley's inspiration, however, did not fully materialize until she experienced a vivid vision that became the foundation of her masterpiece. In the preface to *Frankenstein*, she recounts the moment of creative conception,

I placed my head on my pillow, I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. My imagination unbidden, possessed and guided me... I saw with shut eyes, but acute mental vision, – the pale student of unhallowed arts standing before the thing he had put together, I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion... frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world... (Shelley 1).

This passage foreshadows the novel's central warning: the dangers of unrestrained scientific ambition. In this respect, Shelley's novel serves as a cautionary tale, suggesting that the pursuit of knowledge for personal glory or power, without consideration of its ethical values, can lead to disastrous consequences. The creature, though initially innocent, is later transformed into a vengeful and uncontrollable being due to the cruelty and rejection it faces, even from its creator, Victor Frankenstein. In this way, *Frankenstein* criticizes the consequences of disrupting the natural order, fully reflecting the gothic genre's preoccupation with transgression, human suffering, and the darker aspects of existence. Shelley's use of supernatural elements, tragic characters, and a foreboding atmosphere aligns her work with gothic traditions while also pushing its thematic concerns toward modern ethical dilemmas.

The novel's full title, *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus*, situates the text within a broader mythological and philosophical context. The name 'Prometheus' is most commonly associated with Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*; however, as LeCussan argues, "one must recognise that the Promethean legend has become popular and used and reused by men much closer in space and time to the young Mary Shelley" (109). In an article written by Barbara Johnson titled "My Monster/My Self", it is stated that

The Modern Prometheus, Frankenstein itself indeed refers back to a myth that already links scientific ambivalence with the origin of mankind. Prometheus, the fire bringer, the giver of both creation and destruction, is also said by some accounts to be the father of the human race. Ambivalence toward technology can thus be seen as a

displaced version of the love-hate relation we have toward our own children (21).

According to Greek mythology, Prometheus shaped humans out of clay and defied the Olympian gods by stealing fire, which symbolizes technology and knowledge, and giving it to humanity. His defiance leads to eternal punishment: he is bound to a mountain, where an eagle perpetually devours his regenerating liver. Weiner draws a direct parallel between Prometheus and Victor Frankenstein, stating that “Like Prometheus, Victor Frankenstein suffers repeated torment, while Promethean creation and its consequences are running themes in the novel” (2). Thus, the title foreshadows the novel’s exploration of scientific ambition, the ethical dilemmas of playing a god like role in creation, and the potential dangers of unchecked technological progress. By aligning Victor Frankenstein’s struggles with those of Prometheus, Mary Shelley presents a deeply layered critique of human hubris, raising questions that remain relevant in contemporary discussions of artificial intelligence and posthumanism.

Prometheus is deeply intertwined with the character of Victor Frankenstein, as both figures embody the consequences of unrestrained ambition and the pursuit of forbidden knowledge. Prometheus is traditionally hailed as a hero who defies the gods by stealing fire, an act of rebellion committed for the benefit of humanity, despite the personal suffering it brings him. His defiance represents the desire for ultimate knowledge and power over creation, a theme that resonates strongly with Frankenstein. While Prometheus’ actions are often framed as noble, Victor Frankenstein’s pursuit of creation is more complex. Although initially driven by a scientific curiosity that he believes will advance humankind, his motivations soon become entangled with personal ambition and a desperate longing for recognition. Unlike Prometheus, whose sacrifice is altruistic, Frankenstein’s quest for god like power ultimately leads to devastating consequences, not only for himself but for those around him. As Levine argues,

Frankenstein echoes the old stories of Faust and Prometheus, exploring the limits of ambition and rebelliousness and their moral implications; but it is also the tale of a ‘modern Prometheus,’ and as such it is a secular myth, with no metaphysical machinery, no gods: the creation is from mortal bodies with the assistance of electricity, not spirit; and the deaths are not pursued beyond the grave. The dream vision out of which the work grows (3).

The interpretation highlights a crucial distinction between Victor Frankenstein and the classical Prometheus figure. Shelley's novel, rather than relying on divine intervention or supernatural elements, depicts a world in which creation arises solely from human endeavor, with life animated not by the gods but through scientific experimentation. In doing so, *Frankenstein* shifts from mythological allegory to a modern, secular meditation on scientific responsibility. The absence of divine forces in Shelley's narrative makes Victor Frankenstein's downfall much more tragic, as he alone bears the weight of his transgressions. In the end, both Prometheus and Frankenstein suffer as a result of their defiance of the natural order. Prometheus, bound to a rock with an eagle eternally devouring his liver, endures his punishment as a martyr for human progress. Frankenstein, by contrast, is tormented not only by his suffering but also by the destruction he has unleashed upon others. His relentless obsession with his creation ultimately isolates him, mirroring Prometheus' punishment in a deeply psychological manner. As Levine further suggests, "The trances Frankenstein falls into, born of passion, while constructing his monster, provide a counterpoise to the Promethean triumphs of spirit over selfishness" (3). By drawing upon the Promethean myth, Shelley presents a cautionary tale about the dangers of scientific hubris.

Even though the creature possesses a human form, he lacks a natural origin, which leads others to perceive him as a 'monster.' His artificial nature denies him the essential qualities that define humanity in the eyes of society, such as cultural belonging and emotional validation. For this reason, he is instantly rejected, viewed not as a sentient being with thoughts and emotions but as a deviation from natural order. Victor Frankenstein himself expresses immediate horror and regret upon beholding his creation, stating, "Now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart" (58). The reaction reveals the deep contradiction within Victor's pursuit. Although he sought to push the boundaries of human capability by creating life, he is unable to accept the consequences of his success. His revulsion stems not only from the creature's terrifying appearance but also from its unnatural existence, which disrupts traditional definitions of life and humanity. The novel's depiction of the figure, who is neither fully human nor entirely monstrous, serves as a literary foreshadowing of the posthuman future.

Like Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods to grant power to mankind, Mary Shelley takes the male-dominated gothic tradition and redefines it from a female perspective. By crafting a narrative that births a being outside the boundaries of human, monster, or machine, Mary Shelley aims to challenge the existing notions of identity, autonomy, and artificial life. In doing so, *Frankenstein* is recognized not only as a cornerstone of Gothic literature but also as one of the earliest examples of science fiction, blending Gothic horror with speculative exploration of scientific advancements. Mary Shelley's influence extends far beyond her era, opening the way for new interpretations and literary innovations. Her multifaceted work has inspired numerous writers. By bridging gothic with speculative fiction, Shelley's legacy continuously reshapes discussions around humanity, ethics, and the blurring lines between the natural and the artificial.

Jeanette Winterson is a novelist who blends reality with fantasy to explore the deeper and often darker aspects of human nature. As a 20th and 21st century writer, Winterson is widely recognized for her engagement with themes of gender, identity, and sexuality, which she intricately weaves into her narratives. Her works, including *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* (2011) and *The Stone Gods* (2007) challenge conventional notions of selfhood and societal expectations. In 2019, she published *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, which stands out among her other novels for its extensive engagement with technology, artificial intelligence, and cybernetics. In *Frankissstein*, Winterson modernizes Shelley's gothic themes, adapting them for a 21st-century audience while maintaining the philosophical inquiries that made Mary Shelley's novel timeless. Jeanette Winterson's masterpiece does not merely reference Shelley's work; rather, it reconstructs its essence within the framework of contemporary technological advancements. By intertwining gothic horror with developing technology, Jeanette Winterson creates a narrative that feels both familiar and relevant. She presents a world where artificial intelligence and cybernetics redefine human nature and life, where the lines between human, machine, and monster dissolve. In its opening chapters, Winterson revisits the historical period during which Mary Shelley wrote her gothic masterpiece in 1818, immersing the reader in Shelley's creative process. This narrative technique allows Winterson to draw direct parallels between the anxieties of the 19th century, rooted in scientific discovery and the fear of uncontrolled creation, and the

ethical dilemmas of the 21st century, where advancements in artificial intelligence force humanity to reconsider the definition of what it means to be human. Winterson's novel transforms Shelley's novel into a technologically evolved posthumanist novel, positioning the creation within the broader discourse on the future of human identity in a mechanized world. Winterson's novel serves as both a tribute and a challenge to Shelley's legacy. Through her novel, Jeanette Winterson raises critical questions about what it means to be human in an era where technology threatens the world to surpass biological and natural limitations. As Mary Shelley once warned humanity about the dangers of scientific hubris and ambition, Winterson extends her cautionary tale to the digital age, prompting readers to contemplate the ethical and existential consequences of posthuman evolution.

Winterson's posthuman novel presents the idea of hubris through Victor Stein, a transhumanist, prolific professor of artificial intelligence, who is known all around the world for his visionary role in the future of eternal life. Like Victor Frankenstein, who is interested in bringing humans back from the dead, Victor Stein aims to work on strange cryogenic experiments on dead bodies. He aims to bring a project to life in which the contents of the human brain are downloaded into artificial intelligence systems; therefore, humans are able to live forever. The novel does this by "*oscillating* between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries, illustrating changing similarities and differences on the persistent human quest to transcend biological limitations" (Uzun 60). The title *Frankissstein: A Love Story* foreshadows that the readers are presented with a love story that is different from human romantic love stories for the fact that the characters of the novel have a direct connection with the development of artificial intelligence. The transgender physician, Dr. Ry Shelley, falls in love with Victor Stein, and unwillingly, he finds himself helping him with his experiment.

Frankissstein weaves two narratives together: one set in the early 19th century, which is the time when Mary Shelley wrote her novel, and the writing process of Shelley is narrated as well. The other narrative is in the present day, which reflects the intersections of technology and humanity. By looking at this part, it is obvious that Jeanette Winterson succeeded in connecting the gothic narrative with posthuman discourse. Thus, Winterson's novel is not only about Shelley's gothic classic, but it also engages with the complexities of the modern world that is intertwined with technology. Jeanette Winterson's work is created in order to present a contemporary

retelling of Mary Shelley's classic in the light of the posthumanist view, which puts the novel in a different category from other novels of Winterson. The novel follows a few different characters, all of whom are involved in the development of artificial intelligence. Besides the main story between Dr. Ry and Victor Stein, other characters include Ron Lord, a divorced man living with his mother who is determined to make sex dolls for lonely men all around the world, especially for himself.

The novel begins with the voice of the transgender Dr. Ry Shelley, who was ironically called 'Mary' before. Ry themselves says "Ry is short for Mary" (Winterson 83). Born female, Dr. Ry Shelley is in the process of transitioning; therefore, he uses 'they' and 'them' pronouns. While the thesis mentions Ry, 'they' will be used as the pronoun. Dr. Ry meets Victor Stein, and they begin to provide bodies for Stein's underground experiments. Even if Dr. Ry is aware of the fact that Victor Stein is not a safe person to love, they are drawn to him, and they begin a strange romance. Significantly, the main character Victor Stein muses that Ry's nonbinary identity opens up a new door for some plans: an existence as brains uploaded to the cloud, without bodies or gender identity at all. *Frankissstein* encompasses lots of genres such as historical fiction, satire, romance, and it deals with the life of Mary Shelley. The connection between these two novels, their characters, and their relationship with the scientific area goes in parallel directions, which makes them possible to be compared and contrasted in the light of the gothic novel and its transition to the posthuman novel.

Both of these masterpieces depict similar themes and explore common ideas, including breaking the boundaries of natural order as well as how the perspective of human beings is transformed over an extended period. Humanity dived into a rapid change that comes with the development of technology from the moment scientific explorations emerged. Rosi Braidotti mentions this in her lines "The starting point for me is the anti-humanist death of Wo/Man which marks the decline of some of the fundamental premises of the Enlightenment [...]" (37). In both of the novels, the idea of playing god creates the main plotline. Scientific explorations are used and abused for the sake of human; however, they destroy certain human values and their relations with each other. Both of the female authors have created awkward and interesting characters for their periods, predicting the future transformations of humanity. Even though Mary Shelley published her novel that erases the boundaries between human and technology in 1818, Jeanette Winterson published her novel in 2019 by adding

themes of artificial intelligence and gender fluidity to the narrative of Mary Shelley, which covers nearly two hundred years of time span. Mary Shelley, in her gothic novel, created a monster character rather than a human being, and Winterson presented transhumanist and posthumanist characters who are deep into using science and technology to create 'cyborgs.' Although these significant novels belong to different centuries, they include similar human characteristics such as the pursuit of immortality, the hubris of creation, and the ethical questions that are inherent in scientific advancement. These two novels aim to clarify how dangerous it is to create life beyond nature and its consequences by challenging traditional notions of identity and the human body. Mary Shelley creates this hubris through Victor Frankenstein, and Jeanette Winterson does this upon the characters Victor Stein and Ron Lord.

In the first chapter of the thesis, the concept of Humanism and its fundamental perspective will be concisely presented to make posthumanism more understandable. Humanism, which began in the Middle Ages and called for the emphasis on human value and reason, has evolved in different directions during the 21st century. In this context, posthumanism, by opposing Humanist ideas, essentially declares war on it. Furthermore, in the thesis, the philosophy of posthumanism and its existence in fiction will be discussed. Then, relevant keywords such as cyborgs and cybernetics will be utilized to provide a more comprehensive understanding of posthumanism. Posthumanism and transhumanism are two confusing terms that create ambiguity. In order to distinguish between the two concepts, briefly, posthumanism and transhumanism will be briefly compared. The chapter proceeds to explore the principles of posthumanism, drawing on key theorists such as Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, Pramod K. Nayar, and Rosi Braidotti. It will also argue that posthumanism's emphasis on decentering the human subject and redefining life resonates with the Gothic's interrogation of boundaries and otherness. The connection between the gothic novel and posthuman novel is going to be put in discourse by explaining the process of the evolution of the gothic novel into the posthuman novel in this chapter.

The second chapter provides a deep examination of Gothic literature, focusing on its key themes such as the sublime, the uncanny, and the transgression of natural and moral boundaries. It explores how Shelley's work embodies these elements, particularly through Victor Frankenstein's defiance of natural order in his creation of

life, which leads to existential and ethical turmoil. This chapter also contextualizes Mary Shelley's literary life and the novels she wrote, as well as *Frankenstein's* differences. Moreover, Shelley's work will be read within the Gothic tradition, highlighting its innovations and lasting influence. Additionally, Shelley's engagement with Gothic fiction, and how her personal experiences and intellectual environment shaped the novel's themes, positions *Frankenstein* as both a product of its time and a transformative work that pushed the boundaries of Gothic literature.

The third chapter will include Jeanette Winterson's literary life in general, the novels she wrote, and her writing process for *Frankissstein*. The chapter will examine the narrative's dual timelines, which juxtapose Mary Shelley's historical context with a speculative future dominated by artificial intelligence and robotics. Additionally, the way Winterson draws parallels between the anxieties of the Gothic era and those of the contemporary posthuman era will be presented in a detailed way. Winterson's use of Mary Shelley as a character and historical anchor in her novel adds a metafictional dimension, enriching the novel's exploration of posthuman themes. The other reasons why *Frankissstein* is chosen to be analysed will also be highlighted in this chapter, together with its differences from other posthuman novels written by Jeanette Winterson.

The last chapter will provide a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences between Shelley's novel and its adapted version by Winterson. The chapter will begin by exploring shared thematic concerns, such as the ethical implications of creation, the boundaries of humanity, and the societal consequences of scientific developments. Both novels question responsibility, and the moral dilemmas associated with pushing the limits of knowledge. The whole point of the thesis will be concluded by the end of this chapter to give an idea about what a posthumanist novel is and its connection with the Gothic novel. This section will also explore which Posthuman elements Jeanette Winterson utilized while she was writing the book *Frankissstein* and why she felt the necessity to transform a 19th-century Gothic novel into a 21st-century Posthuman novel. In the 21st century, deconstruction, rewritings, and adaptations of old texts transformed them into new literary works. Winterson's novel has been a subject for more than one thesis so far in accordance with posthumanism. This thesis will specifically be about the transition between the two novels, which belong to different eras. Furthermore, this chapter will investigate how both novels depict the

anxieties surrounding technological intervention in human life. While *Frankenstein*; warns of the dangers of unchecked scientific ambition, *Frankissstein* engages with contemporary debates on robotics, digital immortality, and the merging of human and machine intelligence. Winterson's narrative introduces figures who actively seek to escape biological constraints, embracing a future where artificial intelligence and enhanced bodies redefine existence itself. This section analyzes how Winterson modernizes Shelley's themes by situating them in a world where scientific advancements have made posthumanist ideas more tangible than ever before.

Finally, the conclusion part synthesizes its key findings, emphasizing how the novel of Mary Shelley undergoes a transformation from a gothic novel into a posthuman narrative, reflecting shifting cultural paradigms. By tracing this evolution, the discussion highlights how Jeanette Winterson's novel reinterprets Mary Shelley's exploration of creation, identity, and the human condition through a posthumanist lens. In doing so, Winterson engages with contemporary anxieties surrounding technological advancement, artificial intelligence, and the ethical implications of human enhancement, extending Shelley's foundational questions into the 21st century. Moreover, the conclusion underscores how *Frankissstein* not only revisits but actively reshapes Shelley's themes, presenting a world where the boundaries between human, machine, and non-human entities are increasingly blurred. This shift invites a reconsideration of what it means to be human in an era where scientific progress challenges the traditional definitions of life, selfhood, and consciousness. Ultimately, this part demonstrates how Winterson's work contributes to broader discussions on *posthumanism*, offering a literary space in which humanity's evolving relationship with technology can be critically examined. *Frankissstein* compels readers to confront the ethical and existential dilemmas posed by the posthuman future. In doing so, it reshapes the perspectives on human existence, technology, and the changing dynamics between humanity and the non-human world.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Background of Posthumanism

Posthumanism is a complex and evolving philosophical framework that challenges the traditional understanding of what it means to be human. It challenges all forms of human-centered viewpoints by rejecting the idea of a strict, hierarchical divide between humans and nonhuman entities. Anthropocentrism, which stems from the Enlightenment, is a framework that positions humans as the central focus of value, meaning, and action, asserting their uniqueness and dominance over animals, machines, and nature. Such a worldview has historically legitimized the oppression and exploitation of nonhuman beings by reinforcing a rigid separation between ‘human’ and ‘other.’ On the contrary, posthumanism disrupts this hierarchical order by highlighting interconnectedness and the intertwined agency of human and nonhuman entities. Başak Ağın, who has conducted various academic studies in the field of *posthumanism*, states that “With its insistent emphasis on the blurring boundaries between the human and nonhuman, posthumanism is intrinsically disanthropocentric” (14). By doing so, posthumanism questions the superiority of humans and advocates for a more egalitarian ontology, where all forms of existence, whether organic, synthetic, or inert, interact within intricate webs of being.

It cannot be disregarded that *posthumanism* and *transhumanism* are two confusing terms, creating ambiguity even though their purpose is different. Compared to posthumanism, transhumanism is a future-oriented philosophy that sees the human body not as a finished product, but as something that can be improved through technology. Rather than accepting the limitations of natural existence, transhumanism wishes to overcome them through scientific intervention, aiming to push the boundaries of what it means to be human. In contrast to the pluralistic worldview of *posthumanism*, transhumanist discourse often gravitates toward an idealized notion of progress and perfection. According to Wolfe, transhumanism can be seen “as an intensification of humanism” (xv). Instead of rejecting humanism, transhumanism expands on its ideas by using technology to redefine what it means to improve or perfect the human being. While classical humanism defined the ‘ideal’ individual within rigid social and biological frameworks, such as gender, race, and religion,

transhumanism shifts this focus toward the technological realm. In this sense, *transhumanism* promotes the evolution of humans into a technologically augmented being, namely, into a modern cyborg.

In that case, instead of defining *posthumanism* as a state in which humanity ceases to exist, it is supposed to be understood as a theoretical approach that reconfigures the boundaries of human identity and agency. As implied, “While the ‘post’ in the term ‘posthuman’ emphasizes the end of the conventional understanding of humanity, the ‘post’ in *posthumanism* refers to the end of the problematic conception of humanism” (Ağın 36). The quote draws a vital distinction between the posthuman as a concept and posthumanism as a critical framework. The distinction here is crucial in the sense that it emphasizes *posthumanism* is not a rejection of humanity itself, but rather a deconstruction of the ideological structures that have privileged human exceptionalism. Thus, as Luca Valera suggests, one of the aims of *posthumanism* is to maintain “a progressive elimination and fluidization of differences” (483). In its underlying principles, *posthumanism* seeks to dismantle the hierarchical systems that position humans at the top of the ontological order, promoting a more interconnected and egalitarian understanding of life and human nature, even though the 21st-century world is still anthropocentric. In order to alter and transform this order to some extent, posthumanism has become one of the most significant theories of contemporary times. Humans have started to open their eyes since the Second World War paved the way for the world’s transition into a postmodern period. Antonie Marie Bodley implies that “With the postmodern era, quite the backlash arose against the imperialist attitudes of traditional Western humanist thinking” (6) since *posthumanism* emerged in the postmodern era of the late 20th century.

Since posthuman theory embraces a broad spectrum of indispensable ideas, from the critique of human exceptionalism to the ethical implications of technology, it will not be wrong to say that its contemporary relevance has been shaped by the contributions of prominent scholars from different fields, such as Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, Rosi Braidotti, and Pramod K. Nayar. In the first place, Donna Haraway, whose *Cyborg Manifesto* (1985) has been foundational, interrogates the destabilization of boundaries between organism and machine. Her essay dismantles binary oppositions such as human-machine and natural-artificial by proposing the

cyborg as a hybrid entity that transcends these categories. Even though Haraway does not explicitly say that she is a posthumanist, her ideas and works are equal to other posthumanist thinkers.

Following that, N. Katherine Hayles, who has been one of the significant voices in the cybernetics area, emphasizes the ontological implications of human-technological symbiosis. In *How We Became Posthuman* (1999), she criticizes the disembodiment of information in technoculture while foregrounding the materiality of cognition. Thereafter, Rosi Braidotti draws attention to Deleuzian philosophy and feminist theory, and she advances a materialist posthumanism that emphasizes nomadic subjectivity. Her work, *The Posthuman* (2013), explores the intersections of posthumanity, arguing for a radical reconfiguration of subjectivity beyond traditional humanist frameworks. Braidotti criticizes the techno-utopianism of transhumanism, advocating for an ethical posthumanism that considers non-human life and environmental sustainability as well.

Pramod K. Nayar is a prominent scholar in the *posthumanism* field, who is especially known for his book *Posthumanism*. Nayar articulates his views on posthumanism in the following way: “The radical decentring of the traditional sovereign, coherent and autonomous human to demonstrate how the human is always already evolving with, constituted by and constitutive of multiple forms of life and machines” (Posthumanism 11). Nayar suggests that humans are always evolving alongside and through relationships with machines and other life forms. As much as humans contribute to the formation of these entities, they are also shaped by them. Decentering on the human is a key idea in posthumanism, which sees the human not as separate but as part of a larger, interconnected system.

Fundamentally, *posthumanism* does not regard humans as a singularly central entity but rather situates them within a network of relations that include technology, nature, animals, and other forms of life. Just like Joanna Österblom suggests, “the human, meaning the white, European, male, did not get to persist unquestioned as the norm” (36). Österblom emphasizes that the dominant image of the human no longer goes unchallenged. Critical theories, just like *posthumanism*, question and deconstruct this idea, exposing how it excludes vast groups of beings and reinforces unequal power structures. The quote reminds that “human” has never been a neutral or universal term.

Certain people have marginalized others; however, that assumption is being redefined. Human beings are never truly superior or independent in the absolute sense.

A certain shift in the world's perspective challenges humanist traditions that emphasize human dominance over the natural world; instead, it promotes a relational ontology in which human existence is inseparable from its material and technological surroundings. In this sense, *posthumanism* does not merely predict a dystopian future where humans are replaced or subordinated by machines; rather, it reimagines how humans evolve with their environments and technological innovations. As Nayar emphasizes,

Posthumanism on the one hand merely refers to an ontological condition in which many humans now, and increasingly will, live with chemically, surgically, and technologically modified bodies and/or in close conjunction with machines and other organic forms (such as body parts from other life forms...) (12).

This assertion highlights the ongoing transformation of the human body and consciousness in response to scientific and technological advancements, demonstrating that posthumanism is not a speculative phenomenon but it is a present and continuing reality.

