Cappadocia University

School of Graduate Studies and Research

Department of English Language and Literature

EXPLORING THE TECHNOPHOBIA/TECHNOPHILIA SPECTRUM IN THE ANTHROPOCENE THROUGH MAGGIE GEE'S *THE ICE PEOPLE* AND JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *THE STONE GODS*

Nilüfer DİNÇ DEMİROK

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KABUL VE ONAY

Nilüfer Dinç Demirok tarafından hazırlanan "Exploring the Technophobia/Technophilia Spectrum in the Anthropocene through Maggie Gee's The Ice People and Jeanette Winterson's The Stone Gods" başlıklı bu çalışma, 14.03.2025 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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Bu çalışmadaki bütün bilgi ve belgeleri akademik kurallar çerçevesinde elde ettiğimi, görsel, işitsel ve yazılı tüm bilgi ve sonuçları bilimsel ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduğumu, kullandığım verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadığımı, yararlandığım kaynaklara bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduğumu, tezimin/dönem projemin kaynak gösterilen durumlar dışında özgün olduğunu, **Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Fatma AYKANAT** danışmanlığında tarafımdan üretildiğini ve Kapadokya Üniversitesi Lisansüstü Eğitim, Öğretim ve Araştırma Enstitüsü Tez ve Dönem Projesi Yazım Yönergesine göre yazıldığını beyan ederim.

……/……/……

Nilüfer Dinç Demirok

ÖZET

DİNÇ DEMİROK, Nilüfer. *Maggie Gee'nin The Ice People ve Jeanette Winterson'ın Taş Tanrılar Romanları Üzerinden Antroposen'de Teknofobi/Teknofili Spektrumunun İncelenmesi*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Nevşehir, 2025.

Bu tez, teknofobi-teknofili kavramlarının ışığında, insan, doğa, kültür ve teknoloji kavramlarını çevresel krizler bağlamında tartışmaya açmaktadır. Belirtilen konuları örneklendirmek ve tartışmaya açmak için Maggie Gee'nin iklim kurgu romanı *The Ice People* ve Jeanette Winterson'ın *The Stone Gods* [Taş Tanrılar] romanları her iki romanın da kurgusal ortamlar, insan, doğa ve teknoloji arasındaki ilişkiyi tartışmaya açmış olmalarının yanı sıra, bu ilişkileri yeniden düşünmek için fırsatları da beraberlerinde getirmektedirler. Seçilen romanlar üzerinden teknoloji düşman mı yoksa kurtarıcı mı sorunsalına cevap alınmaya çalışılmıştır. Ayrıca teknoloji insanlığın yararına mı çalışmakta, yoksa insanları daha fazla ve daha büyük bir yok oluşa ve sonunda ekolojik bir kıyamete mi sürüklemekte sorularına da eş zamanlı olarak cevap aranmıştır. Teknolojinin Antroposen'deki herhangi bir geçmiş ve yakın tarihli ekolojik sorunla bağlantısı, teknolojik yeniliklerin bu bağlantıda aldığı yeri ve dahası teknofobi ve teknofili arasındaki geçişler izlenmiştir ve Antroposen ile bağlantıları araştırılmıştır. Teknofobinin kaynağının rasyonel veya irrasyonel olup olmadığı, devam eden ekolojik krizlere doğal bir tepki olup olmadığı da tartışmaya açılmıştır. Seçilen romanlarda dolaylı olarak insan merkezcilik, insan olmayanların failliği ve insan-doğa, insan-insan olmayan karmaşası teknofobi ve teknofili spektrumu bağlamında ele alınmıştır. Bu karşıt düşünce biçimlerinin etkisi altında, her iki anlatı da iklim krizini sorunsallaştırmakta ve doğa/kültür, teknofili-teknofobi yelpazesinde salınan *anthropos* [insan] eleştirisini tasvir etmektedir. Böylece seçilen romanların teması olan iklim değişikliği odağında, okuyucuların ve araştırmacıların eko eleştirel düşünme biçimlerinin izi sürülmüş ve teknofili-teknofobi kavramları tartışmaya açılmıştır. Bu tez teknolojinin insan hayatlarına olan etkilerini ve insanların teknolojiye kavramına olan tutumlarını tüm yönleri ile ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Teknofobi, teknofili, Antroposen, Maggie Gee, Jeanette Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, *The Ice People*

ABSTRACT

DİNÇ DEMİROK, Nilüfer. *Exploring the Technophobia/Technophilia Spectrum in the Anthropocene through Maggie Gee's* The Ice People *and Jeanette Winterson's* The Stone Gods, Master's Thesis, Nevşehir, 2025.

This thesis discusses the concepts of human, nature, culture and technology in the context of environmental crises in the light of the concepts of technophobia and technophilia. In order to exemplify and open up for discussion Maggie Gee's climate fiction novel *The Ice People* and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* bring opportunities to rethink these relationships as well as opening to discussion the relationship between fictional environments, human, nature and technology. Through both selected novels, an attempt has been made to answer the question of whether technology is an enemy or a saviour. Also, the questions of whether technology works for the benefit of humanity or leads humans to further and greater extinction and eventually an ecological apocalypse have been simultaneously sought. The connection of technology with any past and recent ecological problems in the Anthropocene, the place of technological innovations in this connection, the transitions between technophobia and technophilia have been monitored with their connections with the Anthropocene have been investigated. Also, whether the source of technophobia is rational or irrational, whether it is a natural response to ongoing ecological crises are opened to discussion. In the selected novels, anthropocentrism, the agency of non-humans and the confusion of human-nature, human-non-human are indirectly addressed in the context of the spectrum of technophobia and technophilia. Under the influence of these spectrums, both narratives problematize the climate crisis and depict the critique of *anthropos* [human] oscillating on the spectrum of nature/culture, technophilia-technophobia. Thus, focusing the climate change which is the common theme of the selected novels, the ecocritical modes of thinking of readers and researchers have been traced, and the concepts of technophilia and technophobia have been brought into discussion. This thesis reveals the effects of technology on human lives and people's attitudes towards the concept of technology in all its aspects.

Keywords: Technophobia, technophilia, Anthropocene, Maggie Gee, Jeanette Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, *The Ice People*

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis highlights the complex relationship between humans and technology, focusing on how deeply technology is now woven into our daily lives in the Anthropocene with a particular interest in how technologies shape the relationship between technology and humans. This study aims to explore the foundational dynamics between technology, humanity and nature with particular attention to how developments such as biotechnology shape human perception, emotion and human relationship with the environment. The scope of this thesis is contemporary British literature, with a particular focus on the twentieth century British eco-fiction and the Cli-Fi novels. In this thesis, relevant scenes from the selected novels to illustrate the technophobia and technophilia spectrum will be examined through the close reading method. Both novels were analysed through the lenses of technophobia and technophilia. The co-existence of the emergent technological developments and the global ecological disasters both change the planetary ecosystems on macro scales and reconstruct the social relationships and emotional responses to technology on micro scale. This thesis argues that the human-nature relationship took a new turn with the insertion of technology as a new agent to this formula making humans develop contrasting attitudes to technology. Technology no longer serves purely functional purposes but also shapes human consciousness, social institutions and even emotional responses. Some individuals embrace technological developments enthusiastically and express a love for technology which is commonly referred to as technophilia, while other individuals view these developments with anxiety or scepticism that is commonly referred to as technophobia. This tension is central to contemporary literary works such as Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* (1998) and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007). Both novels treat the effects of human-technology interaction in

dystopian terms. In both narratives, humans are challenged by global climate crisis and resort to technology to cope with these crises. Thus, these novels highlight various descriptions and categorization of technology in an eco-dystopic world. Indirectly these novels highlight anthropocentric view supporting the idea that humans usually ignore the role of nonhuman things or show human-nature relationships in a way that puts humans to the foreground. For this reason, we can clearly see both fear of technology and love for it in the same stories. Under the influence of these contrasting modes of thinking, both narratives problematise climate crisis and portray a critique of the *anthropos* who is engaged in various nature/culture entanglements and has been swinging along the technophilia-technophobia spectrum. Thus, the central theme of climate change in the selected novels provides the readers and the researchers with the opportunity to trace and discuss the technophilic and technophobic modes of thinking. Envisioning the increasingly prominent role of technology in the Anthropocene, this thesis aims to explore the relations between nature and humans, the role of technological advancements like biotechnology in the formation of such relations in order to perceive the roots and nature of the technocentric and human-nature relationships entangled with the ecological crisis.

This dissertation is divided into two chapters, each of which examines a distinct but interrelated aspect of technology's role in contemporary speculative fiction. Chapter One focuses on Maggie Gee's *The Ice People*, exploring how technology shapes human experience and survival in a dystopian future. Chapter Two turns to Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*, analysing the entanglement of technological advancement and ecological collapse. This thesis examines the potential impacts as well as uses of technology, drawing on illustrative examples from *The Ice People* and *The Stone Gods* in order to emphasize how technology can trigger both positive and negative

transformations. Within this scope, this study will be exploring how fear and fascination of technology shape literary and societal attitudes and responses. Therefore, this study seeks to illuminate the cultural, ethical and existential dimensions of humanity's evolving relationship with technology, while providing insights into how contrasting attitudes toward technology influence society at large. Eventually, this thesis aims to put forward a detailed analysis of how these dystopian narratives reflect and critique the spectrum of technophobia and technophilia.

Technology today is not just something we use but it is something we live with. As psychologist and researcher Sherry Turkle states in her book *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (2011) that "we are shaped by our tools. And now, the computer, a machine on the border of becoming a mind, was changing and shaping us" (x). Therefore, technology is not merely a tool or an external aid anymore, thus it is embedded within almost every part of human life, shaping not just what we do, but how we think and interact. In the twenty-first century, this presence has grown to levels we probably could not have imagined just a few decades ago. Pascal Bornet, who works in the fields of AI and digital transformation, reflects on this deeply entangled relationship between humans and technology in his *Forbes* article, "The Symbiosis of People and Technology" that "as technology progresses, the relationship between humans and machines becomes interdependent and approaches symbiosis" (Bornet). The word "symbiosis" encapsulates one of the core issues explored in this thesis which is the strange emotional mix humans feel about technology. This emotional uncertainty is not just felt by individuals but it is discussed seriously across many fields, from philosophy to sociology and beyond. For instance, French philosopher, sociologist and theologian Jacques Ellul, who is known for warnings about the unchecked influence

of technology on modern life, discusses the concept of "the phenomenon of invention" (23) in his work *The Technological Society* (1954). Ellul's approach to technology is critical since he argues that technology shapes our environment and our minds, becoming part of our psychological formation by stating that "the technique is absorbed into man's psychology and depends upon that psychology and upon what has been called technical motivation" (23). So, rather than being neutral or just helpful, technology starts to function with its own internal momentum, influencing how society behaves and even how people think.

The etymological origin of technology is Greek, *tekhnologia* meaning "the systematic study of an art, craft or technique" ("Technology"). This word is originating from the suffix *tekhne* which means "art, skill, craft" and *-logia* which means "study and examination" ("Technology"). The etymological background of technology emphasizes its intrinsic connection to resourcefulness and the continuous quest to improve capabilities through innovative ways. Eric Schatzberg, a scholar who focuses on the philosophy and history of technology also consider the broader conceptual understanding of the term. Schatzberg defines technology as "the science of technique" (8), and describing it further as "the principles and processes of the useful arts" (8), he highlights the conceptual approaches to understanding technology. Hence, the concept of technology covers a wide scope of tools, machines, techniques, systems, and methods meant to solve problems. This comprehensive definition has its origins in the most primitive forms of human imagination which can be traced back to prehistoric discoveries that shows humanity's engagement with technology began with the crafting of rudimentary stone tools. These tools were a sign of an introductory milestone in human history initiating transformative changes that laid the basis for future technological

advancements. Sophie A. de Beaune's article "The Invention of Technology: Prehistory and Cognition," examines the technical study of unworked stone tools from prehistoric times. By analysing the marks left on these tools, she infers their function and usage stating that "technical study of tools made from unknapped stone from early times to the Neolithic has allowed the identification of marks found on these tools and inferences from them about the actions they involved" (139). When we think about how human societies first started to take shape, it is easy to overlook just how crucial those earliest tools were. But De Beaune's analysis reminds us that even the simplest technological innovations played a huge role in how communities began forming and functioning. These were not just objects but they were enablers of social life, shaping everything from survival strategies to cultural practices. It will not be wrong to say that this early use of tools did not just help with immediate needs but it also set the stage for all the technological developments that would come later. In other words, although the first technological inventions may seem simple, they opened great doors for humanity. Feminist philosopher Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, who often writes on the intersections of science, religion and bioethics, points out how this technological path continues to shape human values and relationships today. Samuelson suggests that "the list of human technological innovations is very long indeed, including fire, the wheel, pottery, the domestication of plants and animals, metallurgy, glass, the printing press, the steam engine, the telegraph, and the personal computer, among others" (33). Tirosh-Samuelson's perspective fits in well with the long history of technological progress. Every major development, from the invention of the wheel to the spread of printing, from metalworking to agriculture, has significantly transformed human societies. These were not just technical breakthroughs but they were also turning points that changed how people lived, thought and related to their

environment. Of course, technology is not simply a series of inventions. Whether advanced or primitive, each technological development has had a multi-layered impact on societies. For that reason, historians like Bruce Mazlish are looking at this relationship. In his book *Globalization and Transformation* (2017), Mazlish emphasizes that much like war, technology has been a shaping force in the trajectory of human history (18). Especially with the acceleration of mechanization and increasing human intervention in nature, more sophisticated methods began to be used in agriculture. Over time, these developments paved the way for the Industrial Revolution. In this context, economist, engineer and author Klaus Schwab investigates the effects of mechanization and emphasizes how these changes have had a major impact on the course of human history. In his work *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* (2016), he states that "throughout history, revolutions have occurred when new technologies led to radical changes in economic systems and social structures" (11). So, by highlighting the transformative effects of technology, we can see that the Industrial Revolution was a major turning point in technological advancement and it was also a verification to the central role of anthropogenic actions whereas human decisions and innovation alters from manual labour to automated production. Braden R. Allenby, a distinguished scholar in environmental sciences, engineering and ethics, emphasized the importance of the relationship between human activities and technology just like Klaus Schwab. Allenby explores this knotty relationship in his 2005 book *Reconstructing Earth: Technology and Environment in the Age of Humans* by emphasizing how anthropogenic actions and technological advancements have become deeply intertwined while shaping the path of environmental and societal systems in the Anthropocene stating that "this process [the increasingly transformative impact of human activities encapsulated in the concept of the

Anthropocene] has been accelerated by the Industrial Revolution" (9). Similarly in this context, Schwab notes that "the first Industrial Revolution spanned from about 1760 to around 1840 and was driven by innovations such as the construction of railways and the invention of the steam engine, which enabled mechanical production" (11). Therefore, it will not be wrong to say that with the beginning of mechanization, the dynamics of social structures and economic systems have changed dramatically and accelerated at an extraordinary pace. In other words, social structures, such as family structure, social classes, education systems, economic systems, such as production methods, labour distribution and trade underwent significant transformation. Similarly, Thomas J. Misa, a historian specializing in the interactions between technology and modern culture examines the profound influence of technology on society and culture. Misa, who served as a professor of the History of Science and Technology at the University of Minnesota and director of the Charles Babbage Institute, argues that "technologies have deep interactions with society and culture, leading to responses such as resistance, adaptation, acceptance, and even enthusiasm" (3). For this reason, technologies should not be seen as mere tools or objects. They are also powerful catalysts of societal change. As an essential factor in the development of societies, human progress has continued to evolve, shifting from biological evolution to cultural and technological advancements. In this context historian Bruce Mazlish states that "about forty thousand years ago the physical evolution of Homo sapiens more or less stopped. What took over was cultural evolution. The latter was tightly tied to tools and then machines" (12). So, this transition highlights how digital technologies have become integral to various sectors, influencing their functionality. For instance, in healthcare systems, artificial intelligence plays an

increasingly important role as Martin Ford illustrates in his book *Rule of the Robots* (2021):

> An AI system with access to detailed patient histories, as well as information about medications, including their associated toxicity and side effects, would potentially be able to prevent errors even in very complex situations involving the interaction of multiple drugs. Such a system could act as an interactive adviser to doctors and nurses, offering instantaneous verification of both safety and effectiveness before medication is administered, and—especially in situations where hospital staff are tired or distracted—it would be very likely to save both lives and needless discomfort and expense. (149-150)

Hence, the advancements in medical technology such as targeted cancer therapies and smart drugs, have revolutionized treatment methods, improving patient outcomes by personalizing interventions based on individual genetic profiles. So, as Bruce Mazlish states, "technology plays a fundamental role in fashioning a new kind of humanity" (18). Correspondingly, Nicole DiGironimo in her article published in the *International Journal of Science Education* states that "philosophers of technology also agree that technology is a cultural practice that involves values, ethics, rules, and politics" (1339). As we examine technological developments, it becomes clear that the relationship between technology and culture is both transformative and complex. This is not a simple matter of action and reaction though it requires much more nuanced thinking. In this context, Martin Ford draws attention to the increasing impact of artificial intelligence. According to him, "most AI research and development, and nearly all venture capital, continue to be focused on specialized applications, and there's every reason to expect these technologies to become dramatically more powerful and flexible over the coming years and decades" (230). As AI advances, the problems it entails also grow. The issues like the concerns for data privacy and digital addiction are becoming technical, cultural and psychological issues. This is why people's reactions to technology are so diverse as some resist, some

embrace and adapt to without questioning and some embrace it with unquestioningly, with great enthusiasm. Aseel Ajlouni and Saleh Rawadieh also draw attention to the social effects of this digital transformation in their article titled "Technophobia and Technophilia Among Undergraduates" stating "digital transformation (DT) and revolution characterize this era, where all sectors, such as commercial, educational, entertainment, military, and medical, rely on digital technologies and their generated data" (24). As they point out, the way in which these transformations are interpreted plays a crucial role in shaping social debates, particularly as digital transformation penetrates every sector. This shift redefines how industries function and influence societal norms and values. In a similar vein, in his book *Automatic Society* (2016) Bernard Stiegler emphasizes the significance of big data describing it as "the rise of so-called society, digital networks brought with it a new kind of economy, based on personal data, cookies, metadata, tags and other tracking technologies" (19). Stiegler's observation underlines how digital data is at the heart of today's economy and society, reshaping industries and individual lives. Thus, digital transformation and revolution are some of the most pronounced features of our age, giving rise to both technophobic and technophilic responses. The commercialization of personal data triggers concerns about the loss of privacy and diminishing control over one's personal information. On the other hand, the use of big data has reshaped modern sectors, highlighting its fundamental role in industries like marketing, politics and healthcare as Klaus Schwab states:

> User profiling through big-data analysis and inference techniques is opening the way for new, much more customized and personalized services, which can benefit users and consumers, but which also raise important concerns when it comes to user privacy and individual autonomy. Given increased concerns around cybercrime and identity theft, in many jurisdictions, the balance between surveillance and freedom is rapidly tipping towards increased monitoring. (70)

Therefore, the rise and commercialization of big data has increased people's concerns about privacy and control. This dual nature of technology can no longer be denied since technology makes life easier. However, it can also make people get lonelier and more dependent. In other words, as technology is rapidly integrating into our daily lives, it brings along both positive and negative effects. Donald Norman also draws attention to this paradox. Norman, who has been specialized on human-computer interaction and design, emphasizes the potential of technology to make life easier. He also underlines that this can create complexity and frustration by stating that "technology offers the potential to make life easier and more enjoyable; each new technology provides increased benefits. At the same time, added complexities increase our difficulty and frustration with technology" (48). Norman is actually quite clear on the idea that technology makes things easier but on the other hand, it can complicate learning processes. He summarizes this contrast by stating, "this is the paradox of technology" (Norman 32). His analysis sheds light on this dual nature of technology and invites us to rethink our attitudes toward technology. This is where the two opposing concepts of technophilia and technophobia come into play since one approach with hope, the other with hesitations and doubts. In his book *Technophobia: Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology* (2005) Daniel Dinello, provides a nuanced perspective on technophobia, arguing that it should not be reduced to an irrational or neurotic fear of technology. He emphasizes that technophobia is more accurately understood as a critical standpoint characterized by suspicion, antipathy or dislike of technology as he declares:

> Finally, the book's title, Technophobia, is meant to suggest an aversion to, dislike of, or suspicion of technology rather than an irrational, illogical, or neurotic fear. I want to elevate the term beyond its derisive dismissive use by rabid technophiles who believe that questioning technology's direction is crazy if not satanic. (8)