Beyond the physical and biological transformations that posthumanism acknowledges, it also reconfigures the philosophical and ethical dimensions of what it means to be human. As Nayar further states, "Posthumanism, on the other hand, and especially in its critical avatar, is also a new conceptualization of the human" (13). The notion of rethinking humanity goes beyond technological enhancements, addressing a profound shift in how human identity, agency, and subjectivity are conceptualized in the context of both technological advancements and ecological concerns. Thus, posthumanism challenges the traditional frameworks of Humanism by urging a reconsideration of the essence of what it means to be human, pushing for a more inclusive and expansive understanding of the role of human beings in today's world. Rather than viewing humans as separate or superior to nonhuman entities, posthumanism posits a radical shift towards relationality, where humans are indeed seen as part of a larger, interconnected network of all beings and systems.

Such transformation inevitably necessitates a reevaluation of ethical systems, especially in terms of how humans engage with and relate to nonhuman entities,

whether they are animals or machines. In this context, the ethical implications of posthumanism extend to questions of animal rights, environmental sustainability, and the rights of artificial intelligences all of which challenge deeply ingrained assumptions about human superiority and dominion. Furthermore, Griffin expands on this idea by defining posthumanism as “a worldview and moral position that no longer regards the human as at the centre of the universe and as the dominant and determining being... Posthumanism stresses the interrelation between human, machine, animal, and environment” (Griffin 136). This reconceptualization urges a departure from anthropocentric models and envisions a world where all forms of life exist in dynamic interdependence. By rejecting hierarchical thinking, posthumanism encourages a more peaceful view, one that emphasizes cooperation and symbiosis rather than competition and domination over other beings.

In practical terms, the posthuman perspective has profound implications for how humanity approaches issues such as climate change, technological development, and the understanding of intelligence. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of all life forms, *posthumanism* advocates for a more ethical relationship between humans and the world around them. It also invites a rethinking of the roles that technology and nature play in shaping human identity, urging them to reconsider the limits of human agency and the possibilities that emerge when boundaries between humans, animals, and machines are blurred. In doing so, posthuman theory not only criticizes anthropocentrism but also calls for a more holistic vision of existence, one that transcends traditional separations and embraces the complexity of interdependent life. It provides a framework for a future where ethical considerations extend beyond the human realm, promoting sustainability, equality, and mutual respect for all forms of life.

Posthumanism is often regarded as an umbrella term in the academic world encompassing a variety of specific theoretical approaches, including cybernetics and cyborg studies. These approaches share a common interest in the dissolution of traditional boundaries between the human, machine, and the nonhuman, each exploring the intersection of biology, technology, and identity. Cyborgs, for instance, are entities that combine human biological elements with technological structures, thereby challenging conventional notions of the human body and its limitations. The term was coined by Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline, who present the idea that “For

the exogenously extended organizational complex functioning as an integrated homeostatic system unconsciously, we propose the term ‘Cyborg’” (27). Hybridization is deeply informed by cybernetics, which is a multidisciplinary field that emerged as a way to study and control communication and connectivity between biological and artificial systems. Cyborgs inherently embody a hybridization of contrasts, existing simultaneously in the realms of reality and fiction; therefore, a cyborg can be described as a being composed of opposing forces.

Cybernetics has played a foundational role in advancing technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and biotechnology, all of which are central to and connected with posthumanist thought. For the first time ‘cybernetics’ was introduced by Norbert Wiener in his *Cybernetics: or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (1961). He says that “We have decided to call the entire field of control and communication theory, whether in the machine or the animal, by the name Cybernetics” (11). Wiener and one of his colleagues coined the term to describe this new field. He is saying in this quote that cybernetics is the science of how living beings and machines regulate themselves and respond to their environments. By emphasizing the fluid interaction between human and machine, cybernetics opens new avenues for understanding the co-evolution of human and technological forms, and how these hybrid entities might reshape human identity in the future.

One significant aspect of *posthumanism*, particularly as it relates to cyborgs, is the potential for cybernetic organisms to radically alter the trajectory of human life. As cyborgs, which represent the fusion of biological and technological components, gain prominence, there is a growing concern that such advancements could shift the axis of life in ways that may not necessarily be advantageous to humans. The integration of advanced technologies into human bodies could blur the lines between organic and artificial life, leading to ethical and philosophical dilemmas regarding identity, agency, and autonomy. In this context, it is significant to consider how the rise of cyborgs might redefine what it means to be human and whether these changes will serve to enhance or diminish human experience and values.

The discussion is not only theoretical but has practical implications, particularly as technology continues to advance. Humanity is stepping into an era where technologically enhanced bodies, such as prosthetic limbs, are becoming commonplace. Some individuals are even undergoing trials involving brain chips

connected to computers. As a result, human life is becoming more intertwined with technology each day. In the realm of medical technology, for example, the integration of artificial limbs and prosthetics into the lives of people with disabilities demonstrates the potential for cyborgization to enhance human capabilities. As Stefan Herbrechter notes, “Bionic hands, implants for epileptics, 'smart drugs' — these are signs that human prothesization and cyborgization have been advancing” (Herbrechter 35). These technological innovations not only enable individuals to regain lost functions but also challenge our understanding of the boundaries between the human body and external technological systems. As the integration of cybernetic elements into the human body becomes increasingly common, questions arise about the implications for personal identity, ethics, and the concept of the human as a singular, undivided entity.

Furthermore, the close relationship between science fiction and posthumanism cannot be overlooked. As stated in Başak Ağın’s book, “Science fiction has been chosen primarily because, as a genre, it is inherently conducive to posthumanist inquiries, and secondarily because contemporary modes of life are increasingly shifting toward a structure resembling that of science fiction” (19). As a genre, science fiction often serves as a testing ground for posthumanist ideas, imagining futures where technology has transformed the human condition in profound and sometimes unsettling ways. The speculative nature of science fiction allows for the exploration of potential scenarios where cyborgs and other hybrid beings challenge traditional human-centric frameworks. This genre, in turn, encourages posthumanist inquiry by providing a platform for questioning the limits of human nature and the possibilities that emerge when humanity embraces technological augmentation. In essence, posthumanism, through its exploration of cybernetics and cyborgs, challenges our conventional understanding of the human body and mind, opening up new possibilities for both enhancement and ethical complexity.

As technology continues to advance day by day, the boundaries between human and machine will become increasingly blurred, forcing society to confront new questions about what it means to be human in an age of artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and cybernetic integration. To fully comprehend posthumanism, it is crucial to first understand the philosophical foundation of humanism. Humanism, which emerged during the Renaissance period, marked a pivotal shift in how humanity, who had thought God, and the church were at the center. The Renaissance brought the

idea of perceiving humanity once again and its place within the world. This intellectual movement emphasized the centrality of human beings, focusing on human potential, reason, and the capacity for individuality. Humanism provided a lens through which individuals began to see the world as a place governed by a selfish hierarchy, where humans occupied the highest place, often at the expense of nature and other nonhuman entities. In such a worldview, humans were perceived as superior to the natural world, and they saw nature as a resource to be controlled and manipulated to meet human needs. In short, human beings were seen as masters of nature. As a result, humanism contributed to the rise of anthropocentrism, the belief that humans are the central and most important beings in the universe, and that all other forms of existence are measured against human understanding and experience.

In classical periods, people could only attain eternity through God. In order to make themselves eternal, men began to construct an afterlife. They positioned themselves about the existence of a God who placed the human at the center. With the rise of science, people began to believe that many things once attributed to God could actually be explained through rational inner dynamics, and thus, the Enlightenment era began. From that point on, men began to see both themselves and science as the means to achieve immortality, and he glorified science. They began to think in Cartesian dualities: nature/culture, mind/body, male/female. This marks the birth of the humanist subject.

The Renaissance's embrace of humanism opened a door for the elevation of human reason and intellect as the defining attributes of what it means to be human. Kopnina points out that "Humanism, the cultural movement that gained prominence in the Renaissance, refers to the perceived duty to promote human welfare above other objectives" (1). Reason became the hallmark of humanity, and the universe was increasingly interpreted through the lens of human thought. As Nayar observes, "It treats the human subject as the centre of the world, which is influenced by the human's thoughts and actions" (15). This view relegated other forms of life and existence to a secondary status, seen only in terms of their utility or relationship to human needs and desires. The shift towards a human-centered perspective led to the development of Western dominance, where the West came to define itself as superior to the East, particularly during the colonial period. This ideological supremacy was closely linked

to the rise of scientific rationalism, which further entrenched the belief that human intellect had the power to dominate and control the natural world.

The power dynamics that emerged from the humanist worldview were not limited to political and social spheres but also extended to the realm of science, which began to position itself as a force capable of conquering nature through knowledge and technological advancement. In this context, science became a tool of human supremacy, further distancing humanity from its natural origins and reinforcing the notion that humans could, and should, exert control over all aspects of existence. The development of science and technology, viewed through a humanist lens, reinforced the belief in the ability of human intellect to master the world, setting the stage for the emergence of posthumanist thought, which seeks to criticize and challenge these deeply ingrained assumptions.

1.2. Reaction to the Human-Centered Perspective: Posthumanism

Human exceptionalism, which is one of the central tenets of Humanism, laid the groundwork for the dominance of human reason and power over nature. Indeed, it fostered a worldview in which the human subject was seen as the measure of all things, with nature and other forms of life existing only to human needs and desires. Human beings used all beings to increase their life standards as if they were the masters of nature. Posthumanism, as a reaction to the human-centered perspective, seeks to question and dismantle these hierarchical structures, advocating for a more inclusive and interconnected understanding of existence that transcends the limitations.

The chaotic order that emerged from the Renaissance and the rise of Humanism compelled people to think in terms of binary oppositions, categorizing entities into opposing pairs such as civilized versus uncivilized, rational versus irrational, and human versus nonhuman. Humanism, with its unwavering focus on human reason as the ultimate source of knowledge and truth, further entrenched these binary distinctions, positioning anything outside of human reason as dogmatic or inferior. In doing so, humanism not only framed humans as the central and most significant beings but also established hierarchical structures that placed certain groups above others. Within this framework, the Western, white, educated male was elevated to the highest rank, while those who did not fit this ideal were marginalized or excluded. This hierarchical thinking, which permeated both social and intellectual spheres,

contributed to the development of exclusionary norms and discriminatory practices that persist to this day. A striking visual representation of these hierarchical values can be seen in Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man* (1490), also seen as “a symbol of Humanism” by Rosi Braidotti, where the idealized human form is depicted as the perfect measure of proportion and balance. Braidotti explains that in the drawing, a human being is “an ideal of bodily perfection which, in keeping with the classical dictum [...] doubles up as a set of mental, discursive and spiritual values” (13). The human body is portrayed not just as a biological entity, but as a symbol of perfection, balance, and harmony. The ideal body is linked to more than just physical traits; it also represents intellectual, moral, and spiritual ideals. For this reason, Braidotti points out that this visual image of the human is not neutral; it is combined with cultural and ideological meanings.

The drawing symbolizes the humanist vision of the human being as the central figure in the universe, a being whose physical and intellectual capabilities serve as the standard by which all other entities are judged. In this context, anyone or anything that falls outside of this idealized human type, whether due to race, gender, or social status, is either ignored, devalued, or entirely dismissed. The binary opposition and the sense of superiority that emerged within the humanist perspective have fostered a climate of competition, which has often resulted in violence and exclusion. This competitive drive has been particularly evident in colonialism, slavery, and other systems of oppression that sought to elevate certain human groups over others based on perceived innate qualities, showing the problematic side of Humanism, which seeks to prove that all humans are superior to everything else.

As a result, humanism itself has come under scrutiny for the harm it has caused by reinforcing discriminatory ideologies. In response to this, humanism has had to be reevaluated and rethought. Michel Foucault, in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966), predicts the eventual end of the humanist conception of the subject, asserting that “As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end” (Foucault 387). Foucault criticizes the notion of ‘man’ as a stable, permanent category of being, emphasizing that the concept of the human subject is a relatively modern invention that is now being questioned. While human beings have always understood humanist ideals, these concepts are coming to a close in the face of posthumanist critique, which challenges

the very foundations upon which humanism is built. Barret offers a satirical depiction of the ‘Cartesian subject,’ the embodiment of the humanist subject as envisioned by René Descartes. He writes,

Let us imagine the celebrated ‘Cartesian subject.’ He is made in the image of his inventor. He is white, a European; he is highly educated, he thinks and is sensitive, he can probably even think in Latin and Greek; he lived a bit too soon to be a bourgeois, but he has class confidence; he has a general confidence in his existence and power; he is not a woman, not black, not a migrant, not marginal; he is heterosexual and a father . . . It is entirely clear to us that this model of the subject is centred, and unified, around a nexus of social and biographical characteristics that represent power (90).

The quote critiques the traditional conception of the Cartesian subject, the idealized rational individual, who embodies the pinnacle of human thought and represents the core of humanist philosophy. The Cartesian subject is imbued with power, privilege, and cultural dominance, reflecting the social and biographical characteristics that uphold systems of oppression and exclusion. Through this critique, Barret emphasizes how the Cartesian subject is far from universal; rather, it is a construct that reflects the values and power dynamics of a specific group, namely, white, Western, educated, male individuals. This idealized figure of rationality and autonomy excludes women, people of color, migrants, and other marginalized groups from its definition of humanity. By highlighting these exclusions, Barret calls attention to the limitations of humanism and how it perpetuates inequality. *Posthumanism*, in contrast, seeks to challenge these exclusions by questioning the very idea of a singular, idealized human subject and instead advocating for a more inclusive and diverse understanding of human and nonhuman existence.

The binary oppositions and hierarchies established by *Humanism* have had profound implications for how we understand human identity and its relationship to the world. These structures have led to the marginalization of many groups and have contributed to systems of power and oppression. However, as thinkers like Foucault and Barret suggest, the humanist conception of the human subject is increasingly being questioned, giving way to posthumanist ideas that challenge the foundations of *Humanism* and its inherent exclusions. By criticizing the traditional humanist model, *posthumanism* offers an alternative vision of the human, one that is more inclusive, dynamic, and interconnected with the nonhuman world.

The humanist perspective, which placed human welfare and happiness at the forefront, has long been criticized for its exclusionary focus on humanity while disregarding the intrinsic value of plants, animals, and other nonhuman life forms. Humanism's anthropocentric worldview created a stark division between humans and the rest of the natural world, relegating nonhuman entities to a subordinate status. However, with the rapid pace of technological advancements and the integration of artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and cybernetics, this framework has been challenged. These innovations have revealed that human beings do not possess a singular, unified essence that can be neatly classified or rationalized. As such, the boundaries between human and nonhuman entities have become increasingly blurred, suggesting that humans cannot be viewed as isolated, autonomous beings separate from their environment.

Posthumanism arises as a critical response to this shifting paradigm, offering a robust challenge to the traditional humanist framework. At its core, *posthumanism* questions the very concept of humanity, urging a reevaluation of what it means to be human in a world where technology, biology, and the environment are deeply intertwined. Posthumanism is known to reject the dualistic thinking that separates humans from nonhumans, proposing instead an interconnected, non-hierarchical understanding of existence. It calls for a rethinking of identity, subjectivity, and agency, taking into account the influence of technological and ecological forces that shape all life forms.

The growing widespreadness of technology in human life has made it increasingly difficult to maintain the traditional distinctions between human and nonhuman, or even between organic and artificial life. As humans become more intertwined with technological systems, the reference points that once defined humanity are no longer fixed or stable. The body is no longer perceived as a purely biological entity but is increasingly seen as a site of modification and enhancement, where humans and machines coalesce. In this context, posthumanist thought offers a radical alternative, questioning the established norms and providing new frameworks for understanding human existence in the broader world. It acknowledges the complexities of contemporary life, where the lines between the natural, technological, and human realms are increasingly porous, and seeks to explore these interrelations more inclusively and dynamically.

Posthumanism challenges the traditional humanist view of a world structured upon binary oppositions, such as human versus nonhuman or nature versus technology. It posits that such dualities are not reflective of the complexity and interconnectedness of life. As technological advancements continue to accelerate, the once distinct boundaries between the biological and the digital are steadily dissolving. This transformation has profound implications for our understanding of what it means to be human. The increasing integration of technology into everyday life is shifting the focus from humanism, which places humanity at the center of existence, to posthumanism, which seeks to break down the hierarchical distinctions between humans and nonhuman entities. *Posthumanism* reflects a fundamental change in perspective, urging recognition that humans are not isolated or exceptional but are part of a larger, more interconnected system. As posthumanist thought suggests, “an increase in the vigilance, responsibility, and humility that accompany living in a world so newly, and differently, inhabited” (Wolfe 47), it calls for a more responsible and reflective engagement with the world in light of these changes. The posthuman world is characterized by a decentering of humanity, acknowledging that human identity is not fixed but constantly evolving in response to technological, ecological, and cultural shifts. The fluidity further dissolves the notion that humans can be neatly separated from nonhuman entities or that they should be regarded as the pinnacle of existence.

The goal of *posthumanism* is to dispel long-held misconceptions about human exceptionalism, urging a reevaluation of the traditional, anthropocentric framework. It embraces a hybridized vision of humanity, one that is no longer defined solely by biology but by its increasing entanglement with technology, animals, and the environment. In this new paradigm, humans are not isolated from the world around them but are deeply interconnected with it. As *posthumanism* seeks to challenge the hierarchical worldview established during the Renaissance, it promotes an egalitarian approach to existence, where all forms of life, human, and nonhuman, are considered part of a shared, dynamic reality. In *What is Posthumanism?* (2010) Wolfe articulates this shift, explaining that posthumanism seeks to “fully comprehend what amounts to a new reality: that the human occupies a new place in the universe, a universe now populated by what I am prepared to call nonhuman subjects” (47). This idea signifies a profound rethinking of the human’s place in the cosmos, one that moves away from the anthropocentric mindset and towards a more inclusive, relational understanding of

life. By reimagining the human concerning nonhuman entities, posthumanism offers a more holistic perspective that transcends the limitations of traditional humanist thought. It calls for a new way of engaging with the world—one that acknowledges the agency of nonhuman subjects and encourages humility in the face of the rapidly changing landscape of life on Earth.

The term ‘posthuman’ was first articulated in Ihab Hassan’s essay “*Prometheus as a Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture*” (1985), in which he notes, “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” (843). This quote highlights the profound shift from the traditional humanist worldview, which placed humanity at the center of existence, to posthumanism, a philosophical framework that decentrizes human beings and acknowledges a more interconnected and complex reality shaped by technological, ecological, and societal changes. The evolution from humanism to *posthumanism* signals not only the limitations of humanist thought but also the necessity of adapting to the new realities brought about by these transformations. The traditional humanist emphasis on human exceptionalism is increasingly questioned as humans are now capable of integrating with technology in ways once unimaginable. *Posthumanism* envisions a world in which humans are no longer separate from the machines they create, but instead, they evolve alongside artificial intelligence and other technological advancements. The boundary between biology and technology becomes increasingly blurred, with humans and machines becoming intertwined in ways that challenge the long-standing notion of human superiority. In this new era, technology is not merely a tool for human use but has become an integral part of human existence, reshaping the very essence of what it means to be human. This transformation suggests that humans may eventually transcend their biological limitations, altering or even surpassing their current physical and mental states.

Posthumanism further advocates for a redefined concept of rights, where the rights of nonhuman entities, animals, machines, or the environment, are given equal consideration to human rights. The traditional hierarchical view, in which humans are positioned at the top of a pyramid, is replaced by a more egalitarian approach that emphasizes interconnectivity and mutual responsibility. Rosi Braidotti, in her work, describes posthumanism as “a generative tool to help us re-think the basic unit of

reference for the human in the bio-genetic age known as ‘Anthropocene,’ the historical moment when the Human has become a geological force capable of affecting all life on this planet” (5). This idea positions humanity not as the dominant force in the universe but as one among many forces that are capable of shaping the world.

Ron Broglio elaborates on this point by stating that “in posthumanism, the transcendental ladder by which we lift ourselves apart from the muck of the world has been pulled out from under us” (37). This metaphor underscores the destabilization of the traditional humanist notion of transcendence and superiority. The posthuman condition, according to Broglio, eliminates the hierarchical structures that once positioned humans above all other forms of life. As a result, posthumanism calls for a fundamental shift in perspective, moving from a human-centric view of the world to a more systemic, interconnected understanding of existence. This new framework challenges not only our understanding of humanity but also the very structures that have long defined our place in the world, urging us to rethink the relationships between humans, machines, animals, and the environment more inclusively and equitably.

As technology advances, humans are increasingly becoming more integrated with machines, leading to a transformation in human nature itself. The interaction between humans and machines pushes human existence into a new phase, where biological and technological boundaries become increasingly indistinct. Rosi Braidotti draws attention to this shift by referencing Dolly the sheep, a landmark in cloning technology, to highlight the changing dynamics of human-animal relations. She argues, "In many ways, Dolly the sheep is the ideal figuration for the complex bio-mediated temporalities and forms of intimacy that represent the new post-anthropocentric human–animal interaction” (74). Dolly symbolizes the profound changes in how humans now view their relationship with other living beings, particularly as technological advancements in biology blur the lines between species. This example illustrates how human engagement with technology creates new forms of hybridity and intimacy between human and nonhuman life, redefining both human identity and ethical considerations.

Similarly, Donna Haraway’s work challenges the dichotomies traditionally held in humanist thinking. She states, “The dichotomies between mind and body, animal and human, organism and machine, public and private, nature and culture, men and women, primitive and civilized are all in question ideologically” (163). Haraway’s

quote emphasizes how *posthumanism* confronts and deconstructs these rigid oppositions, encouraging a more fluid and interconnected understanding of existence. By questioning such distinctions, *posthumanism* allows for a rethinking of boundaries and relationships between human and nonhuman entities, as well as between nature and technology. This breakdown of binaries is central to posthumanist thought, which challenges the hierarchical ordering that *humanism* is traditionally enforced.

Posthumanism promotes an inclusive and comprehensive worldview, one that emphasizes fundamental rights and freedoms for all beings, human and nonhuman alike. It calls for a dismantling of the idea that humans are superior to any other entity, advocating for the equality of humans with all other life forms. This perspective aligns with the posthuman critique of humanist doctrines, which have historically upheld a hierarchical order not only between humans and the rest of the natural world but also among humans themselves. *Posthumanism* rejects the structures that elevate particular human groups, such as Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and male, while marginalizing others. In doing so, it challenges the assumptions embedded in traditional gender norms and identity concepts that have been idealized within the humanist framework.

Furthermore, *posthumanism* goes beyond merely addressing the hierarchical treatment of human beings and their counterparts in nature. It rejects the idealization of fixed identities and embraces a more fluid conception of personhood. In contrast to humanism, which often imposes rigid categories on individuals, posthumanism emphasizes the relational dynamics among humans, machines, robots, and cyborgs, highlighting the diversity created by these interactions. It focuses on how these relationships contribute to the creation of new forms of being and identity that transcend the boundaries of the human form, creating opportunities for new expressions of freedom, equality, and connection in a rapidly changing world. Through this, *posthumanism* offers a more inclusive approach that allows for multiple identities and experiences, in contrast to the limited and exclusionary perspectives traditionally upheld by humanism.

For centuries, humankind has maintained the perception of itself as superior to any non-human entity, leading to an arrogant disregard for the interconnectedness of life and the environment. This hubris mindset has resulted in the exploitation and degradation of nature while simultaneously fostering a sense of entitlement over other

living beings. Unfortunately, this arrogance persists, with humanity remaining largely unaware that such behavior could ultimately lead to its downfall. In this context, the binary oppositions that have historically defined human existence, such as nature versus culture, human versus nonhuman, and mind versus body, have led to the systemic oppression of those deemed inferior. The constructed idea of human superiority has perpetuated these hierarchies, often with devastating consequences for both the environment and other forms of life. Despite this history of dominance, humans have always been inextricably connected to non-human entities, particularly through their relationship with technology. Ihab Hassan argues in his article “Prometheus as a Performer” (1977) that this relationship is not a recent phenomenon: “There is nothing supernatural in the process leading us to a posthumanist culture. That process depends mainly on the growing intrusion of the human mind into nature and history, on the dematerialization of life and the conceptualization of existence” (835). This quote underscores the idea that the evolution of human existence and thought has always been intertwined with the non-human world, particularly through the lens of technological and conceptual advancements. These developments have been key to shaping the trajectory of human progress, leading to a point where the boundaries between humanity and technology are becoming increasingly blurred. As technology continues to advance, the traditional distinctions between human and nonhuman realms are eroding, prompting a reexamination of what it means to be human.

To free humanity from the delusion of superiority, it is essential to abandon the pursuit of metaphysical ideals that place humans at the center of the universe, as well as the belief in human perfection. The traditional humanist framework, which has long been rooted in these ideals, must be critically reevaluated. As Rosi Braidotti notes, the shift toward posthumanism is not just a theoretical abstraction but an inevitable consequence of humanity's evolving relationship with the world around it:

How could the Humanities fail to be affected by the posthuman condition? The dislocations of the discursive boundaries and categorical differences triggered respectively by the explosion of humanism ... causes an internal fracture within the Humanities that cannot be mended just by goodwill (143).