It may be a bit superficial to see technophobia as merely a state of fear. In fact, this concept also includes an intellectual questioning of the consequences of technological progress. In other words, it is an emotional reaction. From this perspective, Galit Nimrod's work makes an important contribution. Nimrod who is a professor of communication studies examines the psychological and sociological effects of technology on individuals. As she declares, "the rapid development of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) and their ever-increasing presence in all life domains evoked extensive scholarly interest in technophobia and its effects on individuals" (148). Indeed, the rapid and intense penetration of technology into all areas of life raises serious questions about how people adapt to it. An intervention as direct as the rapid infiltration of technology into an individual's living space may undermine the sense of freedom. Naturally, this triggers rational, emotional and psychological reactions. In her journal article "Computers in Human Behaviour", Anne Powell states that "since the 1980s, hundreds of articles have been published about computer anxiety" (2338). Hence, it is possible to elicit that researchers have been thoroughly examining and highlighting the effects of technology its societal impact and psychological implications. As underlined in one of the studies in literature, "the prevalence of technophobia in today's society, as it is estimated to affect 30% of the general population" (Subero-Navarro et al 2). One such study is conducted by two researchers specializing in technology and psychology Larry Rosen and Michelle Weil. In their article, these two scholars defined technophobia in three aspects as follows:

1. anxiety about current or future interactions with computers or computer-related technology;
2. negative global attitudes about computers, their operation or their societal impact; and/or

3. specific negative cognitions or self-critical internal dialogues during actual computer interaction or when contemplating future interaction. (276)

Based on these definitions, it can be seen that technophobia is not just a fear of computers, but it also encompasses a wider range of negative emotions and thoughts. Although the definitions seem to be about computers, such anxieties and negative reactions can easily result from other technological tools. In other words, what is actually in question here is the emotional and mental aspects of the relationship established with technology. As Donald Norman suggests, "fundamental technologies like wristwatches" (32) and modern innovations such as smart mobile health devices can similarly evoke discomfort or resistance. Hence, while traditional watches of the past only required simple functions such as setting and winding the time, their modern counterparts offer a multitude of features that have revolutionized the way we interact with timekeeping devices which may cause anxiety problems. As an anxiety disorder, phobia represent personal challenges and significant societal implications, highlighting the need for greater understanding and support mechanisms. As Xinyi Chang explains in a conference proceeding, "to be specific on phobia, it is an anxiety disorder that are persistent, excessive fear of an object or living things. Different from fear, Phobia is a more intense emotion and would have cause great impact on people's lives" (1). As Chang noted, individuals who face with technology in their daily practices can have negative emotions and reactions to technology, not just fear. Similarly, Odai Khasawneh, a lecturer in Information Technology Management specializing in topics such as technophobia and its effects on users' adoption of technology argues that "the use of technology, or even the thought of using it, can evoke negative emotions such as fear, stress, and anxiety, ultimately leading users to avoid adopting new technologies" (94). For this reason, both

anxiety and other negative responses have been identified as factors contributing to a sense of technophobia.

Technophobia not only have effects on individuals but also it is related to social dynamics and well-being of society. In her article titled "Psychological Implications of Modern Technologies: 'Technophobia' Versus 'Technophilia'," psychologist and academic Maria-Elena Osiceanu examines the psychological effects of modern technologies on individuals. She explores the contrasting phenomena of technophobia, the fear or aversion to technology and technophilia, the enthusiasm and attraction toward technological advancements. Osiceanu discusses how these opposing attitudes influence human behaviour, shaping the way societies adapt to and interact with evolving technological landscapes. Osiceanu's studies have gained importance in social sciences by analysing the basic concepts and approaches of this interaction. In this context she asserts that "the term is primarily used in sociology to analyse the relationship between individuals and society, focusing on the interaction between them" (1138). Consequently, fear or avoidance of technology cannot be described as an individual phenomenon, but a widespread phenomenon in society. In her article "Phobia Anxiety Disorder: Etiology of Phobia," Xinyi Chang explains that, "people with phobia will usually do anything they can to avoid interacting or countering the object they are fear of" (1). Hence, the ubiquity of technology leads individuals to stay away using new technologies out of fear, affecting their overall well-being. In an age where technology permeates every aspect of our lives, understanding the effects of technology on human well-being is important and essential to creating a balanced society. Yair Amichai-Hamburger, who has authored important studies examining the effects of the internet on individual well-being emphasizes that "since well-being is so important to our society and since technology seems to pervade

almost all areas of our lives, the study of the different effects of technology on our well-being would seem fundamental" (3). Therefore, technophobia is not just a personal challenge but it may have serious consequences in both social and professional realms. People who struggle with digital tools may avoid online communities, missing out on meaningful interactions, or even support systems, that many people take for granted. In the workplace, being uncomfortable with new technologies can silently limit a person's emotional growth or self-confidence.

These concerns are not new. People have wondered before if technological change always means progress. In fact, these questions have been debated sometimes with actual violence for more than two centuries. Erik Brynjolfsson and Andrew McAfee, two important academics working on the effects of digital economy and artificial intelligence on the business world, touched upon this issue in their book *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies* (2014) by stating that "between 1811 and 1817, English textile workers whose jobs were threatened by automated looms rallied around the (possibly mythical) figure of Ned Ludd. They protested by smashing machinery in the mills, an act that eventually led to brutal suppression by the government" (156). While their methods were extreme, their fears were real and their story still echoes today. This group later came to be known as the Luddites, a term sometimes unfairly is still used to describe those who resist or question technological advancement. In light of this, while technophobia is often framed as a personal hesitation or fear, it may be more accurate to view it as a broader societal response to the overwhelming pace of technological change.

Neil Daruwala, a researcher who studies how culture and technology intersect, notes in his article "A Cross-cultural Investigation on Smart Home Technology" that "technophobia can lead to feelings of societal isolation" (12). In practical terms, this means that those who struggle to keep up with new technologies may feel increasingly isolated and gradually cut off from social life. But this withdrawal is not limited to friendships or online communities. It can also extend to the workplace as seen in Ned Ludd example. In this regard, Martin Ford argues that technological change often leaves behind those who cannot adapt quickly by eliminating certain jobs while creating demand for entirely new skill sets. The result is a changing labour market that reinforces inequality while promoting a vision of progress that not everyone experiences equally as Ford states:

> As artificial intelligence continues to advance, it has the potential to upend both the job market and the overall economy to a degree that is likely unprecedented. Virtually any job that is fundamentally routine and predictable in nature—or in other words, nearly any role where a worker faces similar challenges again and again—has the potential to be automated in full or in part. (13)

Thus, especially with the integration of artificial intelligence and machines, the rapid pace of technological innovation reshapes the employment structure while redefining social interactions.

This changed social interactions entails psychological outcomes as well. Thus, aforementioned double-sided impact of technology on economic and personal relationships is examined in depth by psychologist and researcher Sherry Turkle. In her book *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (2011), Turkle observes that "we romance the robot and become inseparable from our smartphones (3), highlighting how emotional attachments to technology are altering the

way we relate to ourselves and others. Alexander Chimirri and Ernst Schraube, known for their interdisciplinary work on the psychology and philosophy of technology, argue that human capabilities fall short in keeping pace with the speed and complexity of technological advancements. In *Rethinking Psychology of Technology for Future Society*, they state that the human ability to comprehend meaningfully is a distinction that is primarily attributable to both the accelerating pace of technological development and the enormous complexity of created things and their effects (49-50). This perspective highlights a growing incompatibility between the cognitive limits of the human mind and the sophisticated systems we create. Instead of viewing the gap between humans and technology as a limitation, Chimirri and Schraube's approach opens up a wider field of thought. Does this gap really stem from human inadequacy or is there a problem with the theoretical foundations of the human-technology relationship? Perhaps instead of accepting this situation as an inevitable outcome, it would be more meaningful to reconsider the structures that govern our interaction with technology. In this context, the cognitive discord that Chimirri and Schraube mention seems more like an active challenge to be considered than a passive situation. Such confusion can also be seen in the following words of academic Srđan T. Korać who states in his article "Why Do We Fear The Robopocalypse? Human Insecurity in The Age of Technophobia" that, "awareness of the impossibility of controlling the world in its totality culminates in the rise of fear" (112). Therefore, a growing belief arises and people are concerned about the negative consequences that may arise if these technologies cannot be managed and that people might lose control over technologies such as robotics and artificial intelligence.

The idea that technology will bring about loss of control or that machines will take over humanity and the world and the feeling of hatred towards technology have been

discussed from different perspectives so far from real-world wars to dystopian science fiction movies. In addition, the portrayal of non-human intelligence in popular culture reflects deep anxieties about the relationship between humans and systems beyond their control and highlights a persistent narrative of opposition and conflict. Kaisa Kortekallio in her article elaborates on this theme, noting that "in English-language popular culture, non-human intelligence has traditionally been depicted a threatening – whether it resides in technological, institutional or biological systems. The relation between a human individual and a non-human system has typically been that of opposition" (24). Thus, especially the narratives about uncontrolled development of technology can pose great dangers to humanity contributes technophobic attitudes. Based on these typical narratives, technological advancements and systems are thought to be likely to unsettle the delicate balance of nature, leading to the destruction of humans at the end. As a result, people with a fear of technology generally believe in the harm of technology and often think that only negative aspects of technology lie ahead for humanity. To give a few examples, dystopic narratives include scenarios such as; technology getting out of human control, starting to act on its own or artificial intelligence and robots turning against humans. Moreover, nuclear disasters and biotechnological accidents also play a critical role in the technophobic narratives, along with disasters resulting from the misuse of technology. According to Fallad, Hueso and Ramirez, technophobia does not qualify as a medical condition needing treatment. Instead, it refers broadly to an attitude or response characterized by symptoms related to anxiety (1), which they discuss in the Conference for Engineering and Technology. In the same vein, Joanna M. Moczydłowska discusses the phenomenon of fear related to technology in detail in her 2023 study titled *Between Technophilia and Technophobia – The Problem of Technological Fear*. According to

Moczydłowska, fear has always been a fundamental human emotion which was initially triggered by natural forces, wild animals or the unknown and the incomprehensible (478). In this sense, technology in the modern era can be seen as a new form of the unknown that rapidly evolves. This unfamiliarity may evoke fear or anxiety, leading individuals to approach technological advancements with hesitation or even resistance. When faced with the changes brought by technology and the uncontrollability of these changes, people may experience a similar historical fear of nature or the unknown. It is nearly impossible to deny the intertwined nature of technology and humanity, considering all the given examples. However, while technology has led to significant global advances, it has also caused serious global problems, such as the digital divide between the Global South and the Global North. According to the Digital Economy Report 2024: *Shaping an Environmentally Sustainable and Inclusive Digital Future;* "at the end of the life cycle of digital technologies, developing countries are the destination for an important share of waste from global digitalization, which opens up another dimension of the digital divide" (UNCTAD 21). The report points out that over half of the global population still does not have access to reliable high-speed internet. This gap deepens existing economic and political inequalities. In contrast, thanks to their advanced digital infrastructure, wealthier nations in the Global North have been able to accelerate innovation and economic development, which in turn further stretches the digital divide between regions. In this context, in their article "The Global Digital Divide – Within and Between Countries," Wenhong Chen and Barry Wellman draw attention to the persistent nature of digital inequality. As they point out, "the digital divide remains substantial between developed and developing countries. The divide also remains substantial within almost all countries, developed as well as developing. In some countries, the digital divide is widening even

as the number and percentage of Internet users increases" (44). Their work emphasizes that the expansion of internet access does not automatically lead to equality but it intersects with deeper social and economic dynamics. For many countries in the Global South, limited funding, poor infrastructure and restricted educational access make it harder to close this gap and to fully participate in the benefits that digital technologies can offer.

Despite all the negative aspects and fear from technology, there are numerous benefits that technology brings to our lives, hence the substantial number of devotees to technophobia. To fully comprehend the concept of technophobia, one must discuss it along with its counterpart. For this reason, it will be useful to take a look at the characteristics of technophiles. According to psychologist and academic Maria-Elena Osiceanu, technophilia is defined as "attraction, enthusiasm of the human individual determined by the activities which involve the use of advanced technologies" (138). So, individuals who follow the innovations and opportunities offered by technology with excitement and enjoy integrating these innovations into their lives are defined as technophiles. According to Aaron Bastani, who is a researcher, writer and media commentator focusing on how economic and technological shifts have been reshaping modern life, "technology could improve people's lives" (62). This way of thinking really affects how he looks at the connection between technology and society, showing that he sees technology as something super important for how humans grow and change. Bastani was not alone with his positive thoughts about technology. Renowned economist John Maynard Keynes supported the idea that technology can be a cure for the scarcities and bring abundance to humanity. In his book titled *Essays in Persuasion* (1963) he declared that;

> I would predict that the standard of life in progressive countries one hundred years hence will be between four and eight times as high as it is to-day. There would be nothing surprising in this even in the light of our present knowledge. It would not be foolish to contemplate the possibility of a far greater progress still. (Keynes 364-365)

According to Keynes, humans can benefit from technology, if they transform it in favour of humanity to raise the standards of life. It is true that significant changes have occurred since Keynes made this prediction about technology. As Klaus Schwab notes, "the mind-boggling innovations triggered by the fourth industrial revolution, from biotechnology to AI, are redefining what it means to be human" (93). These transformations illustrate how far technological progress has come since Keynes's time. Both thinkers emphasize the transformative nature of technology. Within this context, technophiles argue that technology offers numerous benefits for individuals and societies. As mentioned in the article "Assessing Technophobia and Technophilia: Development and Validation of a Questionnaire" by Martínez-Córcoles, Teichmann and Murdvee, technophilia is a broader concept that is not limited to positive attitudes towards technology. It can stimulate enthusiasm and desire in people, as well as lead to repetitive behaviours and can include feelings such as the joy of owning the latest products, along with the fear of being left behind (7). Therefore, technophilia reflects the belief that technology promotes progressive evolutionary change and social progress in individuals' lives, which is closely related to people's fascination with technology. Maria-Elena Osiceanu states about the term that "technophilia (from the Greek - techne, "art/ artifact, skill and understanding" and - philos, "love"), refers generally to the enthusiasm generated by the use of technology, particularly new technologies" (1138). For this reason, technophilia expresses enthusiasm and love for technology, especially new technologies. Osiceanu

defines technophilia "as the desire and excitement to use advanced technologies" (1138), highlighting that these technologies attract individuals. In the same vein Neil Daruwala portrays technophiles as "early adopters or innovators who create a buzz when new technology is released onto the market" (12). Thus, technophiles are enthusiastic to new technologies. They feel great joy in possessing the latest product and they have a great drive to continuous innovation and adoption of new technologies which they view as enhancing their status in the society. Underlining the same point of view Sherry Turkle declares that "our population is aging; there will be robots to take care of us. Our children are neglected; robots will tend to them. We are too exhausted to deal with each other in adversity; robots will have the energy" (10). Through this quote, Turkle expresses a vision of the future role of robots which is increasingly seen as balancing for human limitations in caregiving, emotional labour and endurance. In their article titled "Investigating Blockchain Technology Effects on Online Platforms Transactions: Do Risk Aversion and Technophilia Matter?", Nesrine Ben Amor and Imène Ben Yahia elaborate on the concept of technophilia. They described technophiles "as individuals who perceive technology as a natural and inevitable aspect of societal progress—one that improves daily life and provides solutions to future challenges" (Amor and Yahia 282). Therefore, technophiles often highlight the bright side of science and technology, focusing on their real-world benefits. These range from making information more accessible and boosting education through digital tools, to increasing productivity with automation, improving healthcare via genetics and technology, helping us stay connected globally and even supporting sustainability with clean energy solutions. From this angle, technophilia is not just a fondness, it influences how people relate to, use and justify new technologies. Building on this idea, Purian Ronit, in her study *Technophilia: A New Model for Technology*

Adoption, notes that "being excited about technology is not a passive thing—it is what actually drives people to use it intentionally and consistently" (6). Sherry Turkle adds a different dimension by observing that "we are shaped by our tools. And now, the computer, a machine on the broader of becoming a mind, was changing and shaping us" (x). This shows how deeply technology can shape not just what we do, but who we are. Altogether, these thinkers remind us that in today's world, where technology is everywhere, embracing it is not really a choice anymore but it is a part of how we live. Taken together, these studies suggest that in an era defined by ubiquitous information technologies, adopting technology is no longer optional, it is integral. As Bastani suggests, "a new technology-energy matrix of ever-smarter machines combined with ever-cheaper and cleaner energy will make resource extraction beyond our world possible, yielding extreme supply in raw materials" (38). This technophilic view means that with the right innovation and intent technology can offer solutions to humanity's resource limitations and environmental crises. Furthermore, in this context, Bastani emphasizes the immense potential of solar energy, claiming that "while rising global demand for energy might seem daunting, it is nothing compared to what the giant nuclear reactor approximately 149 million kilometres away can provide" (38). This sentiment is an indication of the strong belief in renewable technologies, presenting them both as a tool to combat climate change and as an opportunity for countries to achieve energy independence and increase economic stability. Still, this kind of optimism does not go unchallenged. People who are sceptical about unbridled technological enthusiasm often warn that putting too much trust in new, unproven technologies could lead to unexpected risks or make existing problems worse. They argue that no tech solution can truly fix deep environmental and social issues unless we also rethink the human behaviours and systems

behind them. Martin Ford puts it well when he says, “technology, of course, will not shape the future in isolation. Rather, it will intertwine with other major societal and environmental challenges such as an aging population, climate change, and resource depletion” (xvii). His point reminds us that progress in technology cannot be separated from bigger ethical, social and environmental questions. So, the bond between people and technology is anything but simple.

Despite the aforementioned concerns about it, technology is one of the main reasons why we define humans as modern geological agents. Thanks to and along with the technological progress and humans’ role on anthropogenic geological transformations has been dramatically increased. Atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen emphasizes that technological advances have increased humanity’s ability to shape the Earth’s geological and ecological systems, and therefore humans are defined as contemporary geological agents by stating that:

> Because human activities have also grown to become significant geological forces, for instance through land use changes, deforestation and fossil fuel burning, it is justified to assign the term “anthropocene” to the current geological epoch. This epoch may be defined to have started about two centuries ago, coinciding with James Watt’s design of the steam engine in 1784. (13)

Thus, the Anthropocene is not just a geological marker but it is a reflection of how deeply entangled human life has become with the planet’s systems. What further complicates this epoch is the role of technology. While it has undoubtedly improved lives and solved many problems, its environmental cost is hard to ignore. From carbon-intensive industries to digital waste, technological advancement often walks hand in hand with ecological degradation. As Kate Crawford states in her 2021 book *Atlas of AI* that “the mining,

smelting, export, assemblage, and transport of the battery supply chain" of an electrical car which is promoted as environmentally friendly product to save oxygen and decrease carbon emissions "has a significant negative impact on the environment and, in turn, on the communities affected by its degradation" (30). In this sense the Anthropocene, forces us to question whether innovation always equals progress or whether it is time to reconsider what kind of future we are building.

The term Anthropocene is derived from *anthropos*, meaning "human," and the suffix *-cene,* meaning "recent era". Therefore, it directly means "the recent age of man" (Peters 239). As the name suggests, the impact of humans on nature is so profound that it has become necessary to name this impact with a geological period. Environmental humanist scholar Fatma Aykanat underlines the role of the Anthropocene concept highlighting the traces of the human activities human activities, such as industrialization and pollution, triggering global environmental changes (viii) in a geological epoch. In her 2018 thesis, Aykanat argues that this geological concept can also be applied to literary analyses to highlight the afore-mentioned anthropogenic traces in climate narratives. In the Anthropocene, the role of humans as geological agents who are responsible for the changes on the planet ecosystems is evident. However, human actions and the increasing role of technologies developed by humans is at the centre of this impact. In other words, industrial technologies and the increasing reliance on advanced tools illustrate how technology profoundly impacts and shapes our daily lives. In her book *Material Participation: Technology, the Environment and Everyday Publics* (2012) Noortje Marres, a professor in science, technology and society at the University of Warwick addresses this issue. According to Marres "the idea that the rise of industrial objects – from technology to commodities and scientific objects – should be held responsible for

the demise of sociability and politics in industrial, bureaucratized, technological societies… also lies behind a general diagnosis of the pathology of modern society" (10). Marres's observation contains a technophobic criticism, particularly regarding technology as creating social alienation and political separation. At this point, Bruno Latour's views allow us to delve deeper into the subject. Latour not only criticizes modernity's system of thought that artificially separates nature from society, he also points out that the concept of Anthropocene carries a new kind of anthropocentrism that conceals this distinction. According to him, this discourse that places humans at the centre of the world reproduces the perspective that is part of the problem. In his work *Facing Gaia*, Bruno Latour questions this approach and positions humans not as separate from nature but as beings that affects and is affected by nature. In this respect, according to Latour nature is no longer a passive background but it becomes an entity "that reacts to our actions" (238). This perspective questions both technophilic progress narratives and social theories that exclude nature. When Latour's approach is read from a technophobic framework, it reinforces the idea that alienating nature with technological arrogance accelerates environmental destruction. In this case, technology becomes a practical tool and an actor that causes us to question the ethical and ontological dimensions of our relationship with nature. By emphasizing our entanglement with nature, he invites a new kind of "radical definition of earthly life" (Latour 284), where technologies are not merely tools of domination or exploitation but collaborative instruments within complex ecological systems. In this context technology can be reimagined as a vehicle for mutual interactions. It is crucial for communities to comprehend and handle this relationship since the connection between humans and technology is complex and ever changing. As French philosopher, sociologist and theologian Jacques Ellul stated that as technology

advances, we are enabled to escape natural imperatives, but instead we are subject to artificial technical imperatives (429). Ellul emphasizes how technological advances provide an escape from natural needs, making us more dependent on artificial technical needs. Consequently, this critique of technology emphasizes that technology and human actions have become a force that has great impact on society and the environment.