In this sense, *posthumanism* does not merely challenge existing humanist paradigms; it causes an irreversible rupture within intellectual traditions that have long upheld humanism as the foundation of knowledge and self-understanding.

The posthuman condition demands that humanity adapt to the transformative effects of technological, biological, and ecological change. As traditional humanist ideas are increasingly questioned and redefined, the rigid structures that have governed human thought and identity are being dismantled. In this new era, posthumanism offers a framework that encourages humans to see themselves as part of a larger, interconnected system, rather than as isolated, superior beings. By embracing this shift, humanity can begin to move beyond the constraints of anthropocentrism and reconsider its role in the broader web of life, paving the way for a more inclusive and sustainable future.

1.3. From Gothic Fiction to Posthuman Fiction

Gothic literature is a genre that merges elements of horror, romance, mystery, and the supernatural, creating a powerful imaginative space where human desires and uncertainties are explored. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Gothic literature is defined as “pertaining to a genre of fiction originating in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, marked by gloomy settings, supernatural elements, and an atmosphere of terror and mystery” (OED). Emerging during a time of intense socio-political transformation, particularly during the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution, the Gothic genre responded to anxieties about science, religion, identity, and the unknown. Its narratives often unfold within decaying castles, desolate landscapes, or labyrinthine interiors, spaces that reflect psychological and societal decay. Fred Botting emphasizes that “Gothic writing emerges as a site where boundaries between the natural and the supernatural, the real and the imagined, the rational and the irrational are tested and transgressed” (8).

The genre’s early roots can be traced to Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), often regarded as the first Gothic novel. Walpole’s text introduced many of the tropes that would come to define the Gothic tradition: the haunted structure, the persecuted heroine, ancestral curses, and the blending of rationality with superstition. The genre evolved significantly through later works by authors such as Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker, and Edgar Allan Poe. In the following years, these writers deepened Gothic’s engagement with terror, the uncanny, and the sublime, emphasizing not only external horrors but also the internal

psychological turmoil of their characters. In addition to its narrative devices, the Gothic engages with philosophical and cultural tensions. As Nina Rowe notes,

The Gothic was born in the humanist circles of Renaissance Italy where it was imagined as a necessary temporal, aesthetic, and ethnic construct to connect the art and learning of antiquity with that of its revival in the Renaissance through a newly imagined 'middle' age" (237).

Here, Gothic is understood not merely as a literary style but as an ideological construct, mediating between historical epochs and cultural values. It embraces the grotesque and the irrational defiance of the Enlightenment's faith in reason, thereby creating a discursive space in which alternative forms of knowledge, experience, and identity may be explored.

The Gothic has also been associated with a sense of the barbaric or the primitive. As Longueil states, "One may say generally, then, that in English of the eighteenth century, the adjective 'Gothic' is employed as a definite and recognized synonym for barbarous" (455). This perception underscores the Gothic's longstanding tension with dominant cultural narratives. Gothic fiction often resists the progressive, ordered ideals of modernity by reintroducing chaos, superstition, and the supernatural as destabilizing forces. These forces are not just narrative devices but symbolic representations of what Western rationalism attempts to suppress: emotion, the unconscious, death, and the inhuman.

At its core, the Gothic explores fear, isolation, madness, and the disintegration of identity. Its protagonists are frequently situated at the margins of society, outcasts, monsters, or visionaries, whose encounters with supernatural or psychological forces undermine their sense of reality. These figures are often torn between desire and repression, reason, and irrationality, the natural and the unnatural. The Gothic's preoccupation with such liminal states allows it to delve deeply into the unconscious mind, exposing the darker recesses of human nature and questioning the integrity of the self. Whether through haunted mansions, secret laboratories, or metaphysical hauntings, the genre reveals the fragility of the human subject and the porous boundary between the known and the unknowable. Gothic has endured and adapted across literary periods and genres, influencing modern horror, science fiction, speculative fiction, and even contemporary realism. In particular, the rise of technology in the late

20th and early 21st centuries has expanded the gothic genre's boundaries, incorporating cybernetic anxieties and posthuman transformation into its narrative scope.

In this way, Gothic literature serves as a crucial precursor to posthuman fiction. Both genres interrogate what it means to be human, yet they approach this question through different, though complementary, aesthetic lenses. While Gothic horror often reflects the terror of becoming something other, monstrous, or less than human, posthuman fiction grapples with the implications of evolving beyond biological and humanist boundaries. The posthuman condition, where the human merges with technology, interfaces with machines, and becomes entangled with nonhuman agencies, echoes the Gothic fascination with liminality, hybridity, and transformation. The Gothic's thematic obsession with transgression, scientific, or metaphysical, opens a space for posthumanist critique because "Gothic fiction is a literature of the unconscious, of the repressed, of the unspoken and the unspeakable" (Punter 421). This notion closely corresponds to one of the fundamental tenets of posthumanism, namely the commitment to ontological equality among all forms of life. Just as Gothic protagonists often suffer the consequences of overreaching ambition or forbidden knowledge, as in Winterson's novel, posthumanist narratives examine the ethical boundaries of technological and biological innovation. The hubris of the human subject, once directed toward the supernatural, now toward artificial intelligence, gene editing, or synthetic life, remains a central narrative concern.

Furthermore, the affective power of the Gothic genre, its ability to elicit fear and wonder, mirrors the emotional and philosophical disorientation that often accompanies posthuman experience. Both genres force us to confront the limits of comprehension and the unsettling possibility that the 'human' may no longer be a stable category. Through their shared motifs of transformation, monstrosity, and ambiguity, Gothic and posthuman literatures challenge normative understandings of identity, embodiment, and agency. In this sense, the Gothic does not merely precede posthumanism; it actively informs it as well. The tradition of Gothic fiction, with its deep interrogation of otherness and disruption, provides the thematic and conceptual groundwork upon which posthuman narratives build. As humanity continues to redefine itself through machines, environments, and nonhuman, the Gothic's legacy

persists and its shadows linger in the speculative spaces of posthuman thought. Literature, then, becomes a space where this convergence of the Gothic and the posthuman is most vividly explored.

Posthumanist fiction not only reflects societal fears and aspirations but also catalyzes the reimagining of the future. By presenting narratives where the traditional boundaries between human and non-human, life, and machine, are dissolved or transformed, these works challenge readers to rethink deeply ingrained notions about humanity's place in the cosmos. As Braidotti emphasises, "The posthuman condition urges us to think critically and creatively about who and what we are actually in the process of becoming" (12). Such stories emphasize the interconnection of all forms of life, whether biological or artificial, and explore the potential for new ways of living and coexisting. In an era characterized by rapid technological and environmental shifts, posthumanist fiction functions as both a mirror and a guide. It captures the hopes and anxieties surrounding the unknown future while offering alternative visions of what the future could be. This genre encourages individuals to imagine new possibilities for existence, often questioning the concept of human exceptionalism, which has historically placed humanity above all other beings.

In this speculative framework, posthumanist fiction challenges the conventional idea that human identity is fixed, defined by certain qualities such as rationality, moral superiority, or dominance over nature. Rather, it posits that humanity is a fluid and evolving concept, subject to change through the integration of technology and the redefinition of what it means to be human. As the lines between human and non-human subjects blur, these stories make the reader reflect on the ethical implications of emerging technologies, particularly the creation and manipulation of life. The blending of human and non-human entities, often facilitated through technological advancements, such as artificial intelligence, cybernetic enhancements, or genetic modification, poses crucial questions about the boundaries of personhood, identity, and autonomy.

Moreover, posthumanist fiction scrutinizes the intended or unintended consequences of scientific progress, revealing the ethical dilemmas inherent in humanity's pursuit of technological mastery. It asks whether we, as a species, are prepared for the implications of our creations, and whether such advancements will ultimately enhance or diminish the quality of life. Through speculative worlds, these

stories help explore the consequences of a future shaped by human intervention, inviting reflection on the ethical responsibilities that come with such power. The genre also confronts readers with questions about the moral obligations we have to other forms of life, both biological and artificial, and the broader environment. Posthumanist fiction offers an invaluable platform for engaging with the complexities of a posthuman future, providing insights into the ethical and philosophical challenges we may face as humanity evolves alongside machines, artificial intelligence, and other non-human entities. As we navigate the challenges of the posthuman era, literature will continue to shape and reflect the evolving nature of existence, pushing the boundaries of human experience and prompting crucial dialogues about what it means to be alive in a world increasingly defined by its technological, environmental, and biological interconnections.

Posthumanist stories frequently envision futures where the human body undergoes enhancements and alterations, leading to profound questions about the essence of identity and the role of physical form. Through speculative narratives, posthumanist fiction delves into the ethical, philosophical, and existential dilemmas that arise from a world reshaped by technologies such as artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and significant environmental changes. These stories mirror societal fears, such as the potential loss of human agency or the unintended consequences of technological advancements, while simultaneously challenging readers to reconsider humanity's position within an interconnected and rapidly evolving reality. By presenting alternative ways of living and being, posthumanist fiction creates a space for reflecting on the profound transformations shaping the future of both individuals and societies.

Additionally, posthumanist fiction can be viewed in dialogue with gothic literature, as both genres share a deep exploration of boundaries, particularly the boundary between the human and the non-human. Gothic works are indeed highly suitable for posthuman readings, because when reading a Gothic novel, the readers naturally enter a state of suspension of disbelief. Just like monsters that can talk and feel emotions, anything becomes possible in a Gothic narrative. In Mary Shelley's work, the creature is more prominent than the scientist who created him. This, as posthumanism argues, transforms the hierarchy of beings; humans can no longer be considered the superior species.

While the gothic genre originates from different historical contexts and deals primarily with themes such as terror, the supernatural, and moral decay, both gothic and posthumanism share an interest in the fear and uncertainty that arise when traditional notions of identity and existence are disrupted. Gothic fiction often presents the uncanny, the monstrous, and the sublime as manifestations of a fractured or unstable sense of self. In similar ways, posthumanist fiction questions what it means to be human in an era where the boundaries between the organic and the technological, the living and the artificial, are increasingly blurred. In the gothic tradition, the monstrous represents a deviation from the expected, challenging the stability of human form and identity. The fear of the unknown and the confrontation with the "other" often lead to existential crises within characters. Posthumanist fiction, likewise, confronts anxieties around the dissolution of human boundaries, questioning the implications of creating or merging with artificial life forms. The fear of loss of control or the emergence of unintended consequences is central to both genres, making them particularly suited for exploring themes such as transhumanism, artificial intelligence, and the impact of technological advancement on human identity.

The fusion of gothic and posthumanist themes reveals deeper concerns about the erosion of human autonomy and the instability of identity in a world where the boundaries between the self and other are no longer clear. This intersection encourages reflection on the ethical consequences of scientific progress, the redefinition of what it means to be human, and the unsettling potential of technology to reshape existence in ways that challenge traditional humanist ideals. Ultimately, posthumanist and gothic fiction both engage with humanity's fear of its transformation, examining the psychological and societal repercussions of a world in which the very essence of what it means to be human is called into question.

CHAPTER TWO

MARY SHELLEY AND POST-GOTHIC FICTION

2.1. Mary Shelley

Mary Shelley, who is regarded as a pioneering voice in the 19th century literary world, a period marked by mass epidemics and astonishing scientific progress, profoundly influenced the era's engagement with science, identity, and mortality, holds a significant place in literary history which is recognized not only for her authorship of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* but also for her extensive contributions as a writer and thinker whose influence extends beyond Gothic fiction. Her first work is called *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817), which was influenced by her mother Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark* (1796). Being the daughter of William Godwin, an anarchist poet of his time, and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, who is considered to be one of the pioneers of feminism, greatly contributed to Mary Shelley's upbringing in a literary environment even after their deaths. Carlson puts forward that "Legend has it that young Mary's favorite reading spot was on the grave of her mother [...]" (1). Tragically, after her mother's death, William Godwin eventually remarried and started a publishing business with his new wife, yet they never managed to escape financial hardship. Mary had a problematic relationship with her stepmother and often distanced herself from home to hide inside her world and write.

Shelley did not even receive proper formal education, as Miranda Seymour informs in her book "Mary's early education took a form that was unconventional for the era. She was self-taught to a considerable extent, her autodidactic hunger for learning fueled by access to her father's library" (2), however, there was an interest towards her literature "not just as the daughter of famous radicals and wife of one of the most famous Romantic poets, but as a complex and significant figure in her own right, whose life and writings illustrate the complexities and difficulties for women of combining domestic with creative work..." (Doyle 1). Because her parents were in the literary world, their house was visited by various intellectuals, including Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Mary's world has always been filled with books and literature since her early childhood, greatly influencing her literary life.

Her bond with the Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley played a crucial role in both her personal life and literary career. When Mary was fifteen, she was romantically affected by Percy Bysshe Shelley, a prominent Romantic poet who was already married. Although he came from an aristocratic background, Percy had radical views about the world. He was an anarchist and an atheist. His beliefs resulted in his expulsion from Oxford University and created a rift with his family. Being already married when he met Mary Shelley, they escaped, and Mary became pregnant. Just as supposed, their relationship was marked by intellectual collaboration between them. As Johnson mentions, “in the shadow of her parents, her husband, and her work, Mary Shelley thus lived the Romantic period through its folds and margins” (4).

Even though the couple had been through numerous personal and financial hardships, just like everybody else, Mary and Percy Shelley remained deeply connected through their shared intellectual and literary pursuits, continuously inspiring and challenging one another as well as their readers. Percy Shelley recognized his wife’s exceptional intellect and creativity, and he actively encouraged her writings and fostered an inspiring environment that nurtured her literary ambitions day by day. Their endless discussions on poetry, philosophy, and the emerging scientific advancements played an important role in shaping Mary Shelley’s development as a writer. At the same time, the period that they lived in was an era in which technology and science succeeded to gain recognition. It can be seen that both Percy Shelley and the period influenced most of her writings, especially the intricate themes and philosophical depth of *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818), yet she consistently applied her unique narrative style and intellectual perspectives in all of her writings:

“The fact that Mary’s monster-tale was more successful than anything written by her parents or her husband, or that Godwin’s idealistic hopes for the redistribution of wealth in society served as a pretext for him to live off Percy’s money, did not change the value system by which the writings in themselves were judged. Mary, however, had to adjust herself (unconsciously or consciously) to these lived discrepancies and to the contradictions embodied by those surrounding her. Some of these contradictions and discrepancies found their way into her writing” (Johnson 58).

After Percy’s death in 1822, Mary Shelley dedicated much of her life to safeguarding and promoting his literary legacy to his readers. Bennett says that “After

P. B. Shelley drowned in 1822, she reentered the London literary world in 1823 alone and on a different footing from when she had left it" (ix). She encouragingly edited and published his poetry and prose, ensuring that his work remained accessible and influential to those who followed his steps in the literary world because "she had lived with him during the period of his greatest poetic achievement; had a better understanding of his work than most of his contemporaries; and had sole access to many of his unpublished literary manuscripts" (Feldman 287). Her efforts as her husband's executor played a crucial role in conveying his reputation; however, this responsibility did not prevent her from continuing to pursue her desire. Despite the devastating loss of her husband and her family members, she had experienced, Mary continued to write extensively, with even greater determination, producing a diverse range of works, including novels, short stories, essays, and biographies. Her literary writings not only engaged with contemporary social, technological, scientific, and philosophical debates of the 19th century but also reflected her ongoing intellectual curiosity, experiences, and emotional depth.

Mary Shelley's career stood out due to her originality, intellect, and engagement with the significant questions of her time. Her "fictions express a reaction against the Promethean radicalism of her husband, and of her father and mother-William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft-as well" (Bratlinger 32). Shelley's ability to merge Gothic elements with scientific curiosity and philosophical thought made her one of the most important figures not only in the 19th century but also in literary history. She "[...] set her five novels following *Frankenstein* in varied locations and eras, spanning the fourteenth to the twenty-first centuries" (Bennett and Curran 8). It is easy to understand that Shelley liked going through genres, even from the title "Prometheus." Harold Bloom mentions that "Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley is responsible for a creative transformation worthy of her prototypical mad scientist, Victor Frankenstein: she reconfigures, recontextualizes, and thus modernizes the myth of Prometheus through a 'tiresome, unlucky ghost story'" (53).

Significant themes in her works, such as identity, grief, and the supernatural, demonstrate both her struggles and her engagement with broader cultural and philosophical concerns, which came from her own life experience. Mary Shelley's exploration of these themes and her imaginative storytelling contributed significantly to the Gothic literary movement. By pushing the boundaries of literary convention,

Mary Shelley established herself, consciously or unconsciously, as a pioneering writer, influencing future generations of novelists, especially those who are interested in science, technology, and the supernatural. Her legacy endures not only through her own body of work but also through her contributions to the continued study of Gothic literature. Through her novels, essays, and other works, Shelley not only influenced the course of 19th-century literature but also, in a way, laid the foundation for ongoing discussions in posthumanist fiction.

Shelley's literary life was firmly established with the publication of *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818), a novel that she had written when she was only eighteen with the fear of putting her name on it due to the difficulties in getting it published because she was a woman, defined her legacy and took its place as a foundational text in Gothic tradition. The introduction was written by Percy Shelley, her lover, leading many people to assume that he was the author of the book. Still, it was only under these circumstances, without using her name, that the novel was able to be published. There was a fear among women to be able to produce a literary work that would shake the world. Gilbert and Gubar put forward that "writing, reading, and thinking are not only alien but also inimical to 'female' characteristics" (8) during that era.

She dared to present herself in the second edition, after the novel was widely admired and became a great success. Shelley wrote this book at a time when women did not have a dominant role in society, and through the book, she gives voice to the era's inner fears and anxieties. Whenever she wanted to run away from the life in which she had lost almost all her family, Shelley just gave birth to her art step by step. Percy Shelley and Mary Godwin's children were born out of wedlock, so the pain Mary felt led to a catastrophe. She lost three of the four children she had given birth to; only her son survived. Her husband drowned in a lake while sailing. Her stepsister committed suicide, then she lost her father, and eventually her friend Lord Byron also passed away. In the end, nearly everyone around her died, whether by suicide or natural causes. It is almost inevitable to overlook that such a miserable life led to her success, alongside her parents' and her husband's connection with literature. Victor Frankenstein, the protagonist of the novel, also creates something innocent, but illegal and unethical. Mary Shelley does it for love, Victor does it for science. In conclusion, Mary was deeply influenced by her own experiences while writing this book. Even

today, the novel is still a subject to literary analysis, especially in science fiction. Deeply rooted in the Gothic literature, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818) places its conventional elements by integrating the Enlightenment rationality and contemporary scientific thought, even using the ancient Greek Titan Prometheus' name, yet, "[t]he fate of her "modern Prometheus" is the contrary of the fate of the mythological liberator depicted in Prometheus Unbound" (Brantlinger 32).

Over time, the novel has become a significant subject to extensive critical analysis, particularly within posthumanist studies and ethical philosophy. Bioethical interpretations explore its progressive examination of creation ethics and the responsibilities of scientific inquiry. The novel's engagement with identity, transgression, and the boundaries of the human aligns closely with posthumanist thought, leading to later discussions on the dissolution of human exceptionalism in the face of technological and biological change. After the success of *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818), Mary Shelley continued to expand her literary career, crafting a diverse collection of novels that include historical, political, and speculative themes. Her *Mathilda* (1819), *Valperga* (1823), *Perkin Warbeck* (1830), and *The Last Man* (1826) emerged as important works of Romantic literature, each of which shows her deep intellectual engagement with history and the complexities of her own experience.

Mary Shelley's novel has increasingly been interpreted through a posthumanist lens, highlighting her as a forerunner to modern inquiries into identity, embodiment, and the ethical boundaries of scientific advancement. Rather than simply celebrating Enlightenment rationalism or Romantic imagination, Shelley questions the hubris embedded in unchecked human ambition. This skepticism aligns with contemporary posthumanist critiques, particularly those that interrogate the instability of human identity and the shifting boundaries between the organic and the artificial. Shelley's creature, formed from disjointed human parts and animated through obscure scientific processes, is often regarded as one of the earliest literary embodiments of the cyborg. Like Donna Haraway's conceptualization of the cyborg as a boundary-transgressing figure that defies fixed categories, Shelley's monster resists conventional labels. It stands as both human and nonhuman, sentient yet socially rejected, thus problematizing simplistic definitions of life and consciousness.

Shelley wrote *Mathilda* in 1819, a haunting and emotionally intense story, echoing the deep personal tragedies and complex family dynamics Mary Shelley experienced in her own life. Isolation, loss, and psychological suffering are also the themes of the novel. The narrative follows a young woman named Mathilda who reconnects with her lost father. Their relationship takes a dark turn when he confesses to having incestuous desires for his daughter. Overcoming with anguish, he eventually dies by suicide. Crushed by grief, Mathilda retreats from society and desperately fades away. It was published in 1959, after Mary's death, due to its provocative subject matter.

Valperga (1823), a historical novel that is set in 14th-century Italy, depicts the rise and eventual downfall of Castruccio Castracani, a Ghibelline military leader. Through this story, Shelley examines themes of political ambition, tyranny, and the struggles faced by women in historical power dynamics. The novel contrasts two central female figures: Euthanasia, a noble woman who is committed to justice and republican ideals, and Beatrice, a mystic whose tragic destiny highlights the subjugation of women in patriarchal societies. By blending historical authenticity with Gothic elements, the novel offers a complex critique of authoritarian rule and the moral dilemmas tied to power and integrity.

Perkin Warbeck (1830) is another historical novel that reimagines the life of its titular character, a claimant to the English throne who asserted that he was Richard of Shrewsbury, one of the missing Princes in the Tower. Through this narrative, Mary Shelley critiques established historical accounts, exploring themes of legitimacy, authority, and political identity. Unlike the dramatic and supernatural elements found in her first novel *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818), *Perkin Warbeck* (1830) remains firmly grounded in historical realism, showing Shelley's research and her interest in the ways political myths are constructed and sustained.

The Last Man (1826) represents a shift back to speculative and apocalyptic themes, establishing itself as one of the earliest examples of dystopian fiction. Set in the late 21st century, the novel depicts a world ravaged by a mysterious plague, leading to the downfall of civilization and the eventual extinction of humanity. The novel's theme may, of course, once again carry echoes of Mary Shelley's painful life. Just when the author's life seems to be going smoothly, an event occurs that disrupts everything, leading the writer to create this novel. "At the moment when Mary Shelley

wrote *The Last Man* (1826), three of her four children had died, her husband Percy Shelley had drowned in a shipwreck, and Byron had just died in Greece” (Johnson 9). As it is seen, writing her novel helped Shelley to express her grief on a universal level. The story follows Lionel Verney, the last surviving human, as he contemplates the fragility of existence and the inevitability of loss. The novel is deeply philosophical, and it serves as both a reflection on grief, drawing from the author’s tragedies, and an engagement with Romantic ideals of individualism and the sublime. The novel also foreshadows later post-apocalyptic, dystopian literature, shaping future discussions on human extinction and the resilience of humanity in the face of uncontrollable forces.

Through these novels, Mary Shelley displayed an impressive ability to navigate and blend multiple literary genres, effortlessly weaving together historical realism and Gothic motifs. Her literary works demonstrate an intellectual engagement with a wide range of themes, including the complexities of identity, the boundaries of human experience, and the profound uncertainties that accompany existence. Her ability to explore the human condition through these diverse lenses gives her the position of a pioneering figure in literary history. She was not only a key contributor to the Gothic literature but also helped lay the groundwork for the development of modern science fiction. Her influence extends far beyond her time, inspiring future generations of writers to handle questions of morality, technology, and the limits of human potential. Through her exploration of both the personal and the universal, Mary Shelley’s legacy remains a cornerstone in the evolution of literature that continues to resonate with readers and scholars.

Mary Shelley made notable contributions to the genre of travel literature with her work *Rambles in Germany and Italy* (1844), in which she provided a rich and insightful account of her travels through post-Napoleonic Europe. Her observations reflect the cultural and political landscape of the time and offer sharp commentary on the shifts occurring during Napoleon's reign. Some readers commented on the book as “it was vigorous, independent, sagacious, charming, the work of a real traveler, a traveler by feeling as well as by experience” (Nitchie 29). Her narrative gives an understanding of the evolving dynamics of the continent, and it highlights the personal and broader socio-political implications of the period.

Beyond her contributions to travel literature, Mary Shelley played a pivotal role in curating and safeguarding the literary legacy of her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Following his untimely death, she undertook the meticulous task of editing and publishing his works, ensuring that his poetic vision and philosophical ideals continued to resonate with future generations. Her efforts solidified Percy Shelley's position within the canon of English Literature but also reinforced her standing as an intellectual figure deeply engaged with literary production and preservation. Through this process, she demonstrated an awareness of authorship, textual authority, and the power of the written word in shaping cultural memory, concepts that remain relevant in contemporary literary discourse, particularly within studies of Posthumanism and the evolving nature of textual transmission.

Despite the rigid constraints and gendered biases that defined the literary landscape of the nineteenth century, Mary Shelley navigated these limitations with remarkable skill and perseverance. Her ability to establish herself as a formidable literary figure in a world dominated by male writers stemmed from her intellectual prowess and her unique engagement with themes of identity and the human condition. Drawing upon her rich personal experiences, her profound engagement with philosophical thought, and her inheritance of a literary tradition shaped by figures such as her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, and her father, William Godwin, Shelley crafted a body of work that extends beyond conventional literary boundaries. Her novels, essays, and editorial endeavors continue to be subjects of extensive scholarly exploration, reflecting an enduring influence that transcends temporal and disciplinary limitations. In particular, her works invite critical inquiry into the intersections of humanity, technology, and ethical responsibility, concerns that resonate deeply within Posthumanist studies.

Mathilda (1819) stands as an intensely personal and controversial text, including the themes of incest, unfulfilled desire, and profound psychological anguish. The novel's exploration of repressed emotions and forbidden love challenged the moral sensibilities of its time, preventing its publication during Shelley's lifetime. Its focus on psychological fragmentation and the destabilization of identity mirrors contemporary posthumanist discussions on the constructed nature of subjectivity and the limits of human agency.

Through her literary evolution, Mary Shelley not only expanded the Gothic genre but also contributed to a broader reimagining of the human experience. Her works challenge traditional conceptions of identity, agency, and mortality, positioning

her as a crucial figure in the development of themes that would later emerge in posthumanist studies. By intertwining the Gothic with philosophical inquiry, Shelley's writing continues to provide fertile ground for contemporary discussions on the boundaries of the human, the implications of technological and biological change, and the existential dilemmas that remain at the core of literature and theory. Shelley's impact on Gothic and posthuman literature continues to be a focus of contemporary critical studies.

2.2. Post-Gothic Fiction

At the beginning of all things, "in the dawn of the 19th century, Europe witnessed the emergence of steam-powered railways" (Encyclopedia Britannica). The train tracks and immensely developing technology influenced Shelley; however, just like everyone else at the time, she was frightened by the rapidly emerging scientific advancements. It was such a huge development, coming from the use of glass and fire to the harnessing of electricity. The discovery of electricity brought a sense of shock and awe, as well as fear. Finally, the scientific explorations of the 19th century made it possible to reshape daily life. Luigi Galvani and Alessandro Volta introduced new theories about electricity and the human body, leading to questions about religious and philosophical understandings of life and death. A human could always incorporate fear into a work of art, and this was exactly what Mary Shelley did during that period. Her anxiety was about what could happen if humans harnessed technology fearlessly and irresponsibly. In this chapter of the thesis, the background of gothic fiction as well as the reason why it is called "gothic" will be mentioned. Then, it will move forward to give details about the basic idea of the thesis: the journey of the gothic novel towards posthuman fiction.

Emerging in the late 18th century and flourishing throughout the 19th century, the Gothic era constructed a complex bridge between Enlightenment rationality and the darker recesses of the human soul, amidst the political, cultural, and scientific transformations sweeping across Europe. It prioritizes evoking emotions of fear and suspense in the reader over detailed characters. Reeve puts his finger on the center of the bridge, saying:

[T]he Gothic was born in the humanist circles of Renaissance Italy where it was imagined as a necessary temporal, aesthetic, and ethnic construct to connect the art and learning of antiquity with that of its

revival in the Renaissance through a newly imagined ‘middle’ age” (237).

The era, or the genre, takes its name from the ancient Germanic tribe known as the Goths, who were assumed to have played a role in the fall of the Roman Empire. The background is given in the quote below:

The term had its inception humbly enough as a Germanic race-name. But because the Goths, being Teutons, conceived and built upon an ideal of beauty foreign to the world they overset; and because mediaeval men, in fashioning their new world, rebuilt it nearer to the Teutonic than the classic heart's desire; and because to Renaissance sceptics the Gothic ideal, wrought in castle and cathedral, seemed dark and thwarted beside the measure of a Parthenon, it came to pass, in the early Renaissance, that the term "gothic" took on a new and colored meaning, a meaning that masked a sneer (Longueil 453).

The community was viewed as uncivilized, and later on, a style of architecture was named after them as a form of criticism. Carlick explains that “the word ‘Gothic’ comes from the Latin Gothicus...” (“A Guide to Gothic Literature”). The relation between gothic and literature began thanks to *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) written by Horace Walpole who was an English writer and politician, however, “[i]n English the real history of ‘Gothic’ begins with the eighteenth century. The word, of course, is to be found before. Chaucer employs the noun, as does Shakespeare. Spenser uses the adjective” (Longueil 453). It was not always very simple to define what a gothic novel is, as Markman Ellis says, “While ‘gothic’ invokes an historical enquiry, ‘novel’ implicitly refers to a literary form; while ‘gothic’ implies the very old, the novel claims allegiance with ‘the new’” (17). Writers like Horace Walpole have made it easier to understand what Gothic novels should be like in terms of the setting and plotline. In his novel *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Walpole used medieval Gothic architecture and its historical setting, and made the genre extremely popular from the 18th century to the present day.

However, Shelley’s novel presents the reader with a uniquely complex creature whose emotional depth and existential crisis challenge the conventional boundaries of character construction within the Gothic tradition, aligning with posthumanist concerns about identity and the essence of humanity. The idea that electricity could bring the dead back to life marked the beginning of modern science fiction. It became the first work to question the conflict between science and ethics. The novel was inspired by the scientific experiments and discoveries of its time. The genre evolved

with the Industrial Revolution and accelerated scientific discoveries responding to the rapidly shifting nature and the universe, and it drew upon medieval aesthetics, ruined castles, and elements of terror to explore themes of decay and the sublime. In time, the gothic novel became a vehicle through which writers, including Mary Shelley, discovered the ethical and emotional implications of scientific progress. Other significant writers are Charlotte Brontë, who wrote *Jane Eyre* (1847), and Emily Brontë, who wrote *Wuthering Heights* (1847). Both of these novels focus on the characters and their psychology, as well as gothic elements. H.G. Wells presented *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) and *The Invisible Man* (1897), exploring themes of science and ethical dilemmas; therefore, he reflected Shelley's concerns about uncontrolled ambition.

Longueil emphasizes in his book that "Gothic romance became, concretely, the romance of the supernatural, and 'Gothic' identified itself with ghastly" (459). Starting with terrifying, supernatural stories, dark atmospheres, and motifs such as dark and haunted castles, the Gothic novel evolved into much more complex themes, such as psychological conflicts, and the blurred lines between reason and madness. This transformation was largely influenced by key figures like Ann Radcliffe, Matthew Lewis, and, most notably, by Mary Shelley. As science continually progressed, these themes reflected the anxieties of humanity's psyche during that era. Later on, Robert Louis Stevenson, who wrote *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), H.G. Wells with his *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896), and Bram Stoker with *Dracula* (1897) continued to blend scientific speculation with Gothic horror, solidifying the Gothic's role in the birth of speculative fiction. In an era in which people are not only afraid of science but also hungry for knowledge, Mary Shelley channels these tensions into her first novel *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818), creating an extraordinary narrative that highlights the risks of overreaching ambition, questions the morality of scientific experimentation, and that reveals the tragic fallout of defying the natural order. The integration of scientific and technological elements into the Gothic novel, beyond its conventional reliance on horror and dark atmospheres, suggests an unconscious evolution toward the posthuman narrative.

Post-Gothic fiction reshapes traditional Gothic conventions, which were there "... to educate the reader's feelings through his identification with the feelings of the characters" (MacAndrew 3), to contemporary technological, cultural, and

philosophical concerns, combining classic Gothic issues with the 21st-century anxieties. Post-Gothic fiction becomes evident in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, shaped by the cultural influences of postmodernism, poststructuralism, and posthuman thought. Fred Botting suggests that “Unlike previous Gothic incarnations, scientific themes are not opposed to spiritual or religious modes of understanding or organising the world” (102). Traditional Gothic figures of haunted houses and monsters are combined with hyperreal environments, challenging the distinction between binary oppositions that were at the center of Modernity. Characterized by nonlinear structures and polyphonic perspectives, post-gothic novels mirror the fragmented self associated with posthumanism. Thanks to such narrative strategies, they challenge conventional understandings of identity. In the beginning, classic gothic structured itself around binary oppositions such as human-monster or culture-nature dichotomies; however, post-gothic fiction creates liminal characters resisting categorization; cyborgs and hybrid beings are good examples of such characters. It does not represent pure otherness or evil; instead, monsters reveal the constructed nature and often embody marginal subjectivities. Post-gothic novels discover biotechnological anxieties, artificial intelligence, and nonhuman agency. The horror no longer resides in the supernatural, but in digital hauntings, algorithmic control, and the biological self, frequently dislocating time, and space, offering cybernetic landscapes.

In a sense, posthuman fiction haunts gothic “...which signifies a writing of excess...” (Botting 1), embracing it openly and keeping it in every cell of its being. Indeed, in reality, humanity has evolved from gothic to a more posthuman, cybernetic being. The reason for this is that most humans use contact lenses to be able to see, and fillings in their teeth. The dresses that are worn by humans are made in factories. For these reasons, literature is also moving towards posthumanism. Posthuman fiction broadens the gothic theme of identity dissolution and offers a deeper critique of characters who are intertwined with technology. Going beyond, posthuman fiction presents a reshaping of the self, questioning canonical beliefs in individuality and human superiority. These novels virtually question the centrality of humanity and its position. In gothic fiction, the monster often represents a being who is repressed or excluded from the norm. Posthuman fiction extends this tradition into new realms by questioning not just the nature of the monster who is othered, but also the nature of humanity itself. The cyborg and artificial intelligence become the subjects who

challenge the human concept. In a way, the cyborg figure becomes a post-gothic, posthuman monster. That is why the roots of posthuman fiction are traced back to the Gothic tradition, carrying it from haunted castles to the realm of the digital world. From now on, the human subject is lost within a labyrinth of information and technological manipulation, both in the real world and in fiction.

2.3. *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*

A common misconception surrounding the novel lies in the true identity of its title character, a confusion that reveals deeper psychological and thematic implications. As Stanley Gold puts forward:

Who is Frankenstein? Whilst it is psychologically appropriate that the name has become synonymous with the monster, it is in fact the name of Victor Frankenstein, the young, although essentially untrained, scientist who in the manner of what Mary Shelley calls 'the modern Prometheus', harbours fantasies of producing a new race which will see him as its creator, transcending the function of God the father and producing a new race of creatures that will walk on earth (106).

The misconception about the true identity of Frankenstein emphasizes the novel's complex exploration of creation as well as sets the stage for a deeper understanding of the relationship between human nature and technological advancements. Considering the current era and the gradually evolving technological world since the beginning of the Enlightenment, it becomes evident that Mary Shelley, through *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818), made remarkably forward-looking predictions, demonstrating even to the 21st century that the boundary between human and technology is far from unbreakable. To expand it further, the themes which were carefully explored in the novel have become increasingly relevant in the technologically advanced world of today, thanks to Shelley's dreams and nightmares during the time when she was with Lord Byron in Genoa. Sian MacArthur mentions that "The result was *Frankenstein*, a story widely appreciated not only for its Gothic sentiment and its Romantic ideology, but also for the significance that it holds as the earliest example of a science fiction narrative" (1).

Mary Shelley could not have known that her predictions would be so impactful in the coming centuries, especially in terms of the posthuman point of view. Still, more than any other gothic novel, *Frankenstein* (1818) has been interpreted as a caution or warning about approaching events of the scientific period because "*Frankenstein* carries weight because in explicitly exploring the potential of actual scientific

experimentation upon humanity, Shelley is moving away from the realms of traditional Gothic and into something new [...]” (MacArthur 2). In a way, after its publication, the novel sparked a never-ending question about the ethical implications of scientific developments. One of the strongest reasons to defend this argument is that Victor made his creature from the body parts of dead people, combining it with the ethically questionable scientific practice, which was very unfamiliar to the people of that era. 19th-century people were not accustomed to reading about technology in Gothic works. In addition to criticizing the dangers of being ambitious towards transcending natural boundaries, Shelley’s work also addresses the consequences of adopting such a philosophy. “Shelley’s Frankenstein may be seen as a reaction to this attitude, claiming it as absurd and showing that by subscribing to this philosophy, you will create a monstrosity both of God and of yourselves” (LeCussan 109).

Mary Shelley’s novel, as previously stated in this thesis, operates as a vessel carrying gothic elements into the realm of the post-gothic. Gothic literature usually builds its characters with the stones of cruel and prideful aristocrats, as well as supernatural beings. In contrast, Victor Frankenstein is presented as an intellectual scientist, having not only the rationality of the Enlightenment but also the Romantic Era’s imagination. The horror in the novel comes from the main character’s prideful ambition and his unstoppable effort to exceed the boundaries of nature. Post-gothic novels use their monstrous characters as a metaphor to present existential crises or concerns about technological developments. Shelley’s monster, through his suffering and emotional depth, embodies themes of alienation and otherness that resonate throughout post-Gothic and posthuman fiction. The novel is mainly concerned with the moral implications of creation, paving the way for future works of science fiction novels, including *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), written by Robert Louis Stevenson.

To sum up, Shelley’s masterpiece lays the foundation for posthuman fiction, presenting an early figure of the gothic monster that questions the nature of human beings. The monster is an entity whose existence is shaped by a technological violation. It is physically human-like; however, it lacks a soul and has not got any origins, making it perceived as a monster. From this point, it is necessary to question symbolically whether or not being human is merely a matter of appearance. The position of Shelley’s monster and its tragic fate mirrors the posthuman anxiety about technological creations and the collapse of human boundaries. Besides, being neither

completely a human nor a machine, the monster embodies an existence at the boundary, which questions the human-machine and nature-technology dichotomies. These are the boundaries that are being deconstructed by the posthuman view. Furthermore, in the novel, the true reason for the creature's emotional breakdown and desire for revenge is the lack of affection and rejection from humans, as well as his creator's failure to empathize with him. This demonstrates that the human-centered notion of Humanism is nothing but an illusion. The horror lies in the negligence of Victor Frankenstein instead of the monster itself, emphasizing a transformation from the gothic mode to modern anxieties about scientific progress. In that sense, Mary Shelley's text can be seen as a precursor to posthuman literature, which imagines what happens when human identity is fragmented by scientific innovation. In this section of the study, a deeper explanation will be provided along with some key quotes from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which will be analyzed to understand and support the points discussed. The idea of considering humans as a superior form to all other beings is a problematic thought that is unique to humanity, and Shelley has woven this theme subtly throughout her novel. Victor says:

Learn from me, if not by my precepts, at least by my example, how dangerous is the acquirement of knowledge is and how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world, than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow (42).

Unfortunately, Victor's hubristic desire to transcend human limits, which was rooted in Enlightenment humanism, results in suffering. The extent of the problem coming from the core idea of Humanism, which originates from the West, is presented to the reader in this novel. In the novel, this idea is explored in a more literal sense, as Victor Frankenstein's creature becomes a living embodiment of both the human and the technological. Victor talks about the creature, saying that "His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! — Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath" (45). This highlights the creature's unnatural composition, where elements of beauty and horror, the human, and the nonhuman, are held together in a state of uneasy contradiction. The physical combination of the creature reveals Shelley's challenge towards Humanism in the sense that she creates a contradictory being that is both beautiful and horrifying, both human and other. Thus, she destabilizes fixed notions of identity. The monster

turns into a posthuman figure and makes the reader question the meaning of being human. Surprisingly, things do not go the way Victor had expected, and he says, “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” (45). The monster does not fit into the traditional category of human, representing the posthuman rupture.



CHAPTER THREE

JEANETTE WINTERSON AND POSTHUMAN FICTION

3.1. Jeanette Winterson

Jeanette Winterson, who is suitable to be evaluated as an innovative author even in the 21st century, distinguishes herself with the books that defy the conventional traditions of literature. She was born in Manchester, England, in 1959 and lived with a working-class family who were quite religious, conservative, and “she was raised to become a Pentecostal Christian missionary, and she began evangelising and writing sermons at the age of six” (“Jeanette Winterson”). She handled emotional problems mostly because of her adoptive mother, who was willing to have control over her intensely. Perhaps in an attempt to escape from all of this, Winterson turned her attraction more to books and literature. “Winterson admits to being a keen collector of rare books, mostly signed first editions of her favourite Modernists (AO 119–32), an activity surely meant to compensate for the enforced deprivation she endured during her childhood” (Onega 4). Jeanette Winterson gained critical attention during a transformative period in British literature, when her innovative style and thematic boldness positioned her among a new wave of influential novelists “After a period of perceived decline in the English novel, she was one of a group of new writers in the 1980s seen as breathing new kinds of life into the ailing form” (Morrison 169). Jeanette Winterson believes that human beings can change their nature for the better, and this creates hope. In one of her TED interviews, Winterson explains that

The Homo sapiens species has existed for about 300,000 years, while other hominid species have come and gone. We have survived natural disasters—earthquakes, catastrophes, diseases. We are intelligent. But the real question is: Are we smart enough to survive the knowledge that we are smart? (Winterson).

Winterson has always questioned the possible differences between human intelligence and artificial intelligence as seen in her novel *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019). Human cognition processes information through dualities, but computer intelligence is singular. She puts forward that “AI is not yet self-aware, but as we continue to work with it, we become more aware of ourselves. We are beginning to realize that Homo sapiens may no longer be fit for purpose — in other words, it’s time to restart” (Winterson [online interview]). It is necessary to say that Winterson takes

the side of posthumanism rather than *transhumanism*, as it is understood from her quote. In transhumanism, AI is often envisioned as a tool to enhance or perfect the human condition, to overcome disease, aging, and mortality, yet, Jeanette Winterson suggests that the value of AI lies in what it reveals about humanity, not in how it upgrades humanity, therefore, she says “I accept that machine intelligence will challenge human intelligence. However, the mythos of the world has always been narrated through the conflict between the human and the nonhuman. Think of Prometheus stealing fire from the gods” (Winterson [online interview]).

Just like in the case of Mary Shelley, Jeanette Winterson’s past, her experiences, and the family she grew up with shaped both her life and her literary world. Jeanette Winterson studied English at St Catherine’s College, Oxford, where she was introduced to feminist thought and poststructuralist theories for the first time. In her novel called *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* (2011), Winterson opens a window to her memories and experiences in college. In one of the chapters of the book, she writes “[b]ut a lot of women had moustaches in those days. I never met anybody who shaved anything, and it didn’t occur to me to shave anything myself until I turned up at Oxford looking like a werewolf” (79). The hardships she experienced with her stepmother, along with her experiences at college, shaped Jeanette Winterson’s literary voice and enabled her to contribute to the world of literature, something that is reflected in her works today. It would not be accurate to describe her merely as a novelist.

It would not be accurate to describe her merely as a novelist. Winterson is an activist, a critic, and a cultural figure who carries pieces of the posthumanist canon. She has been very interested in the developing technology. Jeanette Winterson reinforces how technology has redefined what is possible in terms of life, even death, and identity in one of her interviews, “The first heart transplant was only seventy years ago, nobody could do it until then” (Maison de la Poésie, 35.10). Blending narrative drive and philosophical thinking as well as giving voice to queer characters even when they are marginalised, Winterson is successful in pushing the boundaries of typical narration. Her works frequently question identity, gender, and binary oppositions that belong to the humanist idea. To produce works challenging binary oppositions, Winterson adheres to posthumanism as well. Her literary voice is unique to her, and it resists canonical literature. She combines myth and allegory with the conventional

narratives, which are rewritten by Winterson, to emphasize the importance of the marginal, offering a new perspective. Her use of intertextuality and her distinctive narrative strategies connect her with the postmodern movement. Winterson is in the middle of contemporary cultural discourse in the sense that she is linked to an ethical approach and emotional authenticity. Jeanette Winterson opens up a space for alternative forms of existence by creating characters who refuse normative expectations of society. Her style aligns with posthumanist ideals, which take what is called normal out of the center.

In all her works, Jeanette Winterson focused on the themes of sexuality, gender, religion, and rebellion, just as she did in her personal life. “In Winterson’s fictions, we do have a whole range of abjected, ab-normal, de-legitimised and grotesque bodies” (Morrison 175). In some of her books, she used these themes by blending them with the rapid and increasingly surprising developments in technology. Jeanette Winterson, whose rebelliousness and determination are reflected in her works, had to leave her home after coming out about her sexual orientation, which is a pivotal experience that would later resonate in her writing through recurring themes of isolation, personal growth, and a sense of being an outsider. The Guardian writes:

Winterson grew up in Accrington, the adopted daughter of fundamentalist Pentecostals. Before she fell in love with another girl, at 16, and left home (a rupture she described in *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, the novel that made her name), she was a preacher.

The world recognized her name in 1985 when she showed the courage to write *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. Sonya Andermahr writes that “Winterson’s writing career began in the mid-1980s, at the same time as a generation of British writers including Martin Amis, Angela Carter, Ian McEwan, Salman Rushdie and Julian Barnes, all of them publishing major works” (14). Jeanette Winterson published her first novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), during the time in which Margaret Thatcher was in power in the United Kingdom. Thatcher was the Prime Minister between the years 1979 and 1990, meaning that Winterson wrote and published her works during the Thatcher period. The era was a time of neoliberal economic policies and conservative values. Given that Winterson has always been someone who rebels against traditionalism, it is quite natural that living during such a period would inspire her to write her works in the spirit of rebellion, the search for freedom, and the

exploration of sexual identity. Even though there were strict rules, “[...] Winterson’s experience was different in that her first novel brought her to sudden prominence” (Andermahr 14). The novel is a semi-autobiographical novel that is about a young lady growing up in a strict religious family and embracing her sexual orientation. Britannica writes that “[t]his short semi-autobiographical novel is an unconventional coming-of-age story, and it won the Whitbread Award for best first novel” (“*Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*”). Jeanette Winterson, the groundbreaking and boundary-defying author, is mixing fairytale and biblical allegory, making the novel deeply uncanonical. Her experimental narrative style resonates with a wide range of readers, especially women. As a contemporary author, she often reinterprets familiar stories through her own unique lens. By reworking traditionally patriarchal narratives, Jeanette Winterson aims to give power to female voices and perspectives that are unacceptable to society even today.

Apart from *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), she has written many other works that explore different themes. She wrote *The Passion* (1986), which was set during the Napoleonic Wars in the early 19th century and combines historical fiction with magical realism. The novel includes the themes of desire, love, obsession, and politics, making it different from her first novel. Winterson’s shift between her first two novels allows her to discover new narrative techniques and deepen her investigation of identity and human connection, challenging traditional storytelling conventions. In the preface of the novel, Winterson writes that

I wrote *The Passion* in 1986, boom-time of the Thatcher years, clock-race of yuppies and City boys, rich-quick, never count the cost. My own cities were invented; cities of language, cities of connection, worlds as gangways and bridges to the cities of the interior where the coin was not money, where it was all emotion (1).

Here, Jeanette Winterson mentions the reason why she wrote the novel. Even though ambition, money, and quick success were the values of the Thatcher period, Winterson created, symbolically, her cities, which were imaginative and emotional spaces where love, emotion, and passion matter. *The Passion* (1986) is a novel in which human feeling is more significant than anything. The author distances herself from the material world by constructing imaginative realms and challenges the values of her era, proposing a space where emotion takes precedence over financial success. Andermahr informs that even though “Winterson rejects the label ‘political’ writer—as

she rejects labels of all kinds—her work is suffused with a sense of political injustice and protest” (16). Although some critics like Elaine Showalter criticize Jeanette Winterson for avoiding politics, as Peter Childs also points out, her novel *The Passion* (1986) is “a book in which Winterson created an imaginative ‘mirror’ to the actual world of the Thatcher boom years... not a looking glass but a reflector of possibilities” (256).