When talking about the Anthropocene, it is almost impossible to exclude technology from this process. Atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen's statement is quite striking in this respect: "as one of the characteristic features of the "anthropocene", distant future generations of "homo sapiens" will do all they can to prevent a new ice-age from developing by adding powerful artificial green house gases to the atmosphere" (17). In other words, humans are no longer just beings exposed to nature but they are beings who manipulate nature. Moreover, even the beneficial nature of this manipulation does not make the situation unquestionable because the real issue here is the desire to dominate nature itself. Therefore, it is necessary to see this period as a geological rupture and a call for responsibility.

Delving into the responsibility and accountability of humans and their technology in geological transformations, the views of Niklas Alexander Chimirri and Ernst Schraube, who are researchers known for their work examining the relationship between technology and humans, can be useful. They particularly address the impact of technology on human life and the psychological dimensions of these impacts. Their work highlights the gap between the rapid development of technology and the human capacity to make sense of these developments. They focus on human dependence on technology and its environmental, social and psychological consequences. For example, they discuss how technology challenges human imagination and the ability to make sense of it. Chimirri

and Schraube state that “today, scientists around the globe are increasingly aware how the world is dangling on a string due to excessive human exploitation of the Earth’s ecosystems” (50). This growing awareness highlights the urgent need to reassess the role of human activity particularly technological development in ecological degradation. In this context, Chimirri and Schraube make us think about the ways technology contributes to environmental problems. They also consider how it could actually be used differently, maybe in more sustainable or inclusive ways. Known especially for his works evaluating the possible consequences of technological progress on humanity, Nick Bostrom draws attention to how technology can shape human life in the future by stating that recent rapid technological change supports the idea that it will have intense effects on humanity in the future (9). Hence, the rapid advancement of technology will greatly change human life and society. Zalasiewicz, Thomas, and Waters elaborate on this concept by emphasizing the multifaceted nature of human-induced transformations. They note that “although climate change is now the most important force destabilizing the Earth system, the Anthropocene includes many other physical, chemical and biological transformations, interlinked with global economic, political, social and technological phenomena” (983), showing how various dimensions of human activity collectively shape this epoch. In this context, the traces of human on Earth have established the characteristic features of the Anthropocene and are considered to be a forerunner of the environmental challenges humans face. This description aligns with insights from Wolfram Mauser. As one of the leading scholars of Global Change Research, Wolfram Mauser wraps the impact of human activities on the Earth system extensively. According to Mauser:

> Global Change describes humanity’s increasing intervention in the Earth’s metabolism and its relationship with the natural variability of the Earth system. This interaction, which gained momentum throughout the 20th century, has now

> reached the same magnitude as many natural processes. In this context, the concept of the Anthropocene has been proposed as a new era in which human influence has become a significant force. (3)

Mauser points out that this process shows no signs of slowing down or reversing, making it clear that dealing with the consequences of Global Change is one of the greatest challenges humanities has ever faced. These changes can have a wide range of effects, from the labour market to everyday life as Mauser states "humans at the same time cause, are affected by, and alter change" (3). So, problems from the past and those that arise today are worsened by the changes brought about by advanced technology, causing major changes in society and the economy as Amitav Ghosh states in his book *The Great Derangement* (2016), "before the advent of the carbon-intensive economy, the populations of the 'old world' were not divided by vast gaps in technology" (116). Thus, some places rushed forward while others were left to cope with the fallout. And now, we are all witnessing the consequences, most urgently through the lens of climate change. This is not just a scientific problem anymore though it is cultural, political and deeply personal. For all its promises, the uncomfortable part is that technology has played a double-edged role. As Zalasiewicz, Thomas, and Waters point out, technological progress has not just failed to halt environmental degradation but in many ways, it has intensified it by stating that "more than 100 million tonnes of CO2 are added to Earth's atmosphere daily" (983). The numbers are staggering, forcing us to confront a paradox that the very tools that brought us here are also what we are depending on to get us out. This is where the Anthropocene becomes a useful concept. Braden Allenby, a renowned academic and author in the field of environmental sciences and engineering, explores the transformative impacts of technology on humanity and its role in shaping the Anthropocene in his book *Reconstructing Earth*. According to Allenby, technology is not just part of the problem

thus it is the defining force of this new epoch. “It is technology” he writes, “that is ushering us into the Anthropocene” (34). So, we are no longer passive observers of environmental change. We are its authors. This raises a critical question about the nature of human response: How should we respond to these challenges not solely through scientific and technological means, but also through cultural and imaginative frameworks? While literature, art, and storytelling do not directly reduce carbon emissions, they play a vital role in shaping public perception and influencing societal attitudes toward climate-related issues. Within this context, cultural narratives should not be viewed as peripheral. Quite the contrary, they are an essential component of a comprehensive response to the Anthropocene. As Rishma and Gill state in their journal article titled “Fictional Depictions Of Climate Change In Literature: A Study On Human-Nature Relationship,” “literature has always played an important role as a socially responsible means of raising people’s consciousness about the ecological problem by revealing the complex interdependence of man and the environment” (25). Therefore, this thesis examines the intricate relationship between technology, society and the environment through the lenses of technophobia and technophilia in Maggie Gee’s *The Ice People* and Jeanette Winterson’s *The Stone Gods*. Thus, in this thesis the formative role of technology in the established socio-cultural, political systems, the psychological integrity of individuals and the human-nature relationships is discussed throughout the novels. Both writers highlight technology as an important factor as well as a tool during the moments of ecological crises and portray the various outcomes of its usages in their texts. Both novels present compelling dystopian visions in which the consequences of unchecked technological advancement and environmental neglect are evident. In *The Ice People*, Gee presents a chilling future shaped by environmental destruction and the

fragmentation of human intimacy. While some, such as environmental lawyer and cultural commentator Jedediah Purdy, in *After Nature* (2015), express cautious optimism that technological advances such as "clean and renewable energy sources, carbon- eating organisms, and other fixes that could reduce human pressure on natural systems" (259), the novels offer a counterpoint by depicting technology not as a saviour but as a force of alienation, warning against the illusion that mechanized solutions can replace the need for real human and ecological connection.

In this theoretical context, this thesis examines Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* through the social, environmental and ethical problems caused by technological developments. Both novels question the relationship between humans and technology, showing that technology can function both as a promise of salvation and as a tool of destruction. While *The Ice People* addresses the effects of technology on society on a more realistic and sociological basis, *The Stone Gods* reveals how technology transforms the concepts of time, space and identity. Although there are methodological and aesthetic differences between the novels, they both call for rethinking of human-technology relationship with nature and machines in the Anthropocene. This thesis aims to analyse the opposing approaches to technology by comparing the two novels in the context of technophobia and technophilia.

The analysis in Chapter One shows that technology without ethics and social responsibility worsens dystopian realities instead of improving them. *The Stone Gods* embodies a hesitant approach, blending technophilic wonder with technophobic critique. Winterson's narrative, through its cyclical structure invites readers to reconsider humanity's place within the planetary ecosystem. Chapter Two shows how the novel uses speculative fiction to challenge anthropocentric ideologies and capitalist exploitation,

finally advocating for environmental consciousness and ethical engagement with technology. The conclusion will reveal how technophobic and technophilic views towards technology are represented in the context of the Anthropocene in both works. By contrasting these two novels, this thesis underlines how speculative fiction can serve as a powerful medium for addressing pressing contemporary issues. Through technophilia and technophobia framework, this thesis contributes to the ongoing discourse on the intersection of literature, technology and anthropocentricism.

To conclude, the relationship between humans and technology is marked by both fascination and fear, technophilia and technophobia, each revealing the double-edged nature of technological progress. Through the dystopian visions presented in *The Stone Gods* and *The Ice People*, Jeanette Winterson and Maggie Gee challenge anthropocentric narratives and dismantle binary oppositions such as human/nature, mind/body, and nature/culture. At first, *The Stone Gods* presents advanced artificial intelligence and space travel, especially with an emphasis on Spike, as startling signs of what humans can achieve. But as the story progresses, a darker side begins to emerge. Beneath all the high technological wonders lies a strong sense of fear and doubt about where this path might lead. The narrative eventually reveals a deeply technophobic sub narrative. The people of Orbus have all the science and technology they could need but they still end up ruining their own planet by overusing its resources and giving in to endless consumption. When they try to start over on Planet Blue which is a place that looks untouched and full of life, it quickly becomes clear that they are repeating the same mistakes. The story seems to reveal that if humans keep pushing forward with technology but ignore their responsibility to the environment and to each other, humans are doomed for a cyclical destruction. In this context, *The Stone Gods* presents a critique of blind faith in progress,

emphasizing that technology alone cannot save a civilization from collapse if its values are damaged. Similarly, *The Ice People* inclines technophobia, depicting a future devastated by climate catastrophe and emotional alienation. Both stories warn us that if we do not step back and really think about how we engage with technology, we can become even further removed from nature and each other.

Although both Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* have been previously investigated through various theoretical and thematic lenses, the intersection of the human-technology-environment in the Anthropocene context with a particular focus on the technophobia, technophilia spectrum has not been scholarly analysed yet. In this regard, this thesis aims to bring a new perspective to the existing discussions on the abovementioned Cli-Fi novels and fill in this gap. What this study suggests is that technology is not good or bad in and of itself. What matters is what we do with it and the values, intentions and systems that shape its use. Books like Winterson's and Gee's are especially important at present as climate change worsens and technologies like artificial intelligence and biotechnology grow at a rapid pace.

CHAPTER ONE

MAGGIE GEE'S *THE ICE PEOPLE:* EXPLORING TECHNOLOGY'S ROLE IN A DYSTOPIAN FUTURE

English novelist Maggie Gee was born in Dorset in 1948 and raised in London. Gee is currently employed as a professor at Bath Spa University. Being a prolific writer of fiction, she has gradually built a remarkable career in British literature. Her talent and dedication to writing were recognized in 1983 and she was included in Granta's decennial list which highlights the most promising and influential writers of the decade. Notably, this highlighted her as one of the most promising writers of her generation and solidified her status as most important writers in English literature. Maggie Gee was also awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in 2012 for her contributions to literature.