Sexing the Cherry (1989) emphasizes the boundaries between real life and fantasy with questions of time and gender. Winterson’s third novel offers a critique of traditional societal norms and stories describing historical events. “The reviews of *Sexing the Cherry* have much more prominence than those of the previous novel, *The Passion*, demonstrating Winterson’s continuing rise in status as a serious literary novelist” (Makinen 82). The novel is rich in the sense that it mixes reality and myth with a powerful imagination. Taking place during the 17th century in London, the novel aims to transcend the physical world with its main character, Jordan. Once again, Jeanette Winterson challenges the customary understandings of gender, sex, and history by embracing multiple realities and giving place to queer perspectives. The structure of the novel mirrors Winterson’s writing style, in which the language is alive as well as playful, just like Hélène Cixous’ ‘écriture féminine’ theory (Cixous, 1975). *Sexing the Cherry* (1989) criticizes power structures such as patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism. Thus, the novel makes it possible to reimagine the world not only with a realist perspective but also through an aesthetic and emotional lens.

In 1992, Winterson wrote *Written on the Body*. The masterpiece uses language and structure not only to convey emotional depth but also to demonstrate its success in questioning the boundaries of human experience. For the first time, Winterson does not reveal the gender of the narrator, deconstructing the gender binaries. Susana Onega writes that

The publication of *Written on the Body* in 1992 marked a change from the structural complexity of *Sexing the Cherry*, with its duplications and intertwining of narrative voices and historical periods, by turning back to the simplicity of the single narrative voice of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (108).

The reader is forced to understand what universal love is instead of reading a typical love story between a woman and a man. The title of the novel matches with the

idea that a body should be written as a text and “[a]s the title suggests, *Written on the Body* is a self-conscious experiment in écriture féminine [...]” (Onega 114). Even though the novel is not a direct autobiography, it still carries traces of Winterson’s own life through its theme of ambiguous gender.

In her fourth novel, *The PowerBook* (2000), Jeanette Winterson uses multiple realities, blending the past, the present, and the future by giving the reader two different narratives. Most importantly, the novel puts forward the relationship between human and technology, perhaps for the first time, making so many references to posthumanism. In one of her interviews, Winterson says, “*The PowerBook* is about how technology is shaping our lives and how we deal with that. It’s about relationships and how, in the age of the internet, we create our reality, but also how reality can be too much” (Winterson, *Power Surge* [online interview]). This highlights the central concern of the novel, namely, the binary between the virtual and the real. With *The PowerBook* (2000), “Winterson’s standing as an important and challenging novelist has become assured, and critical books striving to survey the second half of the twentieth century invariably contain a discussion of her and usually dedicate a whole chapter to her oeuvre” (Makinen 2). In the novel, Winterson questions how technology is able to make human beings recreate themselves, letting them run away from their past and any limitations.

Lighthousekeeping (2004) is a highly philosophical novel that blends magical realism and coming-of-age storytelling. Winterson aims to present the magical way literature guides and saves human beings, as well as how stories shape the world, with her fifth novel. Winterson explains, “*Lighthousekeeping* is about how stories, like light, are a way of navigating through the darkness. It’s about finding the light in our own lives, even when it seems far away” (Winterson, *The Independent*). This quote emphasises the parallel between story and light, positioning both as necessary tools for navigating life in the moments of darkness. Just like the light does, stories are there in order to show humanity the true path to follow.

Another novel that the thesis aims to briefly mention is called *The Stone Gods*, which was written by Jeanette Winterson in 2007. Besides being a post-apocalyptic novel, which explores humanity’s destructive tendencies and the results through four

narratives that belong to different times and places, the novel still carries hope. The novel is deeply interwoven with technology. In one of her interviews, Winterson says;

Everything in that part of the book has been written about scientifically already, it's very near. I don't think the novel is without hope, but it is a danger signal for us, it's meant to be, about where we're going and what we're doing, the kind of society we're making happen. Until we look at ourselves, look at the human race and our potential for self-destruction, and the destruction of everyone else, I don't think technology can really serve us (Winterson, *The Bookseller*).

Winterson states that the events that the novel describes are not completely fictional; indeed, humanity is really close to the point of the novel, however there is still hope, even though the novel is there as a warning. Winterson also points out that before considering how technology can benefit us, we need to focus on our human world. From *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) to many of her other novels, Jeanette Winterson has always been critical of patriarchy and heterosexuality. Merja Makinen puts forward that "Winterson's characters challenge the binary heterosexual relationships by positing an equally strong competing lesbian one [...]" (148). In almost all of her novels, she has addressed these issues, arguing that humanity needs to heal itself and put an end to restrictive binary oppositions, often making use of technology in this vision.

The combination of the elements that Winterson seeks to change or advocate for seems to come to life in her novel *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019). She deepens her ideas about the issues of technology, transformation, and identity by presenting a narrative mirroring the posthumanist ideas and thoughts. The combination of the elements that Jeanette Winterson has expected to alter or transform throughout her literary career comes to life in this novel vividly. The stimulating novel reexamines the themes that she has investigated during her professional life, such as technological power and the flexibility of identity. Winterson has largely reimagined Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in a contemporary context, this time incorporating posthuman elements, while staying true to the similarities between the names of the main characters in her book and the idea that technology will bring about significant changes in human life. Through this book, Winterson lays bare all of her thoughts on artificial intelligence, bodily subjectivity, and the future of human existence with extraordinary frankness;

therefore, Jeanette Winterson imagines new ways of being in the world thanks to her novel. The disruption of human boundaries and identity resonates far beyond Mary Shelley's time, continuing to inspire contemporary explorations of similar concerns.

We are the first generation truly capable of reading Mary Shelley's novel as a spark hurled through time — because we, too, have the power to create an alternative form of intelligence. Not from corpse parts jolted by electricity, but through code — through zeros and ones. And whether this ends in utopia or dystopia is up to us (Winterson).

The story and plot of this novel must have deeply affected Jeanette Winterson, so much so that she rewrote it 200 years later with the same theme in the distant future. In her novel, Winterson masterfully engages with technology and offers a critical interrogation of transhumanism, saying, "Technology is neutral. The responsibility lies with us; it is merely a tool. Technology magnifies our arrogance and inadequacy" (Winterson).

Throughout her literary journey, Jeanette Winterson has not only pushed the boundaries of posthuman fiction but also profoundly reshaped how the meaning of being human is understood. The way she writes consistently disrupts conventional ideas of selfhood and connection, questioning the fixed categories that have long confined human experience. Thanks to her ability to weave together technology, biology, and perception, her work engages critically with posthumanist thought, establishing her as a key voice in contemporary debates on such themes. Jeanette Winterson merges speculative storytelling with philosophical depth in such an extraordinary style that she creates a space where questions about humanity's future can be explored. Her narratives never lose sight of the timeless human dilemmas that literature seeks to unravel. By continually challenging what it means to be human, Winterson maintains a profound and enduring influence on posthumanist discourse, establishing herself as an essential voice in modern literature and theory. Thus, as a major experimental voice in contemporary literature, Jeanette Winterson engages with posthumanism through thematically rich and formally innovative narratives. Her works align with the ideas of thinkers like Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, and Rosi Braidotti, as discussed in earlier sections of this thesis.

3.2. Posthuman Fiction

Literature and human life have been intertwined and have influenced one another since ancient times; at times, real life has been inspired by literature, while at other times, literature has drawn its inspiration from real life. In the 21st century, humanity finds itself in an era that is influenced by superintelligent technologies and evolving attitudes toward our species' identity, making the definition of what it means to be "human" an important discussion topic. Literature significantly contributes to the exploration, especially in its examination of the lines between culture and nature, as well as the imagined realities that transcend the human experience. While science fiction has traditionally portrayed cyborgs and robots, such posthuman characters are increasingly present in contemporary literary fiction, as exemplified by Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein*. Posthuman literature aims to reimagine humanity beyond the boundaries set by traditional humanist thought. A posthumanist reading examines literature through the lens of posthumanism, which challenges traditional human-centered thinking. Stefan and Callus emphasise that "A posthumanist reading spells out the anxieties and repressions that inform the text's desire" (6). Through its narratives, it challenges the anthropocentric worldview by portraying the intricate interconnections between humans, non-humans, and technology.

Posthuman literature is alive, continuously taking place in human life. Mark Fisher points out that "Fiction as contagion, fiction as artificial intelligence, fiction which makes itself real" (178). A fictional concept, just like cyborgs, artificial intelligence consciousness, or dystopias, can infect minds, cultures, and even influence scientific progress. Often written in response to transhumanist ideals, especially the pursuit of technological immortality, posthuman literature criticizes such aspirations as being ethically problematic. Literary works within this domain frequently look forward to deconstructing binaries and exploring the relationship of humans with machines, animals, plants, and even inanimate matters. Posthuman works build their themes around artificial intelligence, biotechnology, gender, cyborgisation, and societal structures. These thematic concerns reflect broader philosophical anxieties about the future of humanity. As Francis Fukuyama argues in *Our Posthuman Future*, "Biotechnology will cause us to lose sight of what it means to be human, as it may permit the modification of behavior, temperament, and identity itself" (101). Fukuyama is also worried about how biotechnology and related technologies may

allow us to gradually change what it means to be human, saying that “We may be about to enter into a posthuman future, in which technology will give us the capacity gradually to alter that essence over time” (217). Drawing from interdisciplinary fields such as posthumanism, science, and technology studies, posthuman fiction is known to reflect growing cultural anxieties about the boundaries of human identity and embodiment. Still, it does not completely fit in with the dystopian framework in the sense that it takes a more hopeful and imaginative approach, asking speculative questions to explore new possibilities for being human in a rapidly changing world. Kirsten Hunt explains that

Rather than focusing on dystopian depictions and utopian desires, posthuman fiction projects a more hopeful mirror of speculating on what if, affording the adolescent reader insight into their identity as a human being in relation to the natural world of the Anthropocene (78).

These narratives function not only as speculative fantasies but also as potential critiques of anthropocentrism and Enlightenment humanism. Posthuman fiction challenges traditional notions of humanity and literary expression that are rooted in the principles of humanism by exploring the intersections of technology and machine consciousness. As Mark Fisher puts it, “[...] What arrives on the flatline is certainly non-organic, but it is no more alive than it is dead. Gothic fiction offers a ready-made term for this state of anorganic animation: undeath” (44). This notion of “undeath” underscores how posthuman narratives often depict existence beyond binary categories such as life and death, organic and synthetic, human and machine.

In parallel with posthumanist thought, these fictional works criticize humanism’s emphasis on individualism and rationality, offering alternative perspectives on subjectivity. Moreover, posthuman narratives often address themes like uploaded consciousness and simulated realities, asking complex ethical questions about identity and moral legitimacy in a technologically mediated world. In a way, posthuman fiction internalizes and dramatizes the ideas of Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, and Rosi Braidotti. Posthuman fiction is characterized by a set of recurring themes that reflect its philosophical roots. Posthumanist reading often operates by uncovering latent layers within a text, those moments where the narrative begins to reflect on its construction or challenge conventional boundaries of

storytelling. “A posthumanist reading thus merely needs to ‘force’ the narrative a little to arrive at a ‘meta-fictional’ level” (Herbrechter and Callus 21).

Posthumanist reading means analyzing a text through a lens that questions the centrality and superiority of the human. Deconstruction of the integrity means breaking down the idea that human and non-human or natural and artificial are clear, separate categories. Even when trying to step outside the human perspective, a person who is reading a posthuman work is still human; therefore, it is inevitable to bring human emotion and empathy into the process, even though posthumanism asks to disinvest from that position. In one of their articles, Stefan Herbrechter, and Ivan Callus mention that

A posthumanist reading is enabled by the deconstruction of the integrity of the human and the other, of the natural and the alienable. This kind of deconstruction cannot fail to be empathetic to the degree that it is, self-evidently, human, and thereby invested in what it disinvests; yet it cannot abdicate an ethic of extreme dispassionateness which must make itself constructible, particularly in this context, as almost “inhuman” (3).

The tension between empathy and dispassion, between human investment and posthuman critique, finds a powerful symbolic expression in the figure of the cyborg. To begin with, cyborgs are among the most recognizable figures in posthuman fiction, symbolizing the fusion of organic and mechanical elements. Such texts emphasize that identity is no longer grounded in biology or essence but is constructed, and interfaced with the non-human. Donna Haraway expresses her concern on this matter with the following statement: “Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert” (152). In this quote, Haraway is making a powerful and ironic observation about the changing relationship between humans and machines in the modern, technologically saturated world. Likewise, the rise of artificial intelligence as a narrative motif mirrors deep philosophical concerns about machine sentience and moral status. Posthuman fiction frequently portrays the human body as an outdated construct, namely, a biological constraint that technological advancement promises to overcome. Posthuman texts also suggest that ethics must have an inclusive view of life, one that decenters the human in favor of multispecies alliances. Narrative form in posthuman fiction is usually non-linear and fragmented, reflecting the disruption of coherent identities. The formal structures are deeply tied to the posthuman content of

the work, embodying the themes of fragmentation and hybridity that define the genre itself.

What responsibilities do humans have toward machines? What is morality when agency is distributed among humans and networks? These are certain questions that a reader is supposed to think deeply about while reading a posthuman text. In an era that is marked by rapid technological change and environmental crisis, posthuman fiction stands as a vital genre in the sense that it does not merely speculate about the future, it challenges the assumptions of the present as well, offering a new imaginary through which human beings might envision more inclusive and sustainable modes of being. By challenging the idea of human superiority, it creates room for new storytelling approaches. As developments in artificial intelligence continue, posthuman fiction will persist as a key site for questioning the future of humanity.

3.3. *Frankissstein: A Love Story*

A posthumanist reinterpretation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818), merges historical fiction, speculative futurism, and queer theory to explore themes of posthuman identity, artificial intelligence, and the ethics that surround creation. Although the narrative is structured through nonlinear chapters, each storyline develops in its distinct sequence. The narrative shifts between two timelines: one of them depicts Mary Shelley in 1816 as she is developing the concept for her novel, while the other narrative takes place in the near future, featuring a transgender doctor, Ry Shelley, who becomes involved with a tech mogul working on sentient artificial intelligence. In the beginning, Mary Shelley, voiced by Winterson, narrates her own story in Lake Geneva with her husband Percy Shelley, accompanied by Lord Byron, Dr. Polidori, and Claire Clairmont. This part of the novel is based on real-life events centered around these people in Lake Geneva, in the summer of 1816. Winterson aims to offer a vivid portrayal of Mary Shelley's life, emphasizing both the intent behind her novel and the emotional turmoil she faced, such as the deaths of her children and her complex relationship with Percy Shelley. In one of the historical sections of the novel, Mary Shelley says, "Our first child died when he was born. Cold and tiny, I held him in my arms. Soon after I dreamed that he was not dead, and that we rubbed him with brandy and set him by the fire and he returned to life" (Winterson 18).

In the novel, Jeanette Winterson combines two parallel narratives. The first narrative is set in the early 19th century and recounts the story of how Mary Shelley wrote her novel. Winterson revisits this iconic literary moment to reflect on the origins of modern speculative fiction and the imaginative force behind the creation of the first “artificial being” in literature. Thus, she honors Mary Shelley not only as the author of *Frankenstein* but as a visionary who anticipated contemporary ethical questions surrounding creation, science, and humanity. The second narrative takes place in the 21st century and mirrors the first story through its themes and structure. It follows Ry Shelley and Victor Stein as they explore the frontiers of artificial intelligence and posthuman futures. This modern storyline centers on humanity’s longing for immortality, not through the reanimation of corpses, as in Shelley’s novel, but through technological innovations such as mind uploading, synthetic consciousness, and the development of non-biological life forms.

The book combines Gothic motifs with posthuman techniques, offering a fresh take on classic literary themes. Winterson's pioneering work stands out for its thematic complexity and bold structural innovation. It would not be wrong to say that the epic novel written by Jeanette Winterson serves as a profound exploration of posthumanist ideas, weaving themes like artificial intelligence, bodily autonomy, and transhumanism into its core in order to challenge the divide between humanity and technology. The novel stands out for its layered themes and innovative narrative structure. This chapter will examine *Frankissstein* as a posthuman novel, analyzing the key themes, characters, and narrative strategies that shape its engagement with identity, embodiment, artificial intelligence, and the ethics of technological innovation.

The novel follows different characters, all of whom are involved in the development of artificial intelligence technologies. The characters in each timeline mirror one another, Mary and Ry, Victor Frankenstein, and Victor Stein, suggesting that the concerns of the past are never truly left behind; they keep continuing by changing their shape. This recursive structure underscores the idea that humanity is always in the process of becoming, always negotiating its relationship with technology and meaning. First of all, Dr. Ry, a transgender doctor, is developing feelings for Victor Stein, who is an artificial intelligence professor. Ry exists in a state of in-betweenness, not only in terms of gender but also about science and emotion, human,

and machine. The fluidity of Ry's identity mirrors what Braidotti describes as the "de-naturalization of the body" (Braidotti 2). As a trans character, Ry embodies the posthumanist dismantling of binary systems; their identity resists essentialist categories, echoing Rosi Braidotti's assertion that posthumanism embraces "a radical de-naturalization of the body." Ry's existence challenges static conceptions of the self and suggests that identity is always shaped by discourse, desire, and technological mediation. Ry's body plays a crucial role in this discussion. Rather than being erased as some transhumanist visions might wish, it is highlighted as a site of change and negotiation. Ry is acutely aware of the physical aspects of the body, including scars, sensations, and vulnerability. This focus challenges Victor Stein's idea of digital consciousness, which aims to forsake the body in the quest for immortality. For Ry, the body serves not as a confinement but as a palimpsest, a dynamic record of experiences, choices, and transformations. Through Ry, Winterson emphasizes that the posthuman future is not about escaping humanity but rather about broadening its potential.

In contrast to Ry, Victor Stein represents the techno-utopian desire to transcend biology entirely. A brilliant scientist, Victor Stein, advocates for a future in which human consciousness can be uploaded into machines, rendering the physical body obsolete. He envisions a post-biological humanity, one that has shed its mortal, material limitations; therefore, Victor Stein can be defined as a transhumanist character in the novel. Still, Winterson does not completely agree with Victor Stein's point of view. Using subtle irony and contrasting narratives, she highlights the dangers of a disembodied mindset. Victor Stein's philosophy overlooks the social, emotional, and ethical intricacies of human existence. He simplifies consciousness to only data and equates identity with code, namely, he neglects the significance of embodiment, relationships, and mortality. His ideas reflect the troubling Cartesian dualism of mind versus body, which posthumanism aims to confront. The interaction of Ry with Stein highlights the tension in Winterson's novel. While intellectually drawn to his vision, Ry remains grounded in the reality of lived experience.

In one section of the novel, Winterson looks forward to criticizing the commercialization of technology and its connection to gender politics through the character of Ron Lord, a divorced man who lives with his mother, who is striving to create successful sex dolls for lonely individuals. His dolls, which were designed to

serve and satisfy male desire, raise pressing questions about consent and objectification. Winterson satirizes the idea that replacing human relationships with machines will lead to utopia; instead, she suggests that it will only amplify existing inequalities. Rather than imagining a future of evolution or transcendence, Ron Lord envisions a regressive world where female bodies are supplanted by obedient and programmable machines. His business approach underscores how technological advancements can perpetuate patriarchal and capitalist systems while being framed as progress. The AI figures in the novel are there to symbolise the future of humanity in which the line between subject and object becomes dangerously blurred.

Meanwhile, in America, a cryogenics facility is anticipating advancements that will potentially bring people back to life from death. The novel begins in the voice of Dr. Ry, who goes by the name Mary throughout a significant section of the story. Even though Dr. Ry was a female at birth, she/he is currently transitioning, using only they/them pronouns and have had top surgery. In one of the stimulating sections of the novel, Dr. Ry encounters Victor Stein. Although Dr. Ry deeply senses that Victor Stein is a dangerous person to fall in love with or even talk to, they are irresistibly drawn to him. Thus begins an exciting and unusual romantic relationship.

Jeanette Winterson aims to deconstruct the idealized vision of technological progress and human enhancement, offering instead a richly posthuman narrative centered on hybridity and the erosion of human superiority. By depicting fractured identities and artificial forms of life, Winterson presents the transhumanist ambition and highlights the ambiguous, unstable nature of the posthuman experience. In a way, she questions whether machines can mimic love or they can feel it through her novel. Among the novel's most notable elements is that it questions the dominance of human identity, challenges the notion of consciousness that is divorced from the body, and looks deeply into the ethical intricacies of human and non-human interconnectedness. Instead of supporting the notion of a smooth and uninterrupted journey toward advancement, the work challenges conventional views of what it means to be human. In today's evolving landscape, marked by constant fusion and transformation, the novel prompts a rethinking of identity, existence, and progress, urging readers to confront the complexities and uncertainties of a future that defies traditional boundaries.

The narrative structure of the novel also embodies posthuman sensibilities that Winterson aims to give. It shifts back and forth between past and present, as well as between Mary Shelley and Ry Shelley, and between science and emotion. This fluid movement through time reflects the instability of identity and the dissolution of clear boundaries between historical periods. In the same way that posthumanism challenges the idea of linear progress, *Frankissstein* breaks away from traditional narrative continuity. Time is portrayed not as a straight path but as a web of echoes, reflections, and reinterpretations. Jeanette Winterson exposes the limitations of human-centric thinking and forces her readers to reconsider what it truly means to be human in a posthuman age.

Even though the novel is known to be posthumanist, including speculative and scientific themes, it is also a love story, as its subtitle asserts. Winterson insists that love, which is irrational and emotional, is not antithetical to posthumanism; rather, it is central to it. For example, Victor Stein regards emotion as less important than intelligence, whereas Ry recognizes that love is an essential aspect of what it means to be human. In this context, love emerges as a powerful and defiant force, an affirmation of human identity amid the rise of digital technologies, and a meaningful attempt to forge connections in an increasingly disconnected world. Through the evolving relationship between Ry and Stein, Winterson explores whether love can survive the posthuman shift, which creates the question whether affection is tied to the body, or it persists beyond flesh. The novel refrains from offering definitive answers; rather, it encourages readers to reflect on how emotional connections might be reshaped by advancements in technology.

In summary, Winterson's novel weaves satire, romance, and historical fiction together while engaging with Mary Shelley's influence on speculative fiction. Through the character of Victor Stein, the novel examines Ry's nonbinary identity as a representation of a posthuman future, where consciousness could be detached from the physical body, uploaded to digital realms, and freed from the constraints of gender. Ultimately, the novel asks the reader what it means to be human in a technological era. Although this chapter's purpose is to analyse Jeanette Winterson's novel through a posthuman lens, its intertextual relationship with Mary Shelley's novel remains significant to be analysed in the fourth chapter in a detailed way. Winterson's work is not merely a retelling, but a reimagining that both pays tribute to and transforms

Shelley's gothic tradition. Whereas *Frankenstein* warned against the perils of unchecked scientific pursuit through gothic horror, *Frankissstein* reinterprets these fears within a modern framework shaped by artificial intelligence, gender dynamics, and posthumanist thought. The transformation from the gothic novel to posthuman fiction will also be the subject of the following chapter. It will explore how Winterson adapts Shelley's themes and narrative strategies to interrogate modern concerns about technology, embodiment, and the ethics of creation.

Winterson's 2019 novel serves not only as a reimagining of Mary Shelley's 1818 novel but also as a deeply philosophical exploration of posthuman identity through the lens of bodily experience. The representation of Ry Shelley as a transgender individual foregrounds the issue of embodiment in a radically contemporary context. Rosi Braidotti's theory of posthumanism, which emphasizes the materiality of the body as a site of becoming rather than a fixed entity, finds resonance in Ry's negotiation between biology and identity. A key tension within the novel lies in its depiction of competing visions of the future, one rooted in biological materiality and the other in technological transcendence. Victor Stein's unwavering belief in mind uploading and digital immortality echoes transhumanist ideology, but Winterson offers a critique through her nuanced portrayal of Ry. Rather than rejecting the body, Ry embodies a mode of posthumanism that embraces transformation while remaining anchored in human vulnerability.

Winterson's structural choices in her work mirror the philosophical fragmentation she explores thematically. The nonlinear narrative, split between past and future, not only blurs the boundary between fact and fiction but also highlights the instability of identity. The metafictional quality of the text, its self-awareness, and interplay between historical documentation and speculative extrapolation, underscore postmodern strategies that align with posthumanist uncertainty. The novel's satirical tone, particularly embodied by Ron Lord, draws attention to the commodification of human intimacy and the reduction of complex emotional relationships to mechanized transactions. Ron Lord's sex dolls serve as exaggerated symbols of how capitalism and patriarchy intersect within the technological realm.

Additionally, the novel engages in a symbolic dialogue with Shelley's *Frankenstein* through names, themes, and characters that act as literary echoes. Victor

Stein and Ry Shelley function as contemporary embodiments of Shelley's original ethical questions about creation and responsibility. The question of whether artificial intelligence can experience emotion, desire, or love emerges as a central theme in the novel. While Victor Stein reduces the human mind to code, Winterson problematizes this perspective by suggesting that emotional complexity cannot be simulated without genuine embodiment. Furthermore, *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) suggests that storytelling itself, across centuries, mediums, and identities, is a form of posthuman continuity. As Mary Shelley once reimagined the myth, Winterson reprograms that myth for a biotech-driven world, emphasizing literature's enduring role in negotiating human uncertainty.



CHAPTER FOUR

FROM GOTHIC *FRANKENSTEIN* TO POSTHUMAN *FRANKISSSTEIN*

4.1. Tracing the Spectrum: From Gothic Figures to Posthuman Selves

Frankissstein: A Love Story (2019), which weaves together the relentless technological advancements since the 19th century and a posthuman love story, has a remarkably provocative title that needs to be examined closely. Just like the term ‘cyborg,’ a combination of human and machine, the title of Jeanette Winterson’s novel is created through the hybridization of two different elements. Although the spelling of ‘Frankissstein’ differs from ‘Frankenstein,’ their nearly identical pronunciation signals that Mary Shelley’s Gothic tale continues into the 21st century. The emphasis on the word ‘kiss’ in the title evokes notions of romance and embodied reality. As the narrative progresses, it becomes evident that it also foreshadows the intimate tension between machine and human, as well as between artificial intelligence and the flesh. ‘a love story’ expression, in fact, symbolizes a posthuman love story in which love is redefined, just like human, through concepts such as disembodiment, artificial intelligence and gender transformation. At first glance, the title may appear to be a romanticized version of Mary Shelley’s classic gothic story, yet it ironically sheds light on a hybrid structure where love and technology intersect.

As an introductory observation, it is undeniable that in both of these novels, the characters surpass their narratives with the purpose of embodying profound concerns, ideals, and existential questions that are characteristic of their eras. This section examines the evolution of the central characters in Shelley’s and Winterson’s novels with a particular focus on the reinterpretation of traditional Gothic archetypes, such as the obsessive scientist and the forsaken creature, through a posthuman point of view. The nature of interpersonal relationships will be critically examined, focusing on how characters interact, communicate, and remain isolated from one another and the real world. Particularly, the emphasis will be set on the similarities and differences between the plots of the novels, revealing how each of them constructs the narrative, engages with recurring themes, and mirrors the cultural and historical tensions of their time. By tracing the transformation from Gothic archetypes to posthuman figures, the study highlights how concepts of human desire, embodiment, and identity are

continually evaluated and redefined through technological advancement and shifting social narratives.

In an attempt to uncover the continuities and contrasts between the two works, the emotional landscapes of the characters will be thoroughly examined, focusing on their internal struggles and existential perspectives as well as how concepts such as subjectivity, embodiment, and relationality are redefined through technological mediation. Ethical questions, namely, moral responsibility and the limits of scientific intervention, will be foregrounded to demonstrate how each character is situated within a structure that is transformed by technology. The following aspects will be emphasised: firstly, the evolution of the concept of the 'monster'; secondly, the transformation of representations of scientific overreach; and thirdly, the reimagining of the notion of humanity in response to technological advancements, drawing upon the contributions of major posthumanist theorists, to explore the implications of *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019), a novel drawing from and moving beyond the Gothic tradition to present a uniquely contemporary interpretation of posthuman life. The objective of this comparative study is to demonstrate how the relationships between characters and their perspectives on the world offer crucial insights into the evolving notion of what it means to be human within both Gothic and posthuman contexts.

Both of the authors depict characters who deliberately push the boundaries of nature, embodying the archetype of the ambitious scientist who is driven to surpass the limits of human potential. By comparison, with great courage and determination, Mary Shelley's Victor pursues forbidden knowledge, and he strongly desires to give life to lifeless matter as well as dead beings. Accordingly, his characteristic mirrors the early 19th-century anxieties surrounding the rapid expansion of scientific inquiry and the moral consequences of playing God. Victor Frankenstein, negligently exceeding himself, says that "Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world" (Shelley 43). What he means in the quote reveals his arrogant ambition to transcend natural limits, specifically the boundary between life and death. Jeanette Winterson's Victor, on the other hand, reimagines the same dynamic through the lens of 21st-century technological realities. Winterson's depiction of Victor Stein brings upon a contemporary ethical discourse that goes beyond altering biological life. It directly

addresses the uploading of consciousness, the treatment of bodies as marketable objects and the growing erosion of personal autonomy in a society that is increasingly shaped by algorithmic control.

In the ideological framework of Winterson's Victor, technological advancement is regarded as a tool with the potential to transform the essence of being human. For him, technology exists and continues to develop only for the sake of human beings. He embraces technology as a tool to enhance human life, rather than viewing it as an independent entity raising moral questions. Unlike Victor Frankenstein, who desires to make people healthier, to put them in a better condition, along with their bodies, Victor Stein is portrayed as selfish. Nevertheless, his perspective is characterised by a disregard for ethical responsibility and the notion of relational existence. Through Victor Stein, Jeanette Winterson's novel reveals how transhumanist utopias contribute to the mechanisation of the human and a detachment from ethical foundations. On the contrary, other characters in the novel, such as Ry Shelley, who are portrayed as conflicting with Victor Stein's perspective and his ideas, contribute to the narration by implicitly exposing the problems and flaws of transhumanism. In this context, Victor Stein becomes an easily deconstructible figure from a posthumanist point of view, as his understanding of humanity relies only on a fixed, central and universal definition of the human, whereas posthumanist thought redefines the human as a constantly evolving and relational being by taking it from the center of life. It is apparent that Victor Stein's aspiration to disassociate the mind from the body and transfer it onto a digital platform directly contravenes the fundamental tenets of posthumanist ideology. His approach maintains a human-centric focus, perceiving technology as a means to ensure the continuity of the human mind. Consequently, non-human entities such as animals, nature, artificial intelligence, and the human body are regarded as mere instruments that serve the interests of humanity. Nevertheless, the fundamental objective of posthumanism is to dismantle all unfair hierarchies.

Victor Stein, who at this stage aligns more closely with a transhumanist worldview than a posthumanist one, articulates his aim in life in this quote: "What I would prefer is to be able to upload myself, that is, upload my consciousness, to a substrate not made of meat" (Winterson 110). His statement encapsulates a central tenet of transhumanist ideology, the desire to transcend the biological body in favor of

a more durable, technologically advanced environment. Victor Stein's purpose is not merely to enhance the human form, but also to leave it behind altogether by reducing human identity to the pure data of consciousness. His vision offers an ultimate future in which the mind is divorced from the vulnerabilities of flesh, age, and most importantly, death. Winterson's Victor privileges the intellect above all things in the world, suggesting that the essence of the self lies in rational thought and mentality. He underscores the idea that the body is something that is neither needed now nor will ever be needed in the future. At this point, Victor Stein can also be interpreted as a Cartesian figure, echoing René Descartes' philosophical dualism. Like Descartes does, Stein locates the "self" within the mind, while viewing the body as an expendable vessel, a flawed, temporary housing for something more essential and eternal. While Descartes grounded his arguments in metaphysical reasoning, Victor Stein's motivation is rooted in scientific progress and technology. Victor's radical rejection of embodiment positions him as a problematic figure from a posthumanist standpoint.

As opposed to transhumanism, posthumanist theory aspires to displace the human from its dominant position in the universe. The human is not a singular or superior being anymore; rather, the existence of humanity is inherently relational, and it is shaped by constant interaction with animals, machines, nature, the environment, and all other forms of subjectivity. Posthumanism fundamentally challenges the Cartesian notion of "I think, therefore I am" (33) as consciousness or rationality is no longer considered the sole defining feature of the human. Thus, it is evident that the body, emotion, environment, and contact with 'the other' play a pivotal role in shaping the concept of humanity.

Whereas Victor Frankenstein's ambition is driven by a Gothic obsession with forbidden knowledge and an insatiable metaphysical hunger to conquer death with eternal power, Victor Stein transforms the discourse from reanimating the dead to disembodying the self. His experiment is at the heart of the novel. Victor seeks to resurrect his mentor, Jack Good, who is the British statistician, by reactivating his cryopreserved brain and transferring his consciousness into a carbon-based system. Victor restores his life in a hybrid form within the subterranean tunnels beneath Manchester. Here, the narrative mirrors Mary Shelley's concept of reviving the dead through a contemporary, technologically driven lens. Naturally, as can be understood, the continuing advancement of technology has been accompanied by a shift in human

thought and ability, creating an increasing desire to dominate nature. As posthumanist theory suggests, the notion of humanity that places itself at the center has become increasingly untenable. Consciousness is no longer anchored in the physical body, and the notion of the 'monster' shifts from a patchwork of flesh to a metaphor for the erosion of identity and bodily presence in a technologically dominated era. The main point here is that the boundary transgressing Victor Frankenstein is ultimately terrified by the outcome of his scientific ambition, whereas Victor Stein, who embodies key aspects of transhumanist thought, welcomes a futuristic, technology-driven ideal that dismisses the limitations of the physical body. This sharp movement from the Gothic to the posthuman reflects a transformation in the understanding of the self, which is no longer a pure soul confined within a decaying body, but a stream of data striving to escape the material form altogether, which directly aligns with Bostrom's conceptualization. It is mentioned in an online article that "For Bostrom, humans are self-defining information patterns subjected to bodily limitations entailing aging, disease, and death. If we can technologically transcend these limitations, we can achieve a post-human utopia" ("Three False Gospels"). Nick Bostrom articulates a central belief of transhumanist philosophy, that human beings are not fundamentally defined by their physical bodies, but rather by their informational essence, our consciousness, memories, and identity patterns. According to this view, the body is merely a temporary vessel, subject to the inevitable processes of aging, illness, and death. Jeanette Winterson masterfully orchestrates the transition from a Gothic mindset to one dominated by technology.

If technology can liberate this informational self from the biological form, through methods such as mind uploading, artificial intelligence, or cybernetic enhancement, a post-human future becomes possible, one that transcends the limitations traditionally imposed by nature. This vision is embodied in Victor Stein, who advocates for detaching the mind from the body, arguing for a future where consciousness can be transferred into machines or digital formats. His statement parallels Bostrom's belief that human identity can exist independently of flesh. Stein sees the physical body not as essential to humanity, but as an obstacle to be overcome through scientific advancement.

In her novel, Mary Shelley depicts the body as a grotesque construction, which is a very familiar thought to the Gothic genre, assembled from various human corpses.

What should be emphasized here is not merely the power of technology, but rather the role of human intelligence. The technology of the 19th century is, of course, vastly different from that of the 21st century. As an expected result, the characters in these two novels have access to very different technological possibilities, yet, saving humanity from nature appears to be the shared aim. Victor Frankenstein puts forward that “Wealth was an inferior object; but what glory would attend the discovery, if I could banish disease from the human frame, and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death” (Shelley 33). Here, Victor dismisses material wealth as insignificant compared to the potential glory of conquering disease and mortality, imagining a future in which the human body is rendered nearly indestructible, a scenario that will be developed in Jeanette Winterson’s novel two hundred years later. Despite the limited scientific tools of his era, Victor Frankenstein’s desire to liberate humanity from the vulnerabilities of the natural world is clear. The quote encapsulates a thematic continuity between the two works. Both Victor Frankenstein and Victor Stein are eager to reshape human destiny, using the tools available in their respective times, without any regard for divine laws.

Victor Frankenstein creates something that is a disturbing fusion of human elements, logically symbolizing the anxieties about bodily intrusion and the uncanny. The monster’s physical form sets him apart, rendering him a horrifying deviation from the Western humanist standards of beauty and flawlessness. The creature, stitched together in secret and animated by unnatural means, represents far more than scientific ambition. Indeed, it becomes a materialization of cultural anxieties about mortality and the limits of human control over nature. Its existence challenges the Enlightenment ideal of the rational individual. Victor Frankenstein’s monster embodies fragmentation physically and existentially. His body renders him an object of horror due to the fact that he visibly defies humanist norms of symmetry, beauty, and perfection, even though underneath the scary look lies a warm heart. When Victor brings the creature to life for the first time, he says

I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness, but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes... his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips (Shelley 45).

Even though Victor collected the body parts of beautiful dead beings, what he creates is defined in a very disgusting way, even by himself. No matter how beautiful something taken from nature may be, once a human being attempts to interfere with it by exceeding their natural limits, the outcome is rarely as beautiful as expected. The plot serves as a clear indication that the human being, so highly idealized by humanism, is not as perfect as Western philosophy claims. The creature is marked by visible scars and unnatural proportions, a contradiction to the aesthetic ideals of the ideal human form, which is, white and educated. In this way, his appearance provokes fear and revulsion in the people who have met him. Furthermore, the creature's body embodies a philosophical conflict. As a living composite, the monster defies clear classification, existing in a liminal state that is neither completely human nor alien. Symbolically, the creature destabilizes conventional distinctions between life and death, the organic and the mechanical, the self and the other.

In an understandable manner, many readers, whether they are just beginning to read Shelley's novel or have read it before, tend to assume that 'Frankenstein' is the name of the creature. The misconception carries cleverly symbolic implications. It erases the thin boundaries between the creator and creation, scientist and monster, mind, and body. The confusion of identities also represents the deep fear linked to humanity's urge to control and reshape life, a key concern in Gothic literature. Mistaking Frankenstein for the creature reveals the complicated nature of identity, responsibility, and being different, both on a personal level and within society. Society often blames odd-looking beings, the creature itself, categorizing them as the 'other.' Thus, the being that is labeled as a monster becomes a scapegoat for both physical and social otherness, while the original agent of transgression, Victor, remains in the shadows. The monster mourns, "I am malicious because I am miserable. Am I not shunned and hated by all mankind?" (Shelley 111). The quote highlights the idea that the creature, despite being called a monster, is shaped by the way he is treated among the people around him. The monster reflects the weaknesses of humanity and shows the harm that comes from rejecting those who are different.

In contrast, Jeanette Winterson, in a way that aligns with the principles of posthuman fiction, pushes the concept of the body even further into instability. In her *12 Bytes: How We Got Here, Where We might Go Next* (2021), Jeanette Winterson emphasises her posthumanist side saying "When we have to share the planet with

different life-forms, embodied and not, life-forms that are more intelligent than we are, but unmotivated by the greed and land-grab, the status-seeking and the violence that characterises *Homo sapiens*, perhaps we will learn what sharing means” (100). Her thoughts are seen in her novel as well since bodily boundaries are fluid, adaptable, and they are beyond gender norms. Through Victor Stein and the envisioned future of disembodied existence enabled by AI and cryogenics, Jeanette Winterson emphasizes a radical posthuman view of embodiment. The body is no longer defined by fixed flesh; it becomes data, performance, and open potential. Victor Stein’s vision moves in the opposite direction, which is toward the erasure of the physical body altogether. Victor Frankenstein’s creature is trapped within his physical form, judged and cast out due to his appearance. His body serves as a symbol of his unnatural origin, constructed from corpses, which is horrifying to those around him.

On the other hand, Victor Stein envisions a future in which the body becomes obsolete, where human consciousness can be transferred, stored, or even enhanced using technologies like artificial intelligence and cryogenics. Victor puts forward that “The body fails and falls. But the body is not the truth of what we are. The spirit will not return to a ruined house” (Winterson 15), reflecting Stein’s conviction that human identity is not rooted in the physical body. He imagines a future where technologies such as artificial intelligence make it possible to preserve or even improve human consciousness, ultimately making the body unnecessary. This vision stands in direct contrast to Mary Shelley’s novel, where the creature is inescapably defined by his physical form. In Winterson’s version, the focus shifts toward freeing the self from the body, illustrating how modern debates around identity and embodiment are being reshaped by technological innovation. Both versions of Victor seek to reshape the meaning of human existence; however, whereas Victor Frankenstein is tormented by the aftermath of giving form to a body, Victor Stein is captivated by the vision of leaving the body behind altogether.

It is important to note that there is another significant figure in Winterson’s novel who can be compared to Victor Frankenstein. Ron Lord is portrayed as a vulgar yet entrepreneurial character, coming from the working class, who manufactures and sells sex robots because he is divorced and lacks sexual intercourse. The female sex robots are designed to be obedient and solely at the service of men. His approach to technology is motivated by single men, more specifically, himself. In this way, Ron

Lord clearly illustrates how technology can be connected with male fantasy and femininity is reduced to something programmable. Winterson deliberately depicts Ron as unsophisticated to distance the reader from any sense of empathy toward him. In this context, it can be argued that Winterson positions herself against the transhumanist perspective, which places the human, particularly the male human, at the center and employs technology as a means to assert that dominance.

In the contemporary narrative of the novel, Ron Lord has willingly transformed human intimacy into a commercial exchange, which can be seen as an example of a distorted interpretation of technological advancement lacking ethical depth. Ron says that “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” (Winterson 235). For Ron Lord, similar to Victor Stein’s personality and in a way that has nothing to do with Victor Frankenstein, the body serves solely a sexual purpose and holds no other function. This is made clear especially when, in one of his statements, he remarks, “This is a SmartMat. This mat powers her up while she sits next to you. You can have it in the car too, works on the cigarette-lighter socket. Electrodes in her bum” (37). The sentence appears in a scene where Ron Lord is presenting the sex robots that he tries to sell. While explaining the charging system called the “SmartMat,” Ron’s words reveal that he views the female body purely as functional, sexual, and mechanical, nothing more than an object designed for utility. Ron Lord’s perspective directly aligns with Donna Haraway’s critique of the machine as a male fantasy. In this context, technology is employed as a means to perpetuate established gender roles. Haraway puts forward that “The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with bisexuality, pre-oedipal symbiosis, unalienated labor, or other seductions to organic wholeness...” (151).

Ron Lord and his sex robots offer a critical exposition of the relationship between technology and gender. Ron’s marketing of female sex robots as compliant servants reveals how patriarchal fantasies are embedded within technological design. This dynamic carries the worldview of Humanism and Transhumanism, both of which frequently prioritise male-centric ideals of control and perfection. Despite the fact that the bodies of the sex robots appear physically flawless, they are devoid of life and meaning. From a posthumanist perspective, such technological productions are

ethically problematic and relationally deficient. Through Ron Lord, Jeanette Winterson criticizes a transhumanist future driven not by enlightenment or compassion, but by profit and base desire, because rather than romanticizing Ron Lord's vision, she depicts it as a cold, ethically questionable, and existentially threatening construct. This approach, as Rosi Braidotti argues in her posthumanist critiques, is merely an extension of a human-centered paradigm rather than a true departure from it, and as such, it deserves to be critically examined. Ron Lord's enterprise, centred on the utilisation of sex robots, adopts a reductionist approach to the human-machine relationship, prioritising the sexual aspect. Ironically, Ron Lord falls in love with Claire, who is a black evangelical Christian. Claire is, quite evidently, a reference to Claire Clairmont, a historical figure from Mary Shelley's life. This connection highlights the metafictional and intertextual dimensions of Winterson's novel. The character of Claire is significant in the context of posthumanism due to the fact that she blurs the boundaries between human and machine. Ron mentions something like this: "My first sexbot, really, I suppose, the love of my life, was called Claire. That is, I called her Claire. She's retired now. But, well, to me, sitting here now, it's like you have come back to me in human form" (Winterson 239). By making a character like Ron fall in love with Claire, someone who is the complete opposite of himself, Winterson once again positions herself on the side of posthumanist critique.

In contrast to Ron Lord, Ry Shelley's observations about the robots challenge this reductionism, inviting a more complex and critical perspective. Doctor Ry Shelley is "liminal, cusp[ing], in between, merging, undecided, transitional, experimental" (Winterson 29), who falls deeply in love with Victor Stein, is notable for its embodiment of the posthuman subject. As soon as Ry hears Victor Stein's voice, he turns around and explains his first impression about Victor with these words: "A man in his fifties, well-preserved. Botox for sure. Perhaps more if I could look for the scar-lines behind his ears. Tight skin, clean-shaven, dark, restless eyes" (Winterson 106). Being a trans individual, Ry aligns with posthumanist thought not merely in terms of their gender identity, but also as a figure who continually negotiates the cultural, bodily, and ethical boundaries of identity. Dr. Shelley is "here for the global Tec-X-Po on Robotics" (Winterson 25). Ry's identity is not fixed or confined to binary systems; on the contrary, it is fluid and constantly evolving both biologically and culturally. This characterisation bears a striking resemblance to Rosi Braidotti's

concept of the 'nomadic subject.' Braidotti says, "The nomadic subject is my chosen figuration to engage in the task of drawing a cartographic reading of the present, in terms of cultural, political, epistemological, and ethical concerns. It is my preferred way of expressing an insatiable and loving curiosity for the world" (167). Braidotti advocates that the posthuman subject is not grounded in a fixed self, but in a continuous, relational multiplicity. Ry Shelley's body and identity are indicative of this kind of fluidity, both about their own identity and about the technologies with which they engage. Victor Stein's perspective is entirely mind-centred, a standpoint that Ry directly opposes.

Ry Shelley is surprised when he learns Victor Stein's experiment about uploading consciousness into a cloud; he says, "you are interested in bringing back the dead," and Victor reacts, saying that "you make it sound like a Hammer Horror movie" (Winterson 186). For Ry, the concept of life is inextricably linked to the physical body. The body is not merely an integral aspect of one's identity; it also serves as the conduit through which an individual engages with the world. Posthumanism posits the notion of inherent interconnectedness. Ry Shelley employs a dual approach of resistance, both in terms of their body and identity, to the reductive perspective of transhumanism. Ry's existence can be said to exemplify a posthuman subject that lives beyond fixed and conventional categories. The subjects under scrutiny are simultaneously woman and man, body, and mind.

In this sense, the relationship between Ry and Stein mirrors the dynamic between transhumanism and posthumanism, marked by both mutual influence and fundamental opposition. In response to Victor's aspiration to transcend death, Ry Shelley defends the notion that the process of meaning-making is intrinsic to the human experience of mortality. Ry's position is that the quest for eternal life devalues lived experiences and suspends ethical responsibilities. The philosophy under discussion here is one that is founded upon the acceptance of death as a natural element of the human experience, and the concomitant importance of ascertaining a meaningful purpose in each moment of existence. In this context, the novel does not glorify ideals of technological immortality; rather, it elevates life practices that emerge within the reality of death, aligning them with a posthumanist ethic.

It is logical to point out that Ry Shelley, as a hybrid character, stands against Victor Stein's ideas, yet their romantic relationship shows the tension between human flesh and technological transcendence. Ry Shelley experiences a conflict of identity, saying to Victor that "Don't call me a freak because I'm trans" (171). Ry's demands encompass recognition, respect, and freedom from the kind of dehumanising language that has historically positioned trans bodies as unnatural or monstrous. This underscores a pivotal theme in the novel, namely that difference should not be equated with deviance, and that identity should not be subject to the policing of normativity. Ry is a posthuman figure embodying the entanglement of technology and flesh, history, and future. In his discourse, Victor Stein expounds on his perspective on artificial intelligence, claiming that "We have always known that we are not limited to the shape we inhabit" (Winterson 115). This assertion is indicative of his belief in the possibility of transcending the human body through technological means. However, as Ry Shelley listens to him, he is reminded of the surgical procedures his own body has undergone and the experiences that have accompanied his personal transition. Ry Shelley emphasises a more embodied perspective by stating, "I can change my body, but I can't change my body's reading of my body. The paradox is that I felt in the wrong body but for my body it was the right body" (Winterson 310). While Victor Stein advocates for a posthuman future beyond the flesh, Ry Shelley's reflection underscores the enduring significance and limitations of embodied experience, even in the face of technological transformation.

It is also possible to conceptualise Ry as a living, biological cyborg, insofar as Ry has undergone both biological and cultural transformation. Instead of celebrating human advancement, Jeanette Winterson examines the concepts of entanglement, hybridity, and the termination of human primacy through this character. The experiments conducted in Victor's laboratory, namely his endeavour to digitise the human brain, are indicative of a prevailing tendency to mechanise the human being. Conversely, posthumanism conceptualises the human as an entity inherently intertwined with technology, yet not wholly defined by its relationship with it. The subject is regarded as systemic, relational, and in a constant state of evolution. In contrast, Victor's approach is characterised by a reduction of the human element, whereas Ry's methodology is marked by an expansion of this aspect.