Maggie Gee's literary path, which began in the 1970s, has consistently engaged with pressing socio-political and ecological issues. As Mine Özyurt Kılıç, a prominent scholar of contemporary British literature and gender studies, observes in her book *Maggie Gee: Writing the Condition-of-England Novel* (2013) that Gee's fiction critically addresses a broad spectrum of societal concerns including "unemployment, global warming, violence, homeless people, militarization, the threat of nuclear war, infertility, childcare, gentrification, cuts in social services, the lowering of standards in publishing and the commercialization of culture (11). Thus, Gee's reputation comes from her novels and short stories that address environmental and social issues often contain dystopian elements and pessimistic predictions about the future like *The Ice People* (1998) and *The Flood* (2004). Maggie Gee has been one of the writers that deals with the climate crisis and the chaotic situation created by climate change from both sociological and political

aspects. Mine Özyurt Kılıç states that "Gee employs different narrative modes, such as dystopia, fantasy, and science fiction, to illustrate contemporary problems, including climate change, global warming, and environmental crisis, that add to the already crippling and unsolved problems of modern societies" (168). Therefore, environmental issues have an important place in Maggie Gee's works. For instance, in her novel *The Flood* (2004), Gee portrays how individuals from various social backgrounds struggle to survive amid a catastrophic flood. Through this narrative, she emphasizes the pivotal role of environmental issues in her fiction and illustrates how class divisions and social inequalities become especially visible during ecological crises. As Özyurt Kılıç notes;

> Gee's earlier discussions of pollution, consumerism, poverty and unemployment in the context of the corruption and disintegration of society, now culminate in this novel in the merging of social and environmental problems. In that sense, The Ice People as a dystopia is not just a warning about environmental disasters to come, it is also about the lifestyle and habits of thought leading up to that disaster. (113)

This chapter of the thesis concentrates on the dystopian novel of Maggie Gee, *The Ice People* that deals with environmental degradation, social polarization, global cooling, climate change, the collapse of social structure and technological dependency as Rebecca Evans in her article "Fantastic Futures? Cli-Fi, Climate Justice, and Queer Futurity" states that "Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* describes parental conflicts against a background of climate devastation" (105). The novel takes place in a future where the world faces changes in the climate and is beginning to be rapidly cooled down. Gee vividly portrays the devastating effects that climate change can have on the planet which is still a growing concern in the today's world. It is seen that Gee deals with social issues in terms of the main theme and in terms of her choice of characters, emphasizing the complexity of human-technology relationships. Adeline Johns-Putra is a scholar of English literature,

particularly known for her work on the relationship between literature and climate. Her analyses of works by Maggie Gee, including *The Ice People*, examine climate change and gender relations in detail. Johns-Putra has made significant contributions to contemporary climate fiction and ecocriticism, exploring how these genres shape the intersection of literature with environmental and social issues. According to Adeline Johns-Putra, "*The Ice People* is set in a recognizably futuristic world" (75) and "it treats the environmental crisis by demonstrating its impact on a single family" (75). Therefore, Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* depicts a future in which technological advancement coexists with ecological collapse. It reveals a profound paradox that technology extends human lifespan but only for the privileged few and even then, it fails to protect humanity from environmental destruction. As Saul notes, "people lived more than twice as long, if they were rich and lucky enough not to be terminated" (Gee 9). This line encapsulates the novel's critique of technology. Saul's words challenge the idea that technology could serve as a universal solution in a world where ecological and social systems were already fundamentally destabilized. Instead of offering salvation, technology in *The Ice People* becomes a tool of inequality and selective survival, revealing the moral and environmental limitations of technophilic ideologies in the Anthropocene. In *The Ice People*, Maggie Gee constructs a narrative deeply informed by scientific research, embedding real-world ecological predictions within the novel's setting. Adam Trexler, a leading scholar in climate fiction studies, explores how climate change narratives function ideologically in contemporary literature. In his work *Anthropocene Fictions: The Novel in a Time of Climate Change* (2015), Trexler argues that in such novels [Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* and Doris Lessing's *Mara and Dann*] scientific predictions are embedded in the novel's setting. The climate may be influenced by humans, but the novel's conflicts run along familiar

plotlines of humans combating nature and other humans who would further upset a natural balance (30). Gee shows this idea by telling a story set in a world that is falling apart because of climate change which at first gets too hot, then there occurs a new ice age. Eventually, the novel reveals how fragile the modern world is when confronted with nature's retribution and insists on the need for a rebalanced, respectful relationship with the planet as Mine Özyurt Kılıç states, "as an imaginative fiction, the book helps us imagine what might happen and, potentially, to make adjustments and take preventive measures" (113).

Set in the future Britain the novel is divided into two main plots. In the period "Tropical Time" (Gee 38), the effects of global warming are felt in every corner of the world. Extreme temperatures have become a factor that disrupts the environmental and the social order. People's daily lives have changed, resources have begun to deplete and the connection with nature has gradually weakened. In this chaotic environment, the main character Saul is depicted as a figure who is fond of technology and moreover even a little too attached to it. Although Saul seems to be someone who can survive in this technological environment, he actually struggles with the loneliness, alienation and detachment that comes with the comforts offered by technology. When he first talks about their small, simple house, he states that there was "no aircon, no voice response, no auto service" (Gee 26) in their first house. "It was primitive, but so we were" (26) Saul continues, linking the absence of technological tools with primitiveness. This shows us that technology is no longer just a tool but a norm. But interestingly, Saul's relationship with technology is not a simple technophilia. In time inner questionings begins when he states, "my life went wrong when I blurred the line between living and non-living" (Gee 90). Saul seems to confess how much he was lost both emotionally and ethically when

the human-technology boundaries were crossed. In this context as Karola V. Kreitmair, an associate professor of medical history and bioethics at the University of Wisconsin, states in her article that the use of "M- health technology" is problematic because "it can place the burden of health and behaviour change on individuals alone" (482). Hence, technology makes our lives easier but it also makes our relationship invisible with the elements that make us human with nature and with other living things. The alienation that Saul experiences is exactly the result of these invisible losses.

In *The Ice People*, Maggie Gee paints a vivid image of a world where natural elements, once ubiquitous and taken for granted, have become rare luxuries due to climate change. Saul's statement "most people in England lived on pills and Fibamix" (Gee 37), indicates a synthetic lifestyle. Quite the contrary, Saul's wife Sarah's choice to fill her home with "expensive real flowers in the diner and the screen room" (Gee 37) is a symbol that she is consciously refusing to surrender completely to the artificial. The depiction of real flowers as extravagant decorative objects is a commentary on environmental degradation. Also, it is a critique of human-nature dichotomy under technological domination. As Saul portrays, when his parents visit their home decorated with real flowers, they are "amazed and frightened" (Gee 37). In a world where the natural has diminished, real plants become something amazing. This moment in the novel can be read as a tension between a technophilic dependence on artificial solutions and a technophobic nostalgia for the organic. The fact that real flowers inspire fear rather than pleasure reveals how deeply society has internalized artificiality. In this context, Gregers Andersen who is a researcher in environmental humanities at Stockholm University argues about this issue in his book *Climate Fiction and Cultural Analysis* that "in the utilization of modern technology, the presencing of the non-human world is not allowed to occur naturally (95).

Moreover, the shock of Saul's parents reveals a significant shift in collective perception that nature is no longer integrated into everyday life, but catalogued, tempered and commodified. In these high-tech worlds, nature does not matter until it is rare. A flower that used to be seen as just part of nature now feels like something rare or special. In this context in his book *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (2015), environmental historian and political economist Jason W. Moore argues that this way of thinking turns nature into an object and hides the fact that humans and nature are actually connected through ongoing relationships (295). In other words, even a flower that was once considered ordinary is now considered as extraordinary and spectacular because human perspective on nature have shifted from seeing it as a natural entity to a visual spectacle under human control. Similarly, Saul reflects that people have valued nothing when they had everything (Gee 51). The problem is not just that the planet is getting overheated but human actions that have forgotten how to live with it. Luxurious flowers, artificial habitats and emotional detachment suggest that humans need to rebalance their relationship with both technology and the natural world. Thus, Saul refers to his wife Sarah as a nature lover, reflecting his scepticism on nature as a techie:

> She 'loved nature', whatever that meant. I tried to make her see that now nothing was natural, that the flowers she loved had been selectively bred to make them bigger and longer lasting, that even the hills behind the Northwest Borders, which we could just glimpse from our fourth-floor window, were covered with genetically modified crops. (Gee 92)

Furthermore, her commitment to nature reflects a broader scepticism toward the technological logic. Here, Saul critiques the artificiality of the natural world in the Anthropocene, emphasizing the extent to which human intervention has altered even the most seemingly untouched landscapes.

As the narrative unfolds technology is revealed to have deeper consequences, alienating humans from both their environment and from each other. As Saul reflects on his early scientific observations "looking through the electron microscope at tiny machines performing tiny tasks" (Gee 43), he experiences comfort and a sense of control as he continues "men were still in command of things, masters of a friendly universe" (Gee 43). This moment of nostalgia represents a technophilic worldview, wherein scientific advancement is associated with mastery and progress. Sherry Turkle's observation that "technology is seductive when what it offers meets our human vulnerabilities" (1) resonates strongly here. As embodied by Saul, technophilia does not simply reflect a belief in progress but it becomes an emotional investment. As Sherry Turkle notes, "people disappoint; robots will not" (10). This technophilic vision is challenged by characters like Sarah and Wicca. Wicca is the name of a political and social movement formed by women. Initially known as the Children's Commune, this group later takes on the name Wicca World. In the later parts of the novel, Wicca World turns into a structure where women separate from men and establish their own communities. This separation occurs at a time when relations between the sexes are deteriorating in society and women feel increasing distrust and anger towards technologically obsessed men. Furthermore, women blame men for the decrease in children and the inadequacy of men to fix this situation in an environmentally disrupted world and distance themselves from men. Wicca World becomes a community where women are in solidarity. This structure is an important element in the dystopian atmosphere of the novel, showing how relations between the sexes and the general structure of society are changing and crumbling. In *The Ice People*, the Wicca community turns away from technology, viewing it not as a saviour but as part of the male-dominated system that has brought