The dark reflections of transhumanist vision are visible in the novel. The examples include the commercialisation of sex robots, the replacement of emotional bonds with artificial relationship models, and the reduction of the body to a platform. Mary Shelley's creature is endowed with the capacity to experience a range of emotions, including suffering, love, and anger, embodying a body and sensitivity. On the contrary, in the 21st century, selfish characters such as Victor Stein and Ron Lord aspire to create beings who are devoid of emotion and capable of performing only operations. It contradicts the idea of the relational, multiple, and embodied subject advocated by posthumanist thought. The novel demonstrates a decline in human emotions from the 19th century to the 21st century, coinciding with the period of significant technological advancement. Through the medium of these characters, Winterson exposes the ethical shortcomings and existential threats posed by transhumanism. The strong will to become the master of nature and technology ultimately culminates in a new Frankenstein tragedy, in which humanity turns against itself. In this manner, the novel employs the tenets of Gothic tradition to establish a posthumanist space of interrogation, demonstrating the destructive potential of technological advancement.

The relationship between Shelley's Victor Frankenstein and Ron Lord with technology is supposed to be considered as being at opposite ends of the spectrum. Victor Frankenstein is a tragic figure who pushes the boundaries of human knowledge and science in a quest to defy death and rewrite human destiny. However, this course of action entails the transgression of ethical boundaries and ultimately results in an abdication of responsibility for the being created. In contrast, Ron Lord utilises scientific knowledge only for the pursuit of financial gain and personal enjoyment. The fabrication of sex robots by the aforementioned individual effectively results in the complete commodification of the human body, thereby reducing it, particularly the female form, to a marketable commodity. While Victor Frankenstein's concerns are rooted in philosophical and existential queries, Ron Lord's primary focus is oriented towards market share and customer satisfaction. The utilisation and abuse of technology by both characters is employed as a means to transform human experience; however, Victor's approach is imbued with idealism while Ron's is characterised by a purely superficial and commercial perspective. At this juncture, in contrast to the advent of technology in Gothic novels, a technologically saturated posthuman

narrative in the human being has become increasingly self-centred. However, posthumanism, in its fundamental tenets, seeks to decentre the human by acknowledging the inherent ontological equality of all beings, irrespective of their human or non-human status. The central focus of Winterson's posthuman work is on Victor Stein and Ron Lord, who embody transhumanist ideologies. Jeanette Winterson employs these two characters with the intention of deconstructing the ideals of transhumanism from within a posthuman framework.

Perhaps the most intriguing and thought-provoking aspect of the novel is the presence of a character named 'Victor Frankenstein.' Mary Shelley's Frankenstein reappears in a posthuman era in a dramatically altered form. This part of the novel, which takes place in 1818, the same time Mary Shelley published her novel, is narrated by Mr. Wakefield, a doctor in the Bedlam Asylum in London. Mr. Wakefield is a significant figure in the novel since he represents the gap between reality and fiction. A male patient diagnosed with delusional disorder asserts that he is the Victor Frankenstein written by Mary Shelley. During Shelley's visit to the Bedlam Asylum, he declares, "I am the monster you created, [...] I am the thing that cannot die – and I cannot die because I have never lived" (Winterson 214). Jeanette Winterson employs this character to illustrate the emotional and philosophical costs of posthuman ambitions. While transhumanism is predicated on the notion of immortality and machine consciousness, Winterson cautions that such futures may result in the alienation of the human soul, or worse, its complete eradication. This version of Victor Frankenstein is representative of both Romantic ambition and a cautionary tale concerning the hubris associated with technological endeavours. At this point, he not only echoes Mary Shelley's legacy but also haunts it. His identity is fragmented, situated between the human and the artificial, and his madness reflects a posthuman Gothic condition where selfhood becomes unstable. Instead of engendering a monster, he becomes the monster itself, a disquieting, hybrid fusion of man and machine. The notion that he is mechanical suggests a profound dissociation from the embodied self, thereby propelling the Gothic genre into uncharted territories of psychological and ontological terror.

During a conversation between Mary Shelley and Victor Frankenstein in Bedlam asylum, Mary Shelley tries to persuade Victor that he is not a machine, he is not the Victor Frankenstein that is in Shelley's novel by saying, "Those words are

spoken not by Victor Frankenstein, but by his creature” (215). Ironically, Victor Frankenstein answers, “We are the same, the same” (215). In this instance, Winterson employs the moment to demonstrate that conventional categories become obsolete in the 21st century. The character in Bedlam is a representation of both Victor and his creature, embodying the ambitious mind that dares to create life and the tragic result of that ambition. In the gothic perspective, the monster becomes a metaphor for Victor's guilt, alienation, and failure. Winterson gives the sensation of culpability by literally putting two figures into a single, unstable character. The conventional boundaries that delineate the self from the other, the creator from the created and the body from the mind are no longer perceived to be stable. Victor's situation is indeed very confused in a world covered with technology that he says “I do not know if I am the teller or the tale” (Winterson 194). If an individual exceeds their natural limits, they are susceptible to becoming a monster. Whether the transformation of the Gothic into technology is madness or a projection of a technological future is a question that Winterson herself explores and invites the reader to think about.

Mary Shelley ends her extraordinary novel in a way that encapsulates its gothic essence and paves the way for analysis in line with posthumanist thought. Victor Frankenstein feels devastated by the murders that the monster committed, which makes him overwhelmed by a desire for revenge. Victor follows and looks for the monster even in the Arctic regions. However, he turns out to be very ill and asks for the explorer Robert Walton's help. At the end, the creature learns about Victor's death and feels remorse for all the murders he has committed, and he retreats into the desolate, icy nature, determined to end his own life. The central message of the novel lies in Victor Frankenstein's devastating downfall for his desire to transcend the limits of nature, and in the Creature's decision to destroy himself after living a life marked by rejection and ending in deep remorse. Gothic elements such as dangerous knowledge and the sublimity of nature reach the climax in the final chapters. The ending implies that when technological advancement is pursued without restraint, humans can become both creators and victims. Mary Shelley offers a powerful warning against the obsessive pursuit of transhumanist ambitions.

At the end of Jeanette Winterson's novel, Victor Stein is about to upload his mind into a digital realm, leaving his physical body behind. Yet, the novel refuses to celebrate this transhumanist transformation; on the contrary, it raises ethical and

existential questions through the character of Ry Shelley. While Ry represents the possibility of bodily transformation, they also draw attention to the limitations of the body. Through this contrast, the novel critically interrogates basic transhumanist assumptions, such as the pursuit of immortality and the mind-body dualism. The transformation from Shelley's novel to Winterson's is not only technological but also ideological. While the fear in Shelley's Gothic narrative stems from humanity's attempt to assume the role of God, in Winterson's world, the real danger lies in the desire to sever the connection with the body, emotions, and ultimately with one's humanity, reducing the self to mere data. Winterson takes and recontextualizes Shelley's Gothic warning for the dilemmas of the 21st century. Whereas in Shelley's novel the creature is rejected by society, in Winterson's narrative, it is nature, the body, and emotion that are excluded, posing a profound threat to what it means to be human. Jeanette Winterson distances herself from the anthropocentric, selfish use of technology and initiates a critical reflection on a future dominated by technological power.

4.2. Two Different Writers Giving Birth to Unnatural Beings

Although separated by two centuries, Mary Shelley and Jeanette Winterson are united by their bold reinterpretations of human creation and identity. These exceptional writers both devoted themselves to challenging the boundaries of Renaissance humanism: Mary Shelley employed Gothic tropes and Enlightenment-era scientific anxieties to question the stability of human identity, while Jeanette Winterson confronted posthuman dilemmas shaped by digital and biotechnological transformations. Together, these two female writers emerge as foundational figures in the evolution of posthuman literature: Shelley as the originator of its mythical foundations and Winterson as its contemporary reinterpreter. Rather than providing detailed accounts of the scientific advancements of their era, their works offer profound critiques of humanity's relentless ambition to overcome its organic and ethical limitations.

Mary Shelley's message about the power of technology and the expansion of human abilities, encapsulated within the creature's skin in 1818, was carefully received by Jeanette Winterson and reanimated in the circuits and flesh of the posthuman era in the 21st century. Even Mary Shelley herself was astonished during

the 19th century that she could conceive such a terrifying and extraordinary idea. “How did I, a young girl, come to think of, and dwell on, such a hideous idea?” (Shelley 1). Indeed, Mary Shelley aimed to write “a story to rival those which had excited us to this task. One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror” (Shelley 3). Mary Shelley's gothic novel stands there “as a warning against the rapidly changing science which tries to control nature and turn man into God” (Knudsen 20). She must have succeeded, as even today, a technologically updated version of her work waits for analysis.

Jeanette Winterson highlights Mary Shelley's foresight regarding technology in her collection of articles called *12 Bytes: How We Got Here, Where We Might Go Next* (2021). “[Mary Shelley] saw it coming” because she “recognised a decisive shift in the fundamental meaning of what it means to be human” (Winterson 9-10). In her rewriting, Jeanette Winterson discovers and explores Mary Shelley's legacy. Not only does she reflect Mary Shelley's anxieties about uncontrolled creation, she also expands upon them in an era where the distinction between humanity and technology, and between the soul and software, is increasingly ambiguous. Together, these works contribute to a timeless conversation about the essence of being human and the implications of potentially surpassing human nature. Taking this into account, this chapter offers a comparative analysis of how Mary Shelley's gothic narrative transforms into a posthuman meditation in Winterson's retelling. This transformation occurs not only through thematic echoes but also through a profound restructuring of literary form, ethical inquiry, and ontological boundaries. The section examines the interplay between the two novels, tracing the development of the ‘monster’ figure, the changing depiction of scientific overreach, and the reconceptualisation of humanity amid technological change. By closely analysing these two novels and drawing on posthumanist theory, this chapter will demonstrate how *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) builds on and moves beyond gothic conventions to present a uniquely contemporary perspective on posthuman life.

Although they lived in different eras shaped by distinct philosophical, scientific, and cultural circumstances, Mary Shelley, and Jeanette Winterson both had a bold commitment to questioning the nature of existence and the limits of humanity. Writing at the turn of the 19th century, Shelley was influenced by the spirit of the Enlightenment and the emerging ideals of Romanticism. This period was characterized

by a dynamic interplay between reason and emotion, and between scientific progress and metaphysical doubt. Her novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) emerged from this intellectual climate, blending Gothic horror and decay with a profound ethical reflection on the ramifications of scientific exploration. As the daughter of radical thinkers Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, Shelley was naturally inclined to challenge belief systems, especially those related to creation, agency, and human imperfection.

On the contrary, unlike Mary Shelley, Jeanette Winterson writes her works in the context of the 21st century, which is a time shaped not by anxieties surrounding electricity or galvanism, but by the complex implications of artificial intelligence, fluid gender identities, and the breakdown of biologically fixed definitions of humanity. Winterson follows and employs special techniques which belong to that century, such as self-referential storytelling and intricate intertextual layers, in order to interweave multiple historical periods and philosophical frameworks. In place of simply paying tribute to Mary Shelley's work, Jeanette Winterson revives and reinterprets its core questions in a contemporary technological setting. Her work raises several questions that she encourages the reader to consider while following the story, such as what it means to bring life into existence, who decides what a human is, and the consequences of having such definitions collapse.

As disruptors of literary tradition and interrogators of humanistic assumptions, Shelley destabilizes Enlightenment ideals by defining a creature that becomes more human than his creator, and Winterson questions the stability of the human itself by populating her novel with transgender and post-organic beings. Mary Shelley criticizes the desire to dominate nature through Victor Frankenstein's hubris, while Jeanette Winterson expands this critique to include contemporary capitalism, technological determinism, and heteronormative binaries. Each of these authors, in their own time, gives birth to speculative fiction not just as a narrative tool but as a philosophical instrument, using fiction to probe the contours of identity, morality, and embodiment. By positioning Shelley and Winterson as literary matriarchs of posthuman thought, this chapter goes beyond a simple analysis of literary influence. Instead, it highlights a dynamic and ongoing tradition of philosophical and speculative engagement with the concept of the human and its alternatives. Both authors serve not only as commentators on the scientific fears of their respective eras but also as creators of innovative

narrative forms, frameworks designed to contain ambiguous beings, technological hybrids, and unresolved questions.

To be able to deeply analyze a literary work through a particular theoretical perspective, it is mostly crucial to recognize that every narration style which is created by the author, whether it concerns language, character construction, or spatial design, carries intentional meaning. In a literary text, there can be no word that is accidentally there, no character that is arbitrary, and no setting that is meaningless; each element in a literary work contributes to the broader philosophical, symbolic, or thematic framework of the novel. These components are carefully selected by the writer not only to tell a story but also to reflect, question and criticise the cultural and intellectual contexts in which the work was produced, therefore, in order to understand how a Gothic science fiction novel which is written in the 19th century has evolved into a posthuman narrative in the 21st century, it becomes inevitable to examine the settings in which both stories unfold.

Winterson's posthuman novel is in parallel with Donna Haraway's ideas. In her "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1985), she explains that

Twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert (11).

The transformation from Mary Shelley's novel to Jeanette Winterson's novel involves more than a change of themes or technologies; it also involves a profound reimagining of space, atmosphere, and environment, reflecting changing ideas about humanity, identity, and creation. In both novels, the setting is not merely a backdrop, but an active, dynamic force that reflects and reinforces the philosophical questions at the heart of each narrative. From the haunting landscapes of the Romantic sublime in Mary Shelley's work to the fragmented, postmodern environments in Winterson's work, the construction of physical and metaphorical spaces reveals deep cultural anxieties and ideological shifts. These transformations mirror the shift from a human-centred worldview to one that is increasingly mediated by technology, artificial intelligence, and posthuman possibilities. This section offers a focused yet foundational comparison by closely analysing the use of setting in each novel, laying

the groundwork for understanding the broader cultural, technological, and philosophical forces that have shaped the literary evolution from the Gothic to the posthuman.

4.3. Gothic and Posthuman Settings: Atmospheres of Fear and Future

The categorization of a literary work as ‘gothic’ is primarily rooted in the environment of its setting. In a gothic fiction, the setting is not simply a stage on which events suddenly occur or take place, yet it plays an active and crucial role in generating fear, suspense, and heightened emotional states, which are accepted as the main features of every gothic work in the literary world. The mood and symbolic resonance of the novels’ space are vital in shaping the Gothic aesthetic. Mostly known Gothic locations, such as castles, shadowy laboratories, cemeteries, and barren landscapes, are deliberately chosen by authors with the aim of evoking uneasy emotions in the reader. Gothic environments are often depicted as isolated and infused with historical trauma as well as moral tension. Ultimately, a story that lacks a setting that fosters darkness, uncertainty, and existential crisis cannot fully convey the feeling of the gothic mode.

Accordingly, the setting in Gothic fiction is neither passive nor decorative; rather, it actively determines the atmosphere and reinforces the central concerns of horror, the uncanny, and the disintegration of human boundaries. In doing so, it reflects people’s real-life fears as though holding up a mirror to them. Besides the atmospheric function, Gothic settings operate as the inner landscapes of the characters. Dark mansions, abandoned asylums, or cathedrals are spaces, but they symbolize the emotional ruin and madness of the main character. The disintegration of such spaces gives a sense of dislocation about the past and the present. Gothic works include stairwells, attics, and cellars, representing the unknown and the unconscious of the protagonist. The stormy and misty moorland nature of these novels reinforces human weakness against natural forces. For these reasons, the setting is the dynamic agent in gothic works, giving direction for both the plot and the readers. In Shelley’s novel, Victor is about to bring his creature to life in his room and laboratory in Ingolstadt. He says, “It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils” (Shelley 45). The gothic setting emphasizes Victor’s fear and foreshadows his regret due to his act of exceeding human power, which, in Winterson’s posthuman

setting, transforms into a clinical environment where the horror comes from the erasure of the body and digitizing human consciousness instead of the grotesque body.

The posthuman classification of a literary work is also deeply intertwined with the nature and function of its setting. In posthuman fiction, settings are not simply physical spaces; indeed, they are dynamic environments that mirror the dissolution of traditional boundaries. These spaces often include technologically saturated zones such as cryogenic chambers, AI laboratories, virtual realities, and medical or cybernetic research facilities. Such environments are typically fragmented or dislocated, and they evoke a different kind of unease, rooted in ontological uncertainty and the instability of human identity. In contrast to the haunted castles and crypts of gothic settings, posthuman settings are cold, clinical, and mostly futuristic. They aim to challenge the notion of the self, situating the characters in such landscapes that are constantly shifting or artificially constructed. These environments often foreground the mechanization of life and show the isolation of the characters in the novel from the real world. To illustrate, Victor Stein takes Ry Shelley to his secret laboratory and “it’s underground. Manchester has a series of deep tunnels. You could say there is Manchester beneath Manchester” (Winterson 163). He emphasises more about what he does in the laboratory, saying that “Sometimes things need to be done a little more circumspectly. Behind closed doors” (Winterson 163). It is one of the crucial places where the reader is exposed to the technological experiments. When Victor and Ry go inside the underground canals, which were built for the transportation of goods in the 19th century, Victor puts forward that “it was Marx’s time in Manchester, and his friendship with Engels, who owned a factory here, that gave Marx the material he needed for the Communist Manifesto” (Winterson 165). As it is evident, the laboratory of Shelley’s Victor Frankenstein is reimagined in the 21st century as a far more audacious space in which the limits of human lifespan are exceeded.

In posthuman fiction, just like in gothic fiction, the setting is not inert; it is a conceptual space that materializes the anxieties of a world where the human is no longer the central measure of existence. Similar to gothic settings, posthuman environments are not passive settings; instead, they reshape the readers’ understanding of reality in a world that is no longer centered around human beings. Posthuman spaces are intentionally constructed to manipulate the human subject, reflecting themes of artificial control and technological existence. Moreover, posthuman settings blur the

lines between the real and the artificial, making the readers suspicious about what is real and what is artificial. This mirrors the fixed identity and transformation at both the physical and conceptual levels, which are the problematic issues according to posthuman theory.

Mary Shelley's novel, on the other hand, is firmly rooted in the Gothic tradition, with its evocative settings playing a vital role in shaping the emotional atmosphere and underlying themes. Whether it's battered landscapes, isolated mountain terrains, shadowy laboratories, or confining domestic spaces, each setting in the novel serves not just as a physical backdrop but also as a reflection of the characters' psychological struggles and ethical dilemmas. At the heart of the novel's Gothic style is a fixation on sublime nature, decay, solitude, and the dissolution of the line between the natural and the unnatural. These themes are conveyed through repeated imagery of shadow, violent storms, and overpowering scenery. Mary Shelley deliberately constructs each setting to evoke a specific emotional impact in the reader, reflecting the fear and horror that arise from Victor Frankenstein's defiance of natural order.

The majestic Alpine regions of Geneva and the Swiss mountains, for example, provided Victor Frankenstein with a sense of peace, happiness, and emotional relief. Yet, as the narrative continues, these landscapes shift in tone, becoming cold and desolate, which is a foreshadowing of Victor's sense of guilt and moral decay. Thus, isolated places such as Mont Blanc and the Mer de Glace become symbolic settings where Victor must face both the vast, uncontrollable force of nature and the horrific outcomes of his actions. In one of the chapters of the book, Victor Frankenstein talks about his emotions, saying

The sea, or rather the vast river of ice, wound among its dependent mountains, whose aerial summits hung over its recesses. Their icy and glittering peaks shone in the sunlight over the clouds. My heart, which was before sorrowful, now swelled with something like joy... These sublime and magnificent scenes afforded me the greatest consolation that I was capable of receiving (Shelley 76).

This illustration exemplifies the gothic sublime, a central aesthetic figure in Gothic literature that evokes awe and wonder in the face of overwhelming natural forces. Mary Shelley uses the dramatic landscape of the Mer de Glace and Mont Blanc not only for a simple atmospheric description, but also as a psychological extension of

Victor Frankenstein's emotional state. Nature is no longer portrayed as gentle or protective; instead, it appears vast and indifferent, highlighting the consequences of humanity's scientific ambition and the ethical shortcomings of moving beyond nature. Another quote mentioned by Victor Frankenstein again gives a lot of clues about the atmosphere of the narrative. "These sublime and magnificent scenes afforded me the greatest consolation that I was capable of receiving" (Shelley 75). At this stage, Victor is consumed by guilt, sorrow, and emotional anguish following William's death and Justine's execution. To seek relief, he turns to the natural world for solace, hoping to find a sense of peace in its embrace.

Naturally, the primary setting of the novel, and the space where the Gothic horror is most intensely realized, is Victor Frankenstein's laboratory. It functions not only as a site of scientific experimentation but also as a symbolic realm of transgression, where the boundaries between life and death, nature and artifice are dangerously blurred. The laboratory's dark and secretive atmosphere evokes a profound sense of dread. It becomes the birthplace of a helpless creature that embodies both physical monstrosity and metaphysical horror. Thus, one more time, Mary Shelley materializes the darker implications of unchecked scientific ambition and the terrifying consequences of assuming a role in the act of creation. "It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils" (Shelley 44). There is a dark, cold, and dismal tone in Victor Frankenstein's words, creating a mood of unease. November, with its associations to decay and the onset of winter, underscores the unnatural and ominous nature of Victor's act. The laboratory generates a strong sense of claustrophobia and concealment. It serves as the site of an unnatural creation and grotesque transformation, reflecting the classic Gothic trope of the hidden or cursed chamber. Lacking light, warmth, and emotional connection, it functions as an inverted womb where life is unnaturally constructed through artificial and deathly methods.

It is also worth mentioning that the act of grave robbing and assembling the creature from dead body parts underscores a preoccupation with decay and resurrection, Gothic fiction's obsession with the past haunting the present, reinforcing the power of the Gothic setting. In the fourth chapter, Victor finds himself saying, "I collected bones from charnel-houses and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame" (Shelley 43). This passage emphasizes

Victor's boundary-breaking behavior, unearthing graves and constructing the creature from corpses, which reflects key Gothic elements such as terror and the dangers of challenging the natural order.

Mary Shelley's novel was written during a period when the Gothic and science fiction genres were at their peak in the 19th century. It has now been rewritten in the heart of the 21st-century technological and posthuman age, intricately woven with the fabric of modern technology. In this reimagining, the novel's spatial construction undergoes a profound transformation. Jeanette Winterson's approach entails a transformation of the conventional Gothic settings of Shelley's renowned work, affecting a transposition within a distinctly posthuman framework. Conventional Gothic settings, such as cemeteries and dimly lit laboratories, are reimagined as cryogenic chambers, artificial intelligence laboratories, body part storage sites, and technology summits. While these updated environments continue to provoke fear, the source of this fear has shifted from the supernatural to a deeper, existential anxiety. The cryogenics centre in *Arizona* is indicative of humanity's preoccupation with the pursuit of immortality and the transcendence of the physical limitations of the human body. In contradistinction to conventional Gothic sepulchres, which are symbolic of demise and finality, these technological spaces evoke a condition of suspended existence, wherein corpses are considered as commodities and the concept of death is disregarded. In a similar vein, AI laboratories, where consciousness is converted into code and identity is digitised, become spaces in which the human self is no longer untouchable but subject to manipulation, reconstruction, and technological control.

The novel as a whole is highly suitable for analysis through the lens of posthumanist theory; however, since the thesis examines how a Gothic novel transforms into a posthuman one, a quote that includes a Gothic setting has also been discussed. An important quote that illustrates the transition from a traditional Gothic setting to a distinctly posthuman environment is delivered by Ry Shelley as follows "The nearby world of AI will be a world where the physical limits of our bodies will be irrelevant. Robots will manage much of what humans manage today" (Winterson 73). The quote encapsulates the novel's transition from a traditional Gothic setting to a posthuman environment in the sense that it emphasizes that the world is becoming increasingly technological and that the *Homo sapiens* species will no longer hold the same significance as it once did. This shift aligns with the novel's central concern: the

decentering of the human in a world redefined by artificial intelligence, robotics, and biotechnology. The eerie sterility of settings like the cryogenics facility in Arizona or the AI labs in Manchester replaces the damp, decaying spaces of Gothic tradition.

Mary Shelley created a gothic world in which the natural sublime mirrors inner turmoil. On the contrary, Jeanette Winterson's data centers and underground laboratories project the anxieties of the digital world. The text is characterised by a depiction of stark and unsettling environments, wherein the boundaries of identity become indistinct, memories are able to persist beyond the physical body, and death is not perceived as an inevitable conclusion, but rather as a process that may be susceptible to reversal. In this manner, the novel's posthuman settings achieve more than a mere updating of the Gothic setting of Mary Shelley's work; indeed, they serve to intensify its fundamental fears by translating them into a modern context. These spaces give rise to significant questions concerning the nature of the body, moral responsibility, and the definition of humanity in a world characterised by rapid technological advancement. These issues extend beyond the novel's settings and are reflected in its characters, whose evolving identities highlight the moral and existential challenges of the posthuman era. An exploration of these changes illuminates the ongoing redefining of human self-concepts.

Briefly, Winterson employs a literary technique that disrupts the conventional conception of time by masterfully intertwining past and future. The novel does not adhere to a linear chronology. The narrative composed by Mary Shelley is analogous to the world inhabited by her contemporaries. The permeability is indicative of a fluidity between temporalities, as opposed to a temporal unity, which is a concept emphasised in certain strands of posthumanist thought. The concept of time is not depicted as a linear progression, but rather as a cyclical and multifaceted phenomenon. The structural parallel established between Mary Shelley's narratives and Ry's experiences represents the non-linear conception of time central to posthumanism. The present study explores the notion that Ry carries Mary's literary and existential legacies into the present.

4.4. Haunted Voices transforming into Hybrid Narratives

Jeanette Winterson moves from one character's point of view to another, presenting their inner thoughts and perspectives. From time to time, Winterson's narrative is random and imaginary, similar to the mindset of human beings. She skillfully adjusts her writing style to reflect the period in which the novel is set. As Winterson begins to narrate Mary Shelley's process of writing her gothic novel, the language she uses gives the impression that it is Mary Shelley herself speaking. Winterson remains so faithful to historical facts that even Mary Shelley's miscarried children are mentioned in the novel. "We are always beginning again I said. And do we leave a dead child behind in every place?" (Winterson 252). From Mary Shelley's perspective, while describing Victor Frankenstein, she mentions:

He will discern the course of the blood, know the knot of muscle, the density of bone, the delicacy of tissue, how the heart pumps. Airways, liquids, mass, jelly, the cauliflower mystery of the brain. He will compose a man, larger than life, and make him live. I will use electricity. Storm, Spark, Lightning. I will rod him with fire like Prometheus. He will steal life from the gods. At what cost? (Winterson 67).

The internal questions and the word choices are presented in such an authentic way that it feels as if Mary Shelley has written them because in *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818), Mary Shelley utters similar words depicting the purpose of Victor Frankenstein in life and the reason for his existence as such:

As a child I had not been content with the results promised by the modern professors of natural science. With a confusion of ideas only to be accounted for by my extreme youth and my want of a guide on such matters, I had retraced the steps of knowledge along the paths of time and exchanged the discoveries of recent inquirers for the dreams of forgotten alchemists (Shelley 37).

In addition to such similarities, there are also differences between the narrative styles of the two novels. The main reason for this is that Jeanette Winterson's adaptation was written in the 21st century from a posthumanist perspective. The difference in narrative styles is not merely an aesthetic choice but it is a direct reflection of the intellectual frameworks to which the texts belong, namely, the Gothic and posthumanism. Mary Shelley's novel explores the terrifying consequences of man assuming the role of God through a gothic narration, while Winterson's novel

transposes this inquiry into the 21st century, shaped by digitalization and artificial intelligence, employing a multi-layered and experimental narrative form. *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) is written using an epistolary narrative technique in which the story unfolds through a series of letters. The narration is layered, weaving together Captain Walton's correspondence, Victor Frankenstein's account, and the creature's perspective. The narrative style closely aligns with the Gothic tradition.

Mary Shelley begins her legendary novel, one that would resonate for two hundred years and beyond, with an epigraph from John Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1667) "Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay to mould me man? Did I solicit thee from darkness to promote me?" (10.743-745). Her decision to start writing the novel with this particular line is deeply significant both thematically and philosophically. The quotation, which is voiced by Adam in Milton's epic, encapsulates a profound sense of existential anguish and alienation. By placing it at the very beginning of her novel, Mary Shelley signals that her creature, similar to Milton's Adam, will deal with the trauma of creation, abandonment, and the search for meaning in a world that did not ask for or care about his existence. Different from Milton's Adam, Victor Frankenstein's creature lacks divine origin and moral guidance, which strongly intensifies his isolation and uncontrollable monstrosity.

This logically understandable intertextual serves to foreground one of the central Gothic concerns of the novel, that is, the anxiety surrounding human agency, divine limits, and the consequences of overstepping natural boundaries. John Milton's epigraph suggests a world where conventional systems of order and belief are undermined, again, another element that lies at the very heart of the Gothic tradition. Similarly, in his role as the modern Prometheus, Victor Frankenstein takes on a godlike position, yet he neglects the moral obligations that come with such power. Driven by the Enlightenment rationalism and a fascination with scientific progress, Victor Frankenstein succeeds in generating life, but without the guidance of ethical responsibility. In this way, the epigraph that Mary Shelley preferred to use not only aligns the novel with the Gothic genre's focus on boundary-crossing and the uncanny but also quietly introduces the looming presence of technological advancement. Mary Shelley foreshadows a nature where distinctions between human, machine, and creator

begin to dissolve. Through her invocation of Milton, she positions her novel as a dual warning, both spiritually and scientifically.

The significance of the epigraph reverberates most powerfully in Victor Frankenstein's creature's own engagement with John Milton's text, which he discovers during his intellectual awakening. As he begins to read *Paradise Lost* (1667), he starts to see himself reflected in both Adam and Satan, created, yet unloved; abandoned, yet conscious:

Like Adam, I was apparently united by no link to any other being in existence; but his state was far different from mine in every other respect. He had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature, happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator; he was allowed to converse with, and acquire knowledge from beings of a superior nature: but I was wretched, helpless, and alone. Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition (Shelley 100).

The sorrow that the creature had to experience expresses a state of being suspended between purity and condemnation, brought into existence unwillingly, deprived of direction, and condemned to suffer in solitude. The condition that includes both emotional and social isolation reflects a core principle of the gothic genre, a universe shaped by neglect, in-betweenness, and moral uncertainty. Mary Shelley channels the inner conflict beyond the psychological realm by embedding it deeply into the novel's overall mood and spatial design. Rather than being confined to shocking events or terrifying images, the Gothic theme manifests itself in the novel through the physical and emotional landscapes of the story.

Much like Mary Shelley did, Jeanette Winterson prefaces her reimagined narrative with a deliberately chosen and thought-provoking epigraph, signaling the thematic complexities that will unfold throughout the text. This time, however, there is a notable difference: the quotation is taken from the music group called Eagles' 1972 song *Take It Easy*. "We may lose and we may win, though we will never be here again" (Winterson epigraph). The quote speaks to the irreversibility of life and the unrepeatable nature of existence, basic key concerns in posthumanist thought. The quote acknowledges the promises and perils of human advancement, especially technological and scientific. It evokes the temporality of humans and technology. Once

human beings cross certain technological or biological thresholds, there is no turning back. The human condition becomes obsolete.

Winterson's novel is saturated with these ideas, from artificial intelligence to philosophical discussions of immortality and the self. The quote also emphasizes the melancholy of the fact that the human world is slipping away from moment to moment, and what comes next is unknown to human beings. It is much like the situation of Victor Frankenstein and Victor Stein, who cannot return to innocence after aimlessly trying to exceed human limits. In Jeanette Winterson's novel, humanity cannot return to its organic self after digital and mechanical transformation. Winterson begins *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) with this specific line to catch the novel's main conflict, that is, a deep transformation is underway affecting identities, physical forms, relationships, and even the human species itself. Thus, the quote exists to express posthumanism's irreversible shift. These subjects in the novel will be revisited later as the analysis progresses and is developed in comparison with Mary Shelley's work. However, since Mary Shelley's novel opens with this specific quotation from Milton, and Jeanette Winterson's work opens with a special lyric, a detailed examination at this point is necessary. This section of the thesis will examine the spatial configurations of the works of Mary Shelley and Jeanette Winterson through a comparative lens. By analysing how each novel constructs and utilises space, both physical and symbolic, it will become evident how the Gothic narrative tradition has been reinterpreted and reshaped into a posthuman literary form. This comparison will highlight not only the transformation in narrative setting but also the broader shifts in how human identity, embodiment, and creation are conceived in two distinct historical and cultural contexts.

Mary Shelley's novel consists of a series of letters which is written by Robert Walton. He begins his words, "You will rejoice to hear that no disaster has accompanied the commencement of an enterprise which you have regarded with such evil forebodings" (Shelley 13). The very first sentence of the novel immediately establishes that the narrative is framed as a series of personal letters from Walton to his sister, as well as demonstrating the epistolary format, introducing a subjective, personal tone, and showing that the story will be mediated through the perspective of a character within the story. By presenting the story through personal letters and layered perspectives, the novel deepens the emotional and psychological intensity,

which makes the Gothic narrative stronger. It enhances isolation and guilt themes due to the fact that it allows characters to confess their fears and obsessions in their voices. It also creates ambiguity and uncertainty, which are other key gothic elements, through unreliable narration and fragmented storytelling.

On the other hand, *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) employs a distinctly posthuman kind of narrative style, which is characterized by parallel storylines, multiple narrators, including historical figures like Mary Shelley, AI entities, trans characters, and nonlinear temporal shifts. The story unfolds across both the 19th and 21st centuries by creating a layered structure that fluidly moves between different periods and perspectives. The fragmented and temporally unstable narrative form of the novel is deeply connected to posthuman fiction. As mentioned on the previous pages, posthumanism challenges the idea of a unified, stable human subject and instead embraces multiplicity, hybridity, and aims to end the cultural binaries. The structure of Winterson's novel reflects these concepts because the bodies in the novel are fluid or reassembled, and the boundary between organic and artificial collapses. The narrative performs the posthuman condition also by refusing linearity, coherence, or a single authoritative voice, just like posthumanism refuses fixed definitions of what it means to be human.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, one of the characters of the novel, says, "The body fails and falls. But the body is not the truth of what we are. The spirit will not return to a ruined house" (Winterson 15). Jeanette Winterson used this quote by Percy Bysshe Shelley at a very fitting moment because Percy's quote captures the novel's engagement with posthuman concepts, especially the separation between the physical body and the core of human identity. It reflects posthumanist thinking by implying that our true essence extends beyond our biological form, echoing the book's broader themes of artificial intelligence, self-awareness, and the malleability of identity. Logically, both novels present a sense of entanglement. In the opening chapters, Ry Shelley comments on the creature created by Victor Frankenstein, saying that "Frankenstein was a vision of how life might be created – the first non-human intelligence" (Winterson 27).

In the final analysis, both *Frankenstein* and *Frankissstein* articulate a deep anxiety over the limits of human ambition and the ethical dilemmas posed by

technology and scientific advancement. Mary Shelley's Gothic narrative warns of the consequences of disrupting the natural order through creation, whereas Jeanette Winterson's posthuman retelling expands this caution into a digital age where bodies are disposable and identity transforms into data. In contrasting Victor Frankenstein's horror at his creation with Victor Stein's confident pursuit of disembodiment, Winterson emphasizes that the true monstrosity may no longer be the creature, but the unchecked technological will to transcend mortality. As she states in *12 Bytes*, "There is no back to go back to. There is only forward, into whatever comes next" (5). This forward movement demands not only technological progress but a renewed ethical consciousness, one that challenges transhumanist dreams and reclaims vulnerability, embodiment, and relationality as essential to being human. Transformation from Gothic fears to posthuman critique prepares the ground for a final reflection on how literature continues to question what it means to be human in the age of machines.

CONCLUSION

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) and Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) are separated by two hundred years, yet they are closely intertwined through their shared engagement with themes of exceeding human limits through the developing technology and the fragility of the human condition. The two works arguably offer the most compelling example of how a gothic novel can evolve into a posthuman narrative as well as how literary imagination, from the early 19th century to the technological 21st century, reshapes the understanding of what it means to be human. Focusing on these two extraordinary novels of these remarkable female writers, the thesis has revealed how the boundaries between human-nonhuman, natural-artificial, and body-mind have been questioned and redefined. Even though they have been written in different periods of time, both of the novels engage with a shared curiosity and concern about the future of humanity. Drawing from these discussions, the introduction part has presented the main focus and scope of the thesis, along with a concise overview of the lives and works of Mary Shelley and Jeanette Winterson.

In the first chapter of the thesis, Humanism, which places the human at the center, is thoroughly defined in order to clearly understand what posthumanism is and what it is not. The British Humanist Association defines Humanism to be "the belief that we can give good lives without religious or superstitious beliefs." Furthermore, transhumanism, which is rooted in the belief in human potential enhanced through science and technology, has also been discussed in this thesis in order to compare and distinguish it from posthumanism. The thesis has explored the core principles of posthumanism along with the views of several prominent theorists associated with the field, such as Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles, Rosi Braidotti, and Pramod K. Nayar. These thinkers paved the way for a more fluid, relational understanding of the meaning and aim of posthumanism. Instead of accepting humans as the center figure of the planet, posthumanist theory puts them in the center together with machines, animals, and other life forms, encouraging an ethically responsible worldview. According to posthumanist ideology, nature, technology, and all the other things in life are interconnected, which is a response to the classical hierarchies that were created by Humanism during the Enlightenment. The celebration of mind and individualism of the Enlightenment marginalized those who do not fit into the 'ideal human'

category. Humans who are not Western, white, and rich have always been ostracized from the center, which created a certain hierarchy in terms of racism and classification. The anthropocentric system not only puts a certain group of humans into the center, but it also brings binary oppositions between humans and machines, mind and body, and culture and nature. Posthumanism challenges these binaries and puts forward that the boundaries between humans and non-humans are nothing but an illusion. N. Katherine Hayles shares the same idea, saying that “Perhaps, none was more disturbing and potentially revolutionary than the idea that the boundaries of the human subject are constructed rather than given” (235).

Naturally, human beings have always been entangled with animals, plants, and technology. Once considered insignificant to human identity, this entanglement is now considered to be the most important detail to understand the human condition. From the primitive tools of previous centuries to contemporary dependence on smart technology and prosthetic limbs, humanity has always evolved with nonhuman elements. Today, technological advancement has reached unprecedented levels; therefore, it is rare to find individuals whose physical or cognitive capacities have not been extended or altered by technology. There are hardly any people left who do not carry some form of technological component within their bodies. Expectedly, the figure of the ‘cyborg’ becomes more than a symbol of technological hybridity; it becomes a political and philosophical agent that disrupts established hierarchies and anthropocentric assumptions. As N. Katherine Hayles emphasizes, the posthuman subject “thinks of the body as the original prosthesis we all learn to manipulate” (3), blurring the boundary between enhancement and embodiment. Posthumanist theory, therefore, reimagines subjectivity as networked and fundamentally mutually reliant on nonhuman entities. Posthumanism calls for an ethical environment in which all beings and ecosystems exist. It aims to break the illusion that human beings are superior to all beings.

The first chapter of the thesis traces the history of the concept of the ‘cyborg’ and the development of the field of cybernetics, which focuses on the relationship between biological and mechanical systems, revealing how posthumanism is deeply intertwined with the evolving realities of a technologically advancing world. The cyborg becomes emblematic of the current condition of humanity, in which identity and embodiment are no longer confined to the human body alone. This

dynamic illustrates how posthumanism is in fact, a response to the material conditions and existential dilemmas of the 21st century. The rapid rise of artificial intelligence and smart devices proves the fact that posthumanism has already affected the daily lives of human beings. Technology has advanced so rapidly that these developments have transformed not only the body but also the mind and patterns of thought.

Leonardo da Vinci's *Vitruvian Man*, which symbolizes the mindset of Renaissance Humanism, stands as one of the clearest representations of the exclusionary nature of binary thought structures. However, with the emergence of advanced technologies and the rise of alternative modes of thinking, particularly posthumanist and non-anthropocentric frameworks, this idealized figure has gradually lost its central relevance, revealing the limitations of humanist universality in a world that increasingly embraces hybridity, multiplicity, and fluid identity. The man in the portrait is muscular, intellectual, and white in appearance, and any being that is outside of this category is marginalized. Posthumanism aims not only to place humans on equal footing with other entities but also to dismantle the internal hierarchies within humanity itself. All people in the world, male or female, rich or poor, powerful, or powerless, Western or Eastern, are considered to be equal and are already intertwined with one another, as well as with other entities, including technology.

As an interdisciplinary field, posthumanism also influences philosophy and literature. Posthumanist works, in particular, can be seen as a continuation of the Gothic and science fiction genres. Both of these genres, which are deeply intertwined with monsters, robots, and the unknown, carry the theme of humanity's transgression at their core. Posthumanist works draw on the fear and uncertainty of the Gothic and the technological imagination of science fiction to construct a world that goes beyond the human. Posthumanism has emerged as a critical response to the shifting realities of the 21st century. Thanks to posthumanism, the need to reconsider humanity's place and definition in the world has gained significance. The aim here is to move beyond the Humanist perspective and to develop an ethical understanding of life.

The ideas discussed in the first chapter are reflected in the transformation of Mary Shelley's Gothic novel *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818) into a posthumanist narrative in Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019), and it is analyzed in detail in the following chapters of the thesis. These novels have

been examined as literary examples that demonstrate how the defined figure of the human becomes decentered within a posthuman universe.

In Chapter 2, Mary Shelley's life and her literary contribution to the Gothic tradition have been explored in detail, revealing how her unique intellectual heritage and personal experiences shaped her engagement with themes of scientific ambition, moral responsibility, and the fragility of human identity. The chapter also emphasizes the philosophical and literary influences that informed Shelley's groundbreaking novel *Frankenstein*, positioning it as a pivotal work that not only embodies the anxieties of early 19th-century Enlightenment rationalism but also anticipates the posthuman concerns of the 21st century. Since the novel's basic concerns are the limits of human ambition, ethics, and creation, it is more than a science fiction and horror tale, resonating with posthumanist discourse. In this regard, Shelley's creature is a prototype for the posthuman figure, constructed, othered, and excluded from the center. As Rosi Braidotti puts forward, "Posthumanism does not celebrate the death of the human but calls for a renewal of ethical relations among embodied, technologically mediated, and ecologically embedded subjects" (190). As the daughter of political philosopher William Godwin and feminist thinker Mary Wollstonecraft, and as the partner of Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley's work reflects not only a Gothic fascination with the sublime and the grotesque but also a deep philosophical meditation on human agency and its limits.

As posthumanist theorists examine the changing dynamics between humanity and technology, Mary Shelley's literary works provide a foundation for understanding the intricacies of this change. Considering the fact that Mary Shelley's partner was the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley and she was the daughter of philosophical thinkers William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, it is not surprising that she produced works so influential that they transcended her century. As being already mentioned in the thesis, her works such as *Mathilda* (1819), *Valperga* (1823), and *The Last Man* (1826) reflect the anxieties of developing technological and scientific explorations, and her *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) functions as a foreshadowing for the technological crises of the 21st century.

Just like Mary Shelley, Jeanette Winterson's life and her contributions to literature have been thoroughly examined in Chapter 3. As a 21st-century author who

deeply engaged with questions of identity, embodiment, and power, Winterson builds on the Gothic tradition she inherits from Shelley, yet reimagines it through a posthumanist lens suitable for the contemporary context. Her personal experiences with marginalization, philosophical inquiries, and her experimental narrative style create her literary work, rendering it a fertile ground for posthuman critique. In *Frankissstein*, Winterson explicitly engages with and challenges the assumptions of transhumanism, a movement often regarded as an extension of Enlightenment Humanism. Characters like Victor Stein and Ron Lord embody transhumanist fantasies of bodily transcendence, digital immortality, and male-dominated technocapitalism. Winterson deconstructs these narratives by exposing their ethical blind spots and by situating them within a broader discourse of domination, exclusion, and anthropocentric arrogance. As such, the novel criticizes not only the transhumanist dream of surpassing human limitations but also the underlying humanist assumptions that still privilege certain forms of life and consciousness over others. Thus, Jeanette Winterson embraces and elevates posthumanism, which advocates for the equal recognition of all forms of existence, taking human beings away from the center of the world. Her literary works demonstrate how posthuman fiction can challenge the limits of what it means to be human in a rapidly growing technological era. Her writings explore themes such as gender, bodily identity, technological transformation, and speculative imagination, which are the basic concerns of a posthumanist novel. *Frankissstein* continues, develops, and reframes the technological anxieties of Mary Shelley.

Jeanette Winterson introduces the character of Ry Shelley in her novel to challenge the transhumanist perspective, represented by characters like Victor Stein and Ron Lord, who exploit technology solely for the benefit of their species, disregarding all non-human life forms. Through Ry, Winterson advocates for her own views, offering a counter-narrative to the anthropocentric ideologies embodied by these characters. As seen in her other works, such as *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), *The PowerBook* (2000), and *The Stone Gods* (2007), multiplicity and marginal voices are things that have always been embraced by Winterson. As a writer, she emphasizes the use of intertextuality and fragmentation, making her one of the advocate voices in posthumanist theory. She rewrites the 19th-century gothic novel to confront the readers with the problems coming with the developing technology. The

novel embraces posthumanism as a philosophical framework in order to criticise the cultural norms that the Enlightenment brought.

In the last chapter, the thesis has examined in depth how Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein* reimagines and reconfigures Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* through a posthuman lens. By placing these two novels into comparative dialogue, it has been revealed that the Gothic foundations of Shelley's narrative, haunted settings, sublime landscapes, moral ambiguity, and fragmented identities, are transformed into a posthuman fragmentation of technology, subjectivity, and corporeality in Winterson's 21st-century reworking. Significantly, the importance of narrative form in the evolution from Gothic to posthuman fiction has been highlighted in the thesis as well. Shelley's original structure, characterized by nested narratives, emotional introspection, and moral reflection, echoes the Gothic tradition in which the subjective experience and ethical burden of the creator are emphasized. On the contrary, Winterson adopts a deliberately fragmented, nonlinear, and multi-perspectival narrative structure that mirrors the disjointed, plural, and often disembodied nature of posthuman existence. The ruptured narrative is highly symbolic in the sense that it reflects the breakdown of unified identity and stable subjectivity in a world increasingly shaped by AI and virtual systems.

Rather than presenting a grotesque physical monster stitched from human parts, as Mary Shelley does, Jeanette Winterson criticizes a contemporary form of hubris that is far more relevant than previous conceptions to current technological realities. The cryogenic chambers and AI laboratories that replace Shelley's shadowy setting are not distant science fiction; they are grounded in real-world technological pursuits. Thus, the horror in *Frankissstein* arises not from the unnatural creature, but from the all-too-human desire to dominate, erase, and commodify life.

Victor Frankenstein and Victor Stein are significant characters who function as symbolic anchors for their respective eras. While Victor Frankenstein is tormented by the ethical consequences of creating life through unnatural means, Victor Stein is driven by an obsession with disembodiment, seeking to upload consciousness into machines and abandon the mortal flesh altogether. The contrast reveals a shift from Romantic guilt to posthuman abstraction, from emotional ruin to technological detachment. This development aligns with N. Katherine Hayles' notion of the

posthuman, where embodiment is no longer essential to identity, but rather something to be modified.

Winterson's use of the character Dr. Ry Shelley, an emotionally complex figure, is the most radical intervention in this narrative. Ry is there to challenge not only the norms of gender and bodily identity but also the broader assumptions of what constitutes personhood and humanity. Through Ry Shelley, Jeanette Winterson reclaims the posthuman as an ethical and embodied alternative to the data-driven fantasies of Stein and Ron Lord, highlighting the tension between posthuman multiplicity and transhumanist reductionism. Ry represents fluidity, care, and presence, whereas Stein and Ron symbolize domination and erasure. Furthermore, Winterson delicately criticizes the capitalist and patriarchal logic that has been embedded in contemporary technological pursuits. Ron Lord's sex robots satirize how even the most advanced technologies are often employed to reinforce gender hierarchies of human beings. Jeanette Winterson exposes the ethical void beneath these futuristic visions.

In Mary Shelley's novel, the creature's monstrousness lies in its unnatural assemblage and its rejection by society; it is both physically grotesque and morally tragic. In contrast, in Winterson's text, monstrosity is more insidious, lying in the normalization of disembodiment, in the idea that consciousness can be divorced from matter without consequence. As Rosi Braidotti suggests, the posthuman future demands "an ethics of sustainability, of complexity, and of non-linear, multi-directional relations" (The Posthuman 192). Winterson's novel implicitly argues for such an ethics, embodiment, and co-existence over the illusion of techno-immortality.

In conclusion, *Frankissstein* does not merely rewrite and reimagine *Frankenstein*; it also acts as a critical mirror held up to the technological ambitions of our time. It interrogates the promises of liberation made by transhumanism and reminds that without ethical awareness and morality, scientific progress can become a vehicle for exploitation and existential loss. It is more than a literary work; it is indeed a profound warning. Unless humankind learns to decenter itself and live in harmony with the other beings around, it risks becoming the very monster it sought to overcome.

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