environmental and reproductive collapse. This rejection aligns with what Sherry Turkle identifies as a broader cultural anxiety, where people feel technology threatens real emotional connection (14). Instead of trusting in machines, Wicca women build a life based on physical presence, natural rhythms and shared care. Their technophobic attitude is not simply fear but it can be considered as a resistance. For instance, Sarah perceives robots not as helpers, but as distortions of natural order by stating "they're – completely unnatural. They're wrong. They're perverted" (Gee 107). This rejection of technology signals a defence of human identity and emotional integrity in the Anthropocene. Wicca's distrust of robots stems from a more spiritual and ecological perspective. Despite being marketed as indispensable domestic aides that "could dust, wash floors, recycle rubbish" (Gee 74), under the slogan "A Dove in Every Home" (74), the Doves are rejected by the Wicca movement. What is more they "had at once demanded that production of Doves be halted, and all existing models destroyed" (Gee 119). This harsh attitude by Wiccans shows that fear of technology is not simply an irrational reaction to innovation but it is a conscious and moral view. By refusing to accept robots as household commodities, the Wiccans argue that such devices do not enhance societal well‑being. Quite the opposite, they erode communal values and widen the gap between human and nature. This perspective aligns with the critique of Alf Hornborg, a cultural anthropologist and professor of human ecology, who explores the global inequalities produced through the intersections of economy, technology and the environment. Hornborg argues that modern societies often fail to recognize the social and environmental costs of technology, focusing instead on market value. He calls this the "myopia of commodity fetishism" (Hornborg 22), the tendency to ignore how technological systems contribute to alienation, the loss of social practices, and the weakening of human connections. Hornborg argues

that this form of fetishism masks the environmental degradation embedded in consumer goods and alters our understanding of technology itself.

In contrast, Saul's perspective frames robots as desirable companions "robots to live with us as friends" (Gee 75). He sees them as rational, predictable and emotionally unambiguous qualities that appeal to his need for order and control. In this context Sherry Turkle notes that "in a complicated world, robots seem a simple salvation. It is like calling in the cavalry" (11). Saul's embrace of machines reveals not only a belief in their utility but a deeper longing for clarity and stability in a world marked by environmental and social collapse. The domestic integration of machines becomes symbolic of a technophilic vision of society as stated by Saul in the novel, "mobots", "robot friends" and "machines that responded to our voices… opening doors, cooling, heating" (Gee 37–38, 71). Saul's admiration for this mechanized world reveals how deeply technology has transformed everyday life making it more convenient while redefining human interaction and societal structure. Maggie Gee's depiction of the Doves in *The Ice People* is not merely a warning about malfunctioning machines. It is a broader critique of how technological progress when governed by masculine logic can undermine ethical responsibility and emotional depth. William Grassie who is the founder and executive director of the Metanexus Institute, aims to promote the constructive interaction of religion and science. In his chapter entitled "H±: Transhumanism and Its Critics", he states that "self-replicating nanobots could run amok like an invasive weed, turning our green, rich planet into gray mud" (262). This statement critiques the uncontrolled technological development because he relates nanobots to invasive weeds, explaining the risks of creating autonomous systems that exceed human control. Similarly, in Maggie Gee's novel, robots called "Doves that could reproduce themselves" (Gee 87) became popular states Saul in a

sentence indicating that technology raises so enormously that they even have the ability to reproduce. Therefore, self-replicating robots called Doves were initially designed to provide assistance carry the potential to exceed their intended limits. Moreover, the uncontrolled proliferation of these machines eventually turns them into an existential threat. Their ability to self-replication makes them an existential threat. This multiplying of Doves is similar to William Grassie's "grey goo" idea (158) in which he states that technology begins to threaten the environmental system, social structures and human agency. So, Grassie and Gee share a common ground arguing that the self-sustaining technologies such as nanobots, or robots, entail a risk to disrupt the balance of the systems that they get to improve. Gee's depiction of Doves is a critique of humanity's illusion of absolute control. At this point, Donna Haraway's concept of the cyborg in *A Cyborg Manifesto* comes to mind in which she states 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 through a final appropriation of all the powers of the parts into a higher unity" (6). Haraway states that the boundaries between human and machine are becoming increasingly blurred and that this situation can be both beneficial and dangerous at the same time. Gee's dystopian Doves also portray the dilemma that, they have been created, but it is no longer clear whose service they serve. Nick Bostrom also praises the potential of transhumanist technologies in his work *A History of Transhumanist Thought*, while also acknowledging that these technologies can have devastating consequences in the wrong hands. According to him, the potential benefits of new technologies are enormous, but so are the risks like "creation of self-improving artificial intelligence will at some point result in radical changes within a very short time span" (12). Especially those associated with self-replicating, intelligent

machines that might act in ways not aligned with human values. So, Bostrom's warnings provide a theoretical foundation for both Grassie's nanobots and Gee's Doves. Combining the perspectives of Bostrom, Grassie and Gee, we can argue that the critical challenge of the 21st century is not to accelerate innovation but to moderately limit its reach. They all suggest that humanity may not fully foresee the consequences of developing technology as Saul states "the whole of Euro went Dove mad" (Gee 79) and the inability of manufacturers to keep up with demand because, "they were selling a thousand a day, then two thousand, then the figures began to go through the roof and the manufacturers couldn't keep up" (Gee 79), reflecting society's increasing dependence on technology and consumer culture. What they have in common is that self-sustaining systems like nanobots, robots or synthetic intelligences may at some point surpass their designers. Doves' acceptance among people also reflects the belief and expectation that technology can provide solutions to humanity's biggest problems. According to Saul in a world where recycling is of great importance, Doves redefine the nature's resources as he states;

> In a world that was wild about recycling, the Doves arrived like mini messiahs. Refuel Recycle: R and R. All you had to do was put your rubbish on the plastic feeding mat that came with the Dove, perch the machine on the top of the mound, and with a slurping, sucking sound that was unnervingly like a pet eating, the pile of mess began to disappear, and the Dove slowly settled towards the floor, eyes locked on its food, until it sat satisfied flat upon the floor. (80)

This shows that technology creates new habits and behaviours among people, which can lead to changes in social structures and values. Originally conceived as domestic helpers, the Doves soon go out of control. "A programming error" causes them to attack pets and even children, including one incident in which a Dove "eats a baby in half" (Gee 118–119). These examples point to the core danger. Once a technology escapes ethical

oversight, its impact becomes unpredictable and often violent. Due to the frightening news published, Wicca demanded that all Dove models should be destroyed (Gee 119). The Wicca movement's demand that all Doves be destroyed reflects more than just technophobia. It is a collective defence mechanism rooted in distrust of patriarchal scientific authority. As Sarah puts it, "You men made a pact with the devil" (Gee 259), suggesting that technological progress has excluded female voices and values. In a similar vein as Sherry Turkle warns about intimacy stating that "technology proposes itself as the architect of our intimacies. These days, it suggests substitutions that put the real on the run" (12). So, Saul's emotional attachment to the Doves, especially Dora, replaces real human connection with a mechanical replacement. Saul's unwavering defence of the household robot Dora in *The Ice People* reflects a technophilic denial. An uncritical embrace of technology that disregards its ethical and social consequences as Turkle states "I find people willing to seriously consider robots not only as pets but as potential friends, confidants, and even romantic partners" (9). While others react to the increasingly violent behaviour of Doves, Saul still insists stating that "we were the machinemen, the Scientists, the Greeks, and the women were trying to take away our machines" (Gee 119). Therefore, the Wicca World's caution and Saul's obsession reveals a vital worry in contemporary technocentric culture. Although machines promise salvation, they often come at the expense of control, intimacy and attention.

This tension between technophilia and technophobia reflects broader contemporary debates about the role of technology in the Anthropocene. In the same vein, Claire Colebrook who is a professor at Penn State University, known for her work on posthuman thought, the climate crisis and the relationship between literature reflets upon the context of Anthropocene in her book chapter "The Future in the Anthropocene:

Extinction and the Imagination" in *Climate and Literature* book (2019). Colebrook argues that "technologies that enable certain humans to flourish and conquer the planet are also world-destructive" (272). Eventually, Gee's novel suggests that the future of humanity will be determined not just by the technologies we invent but by the attitudes we hold toward them. Whether embraced as saviours or rejected as threats, technologies reflect our values, fears and desires. Through her characters, Gee invites us to critically examine what it means to live in a world where the boundaries between human and machine is increasingly blurred.

In *Facing Gaia*, Bruno Latour defines the Anthropocene as "a truly Oedipal myth" (277) and unlike Oedipus, humanity must now see its own mistakes clearly. Latour continues arguing that "we must resist the temptation to blind ourselves anew: we must agree to look at them head on, in order to be able to face what is coming toward us with our eyes wide open" (277). This insight resonates deeply with the character of Saul in *The Ice People*. Despite his intelligence and access to scientific data Saul remains entrenched in a culture of denial. Much like today's climate sceptics, Saul disregards urgent ecological warnings, noting "no one took the odd data seriously, and the original scientist who'd published the results kept her head low while she repeated the probes" (Gee 32). Saul's scientific work and interest becomes abstract and elitist, disconnected from the climatic changes and suffering around him. In this way, Saul symbolizes a broader human tendency to rely on technological progress as a shield from accountability, even as the natural world collapses. In other words, rather than confronting the moral implications of environmental degradation, technology becomes a medium for avoidance, a tool that distances humans from nature and responsibility. This highlights the societal tendency to undermine or overlook problematic truths, even in the face of mounting

evidence very much like Bruno Latour's statement about technology that "face what is coming towards us" (277) which is a critique of the illusions of control and safety that modernity and science have fostered. Additionally, the impacts of these technological advancements on the environment are also discussed as the storyteller and the main character Saul points out:

> Something was beginning, something very important, but I didn't understand it, nor anything else. 'There's some weird data here from the Antarctic,' I said. I was reading from the net about the rate of melting of the icecaps, and the various tech fixes trying to slow it down. 'Some of these results are coming out skewed. (Gee 30)

Saul's statements serve as early indicators of the planet's growing distress, drawing attention to the first warning signs of environmental degradation. People start to rely more on technological tools instead of communicating with each other, which has led to a minimum empathy in human connections. This situation is also seen in the relationship between Saul and Sarah. Their relationship is stuck in the chaos of modern life shaped by technological advances. In other words, too much use of technology causes relationships between the couple to break down and alienate as they work very hard and do not have time to have children. Saul, states that "for a while we were everything to each other" (Gee 26). These quote reveal that they have a harmonious relationship with his wife Sarah at first. However, their relationship worsens as the weather patterns change drastically, leading to their separation in the second part of the narrative. While the novel's characters cope with the challenges of extreme environmental conditions, their bodies are also experimented on and abused in the process of reproductive technologies. Both Sarah and Saul are experimented in return for the huge amount of money they pay for the hope to have a baby:

> We whizzed through the tunnels nearly every morning before five AM to be injected or tested, making changes of plan at a split second's notice if the doctors told us they needed us, if eggs could be harvested or sperm donated or any bits of us removed and twizzled…We'd held out too long, and now yielded our bodies completely… (Gee 52)

As for the doctors, Saul and Sarah's body are considered and treated as unimportant. Sarah is degraded into eggs whereas Saul's sperms were degraded to sperms:

> Our god, who ran the universe, was Dr Zeuss, and we believed in him, however much the Doctorwatch tried to expose him as a moneygrubber or a charlatan, whatever the disquieting stories onscreen about mixups of sperm or eggs or foetuses, however chilling the articles on rates of deformity in techfix births. (Gee 42)

In an environment where climate change has pushed people to their physical and emotional limits, daily life is constrained to confined spaces, making natural reproduction nearly impossible. As Andrea L. Bonnicksen puts it in her book in *In Vitro Fertilization* (1989) IVF is no longer seen as the beginning of a "hill of horror" but rather as the first rung of a "ladder of opportunity" (138). This perspective aligns with what Sylvie describes as the "techfix conception" or "techfix way" (Gee 39, 41), and shows that technological intervention in the reproductive process has become normalized. Also, this process has been adopted as a promising solution to infertile Sarah who "was utterly depressed, though she smiled for the world every week on the screens" (Gee 41). So, Bonnicksen's statement is consistent with Sylvie's description. Therefore, in the novel, the techfix approach reflects a society increasingly dependent on technology where natural biological processes are redefined to human innovation. Saul and Sarah's decision to use in vitro fertilization to have children, despite the emotional and physical toll it takes on Sarah, reflects this deeper technophilic reliance. In Gee's novel, Saul illustrates this

reliance in his depiction of fertility clinics, places where "thousands of anxious couples who flocked to the Batteries every day" (Gee 39), seeking technological solutions to their reproductive struggles. As Selen Sepetoğlu argues in her dissertation, "the human body has become a fluid entity constantly shaped by these technologies" (23). In a way, the body that once a fixed entity with natural boundaries, now exists as a dynamic, technologically enhanced system that is affected and altered by artificial interventions. This portrayal emphasizes the growing reliance on technology to overcome natural barriers, pushing the limits of the biological and ethical boundaries. Saul's statement "we yielded our bodies completely, our private parts, ourselves, our money" (Gee 42) supports this point of view. It is true that technologies like in vitro fertilization have opened up new possibilities for couples who might otherwise be unable to have children. However, they also raise difficult ethical questions about what it actually means to create life, how much control we should have over reproduction and whether we are upsetting the natural balance in ways we do not fully understand. The more we turn to technology to manage natural processes such as reproduction, the more we are exposed to situations where these systems fall short and fail to reflect the complex and unpredictable nature of human life. Saul's reliance on these technological systems at last suggests a technophobic critique that underlines the surrender of personal autonomy to the technological systems that promise to solve what nature has made difficult. Perceived through in vitro fertilization Sarah and Saul's child Luke can be seen as a representation of technophobia. As John D. Biggers, one of the pioneers of in vitro fertilization technology and a reproductive biologist and physiologist who served as a professor at Harvard Medical School notes, "the results [of in vitro fertilization in reproductive biology] were well received by some commentators, who suggested they may eventually help in the solution of human

problems. Others were critical, saying that the scientists were playing God" (120). This statement underlines the dichotomy of technophilia and technophobia. While some approach assisted reproductive technologies as a triumph of human ingenuity, others see them as a dangerous, manipulating with natural boundaries. When we look at the story this way, it encourages us to think about how our dependence on technology can affect our future, especially in areas that are so deeply connected to our humanity, such as fertility. It makes us question how something so personal can still feel natural when science plays such a big role. Luke, who comes to life through in vitro fertilization is different from other children. Luke's portrayal is not ideal as Saul states "his pale childish face", "his miserable eyes—Luke was real. Luke was tragic" (Gee 108). Therefore, while the biological existence of a child born through technological intervention is questioned, its emotional and psychological depth is also brought up for discussion throughout the novel. So, in vitro fertilization comes with a bunch of ethical questions, not just for individuals but for society and culture as a whole. On the one hand, assisted reproductive technologies give people greater freedom to choose when and how to have children. But they also raise difficult questions such as; How are these technologies reshaping what we think of as a family? And how does society respond to such changes? In *The Ice People*, Luke stands at the point where science and personal pain collide. Through in vitro fertilization technology *The Ice People* addresses the integration of technology into human life from a perspective that neither completely affirms nor completely rejects it. The novel reveals the ethical and emotional costs that technological advancement brings along with the opportunities it offers. In this context, Luke's presence becomes a symbol that questions the effects of technology on human nature. Saul's personal experience with infertility during the planet's tropical period is not merely a biological or emotional

challenge, but a deeply gendered and socially charged issue. He describes it as “a secret minefield of rings on calendars, hopes and fears” (Gee 38), revealing the immense psychological pressure rooted in societal expectations of masculinity despite his capabilities as a techie. As Saul portrays, it was hard “for a man to admit he can’t do the thing his body should do” (38) points to an internalized sense of failure tied to normative gender roles. In this context, the novel suggests that neither blind faith in technology or technophilia nor total rejection of it or technophobia can resolve the crises caused by climate change and social decay. Saul notes this situation as “a great gap had grown up between the sexes. Segging we called it. From segregation. Almost everything we did was segged. Girls with girls, boys with boys, great droves of animals bypassing each other, eyes darting across, wild in the neon, jostling, signalling, twisting through the night, two big streams that couldn’t make a river” (Gee 18). This gender segregation can be interpreted as a technophobic reaction to the failures of previous societal models that were rooted in both patriarchal and technological dominance. Saul’s statement “two big streams that couldn’t make a river” (Gee 18), symbolizes how deep this separation is, also including a critique of modern society’s gender perceptions. In this context, it is true that natural disasters or resource shortages are often situations where women and men are more affected by their fertility. Saul defines this situation as “the problems with fertility had started to get worse. The screens were full of alarming statistics” (Gee 18). Furthermore, the rising levels of bacteria and “mutant HIVs” (Gee 18), transform social relations and interactions between genders who are trapped in their modern, technologically advanced homes, left alone with technology and unable to control nature. Therefore, an estrangement begins between the perfect couple of the novel, and this

separation ends with Saul joining the "Gay Scientists Club" (Gee 62), and his wife Sarah joining the Wicca.

What makes the characters' individual struggles in *The Ice People* more striking is that this struggle is intertwined emotionally, physically and politically with a technologically driven environmental collapse. As Adam Trexler notes, "such dystopias trace the failure of politics to craft an effective response to climate change and a subsequent disintegration of the political sphere as a result" (120). This statement underlines a larger technophobic anxiety about the idealization of technology. That is, it is not just about environmental destruction but it is also about the way technology silently transforms and even erodes fundamental human structures such as family, politics, identity and gender. In the context of politics in an environmentally disturbed world Saul states the situation of governments that "when civil order broke down, over the next few years, I stayed optimistic. Who needed governments? If you were young, you were self-dependant. The plagues passed me by, though I lost several friends" (Gee 19). This quote illustrates the collapse of the political structure and the individualistic fantasy of salvation that has replaced the idea of social solidarity. The idea that technology can rebuild society is romantic but also dangerous, because the individual solutions offered by technology cannot be the answer to collective problems. The losses that Saul experiences, such as the loss of his friends, the collapse of his marriage show that technology, far from being the solution, has become part of the problem. As Fukuyama states, "science and technology, from which the modem world springs, themselves represent our civilization's key vulnerabilities" (xii). This idea is further illustrated through Saul's reflections on life before the tropical age period as "we travelled everywhere, easily as swallows, we students with money from waiting tables, on cheap, safe airlines that competed for our

business" (Gee 17). His words highlight how technology made life easier, allowing people to travel freely and experience a world that felt stable and connected before climate change began to reshape everything. While describing the old world, he emphasizes how accessible the world has become. Thanks to technology, even students can travel easily with low budgets and working in various jobs due to the competition of cheap and safe airlines which allows people to easily go to places that were previously difficult to reach by showing how technology accelerates human mobility and globalization. Thus, Gee emphasizes the freedom provided by technological developments such as air travel and the improvement in living standards of people before the ice age. However, it is clear that, in the background of this freedom, the effects of technology on the environment and climate are ignored. Naomi Klein's statement in her book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* "it is we humans who are fragile and vulnerable and the earth that is hearty and powerful, and holds us in its hands" (323) resonates throughout the novel. Technology once has been viewed as humanity's greatest tool, becomes old fashioned facing the overwhelming power of nature materialized as extreme heat and global cooling. In other words, nature reclaims agency, challenging the illusion of human domination over nature. Bruno Latour similarly critiques this illusion in his book *Facing Gaia*, where he argues that "we have never been modern" because modernity is built on a false separation between nature and society (72). In *The Ice People* this separation collapses. Climate becomes a direct actor in human affairs, not a background condition. The characters, particularly Saul, become increasingly aware that technological advancement cannot isolate them from planetary forces. Dipesh Chakrabarty argues and furthers this perspective in his book *One Planet, Many Worlds* (2023) that the human today is greatly vulnerable within changes in the planetary systems. In *One Planet, Many*

Worlds he writes, “humans, the species called Homo sapiens, for all their mastery of technology, are not outside of the Darwinian history of life and evolution that unfolds on this planet” (Chakrabarty 35). This shift in perspective is central to the novel’s structure as well.

Apart from the journeys that Saul makes in real terms, the journeys that he makes in his personality also have an important place in the novel. Saul, formerly a young nanotechnologist, reflects on his deep connection with machines, stating, “I found I had a gift with machines. They were alive to me, and entirely absorbing, like the aphids I once bred in a matchbox” (Gee 19). This strong attachment continues in his later role as “a part-time tech teacher at a Learning Center” (19), suggesting that despite the dystopian conditions of his world, his passion for technology persists.

In the ice age part of the novel, Gee tells a story set in a future where Britain is completely covered in ice and the characters are forced to adapt to extreme climatic conditions. In addition to changing the relationship with technology, the ice age also brings with it cultural and political transformations, such as the collapse of governments, uprisings and increased hunger, as Saul describes “the world cooled down and everything changed, metal piping soon became something to loot, something to cannibalise, something to fight with, something worth killing or dying for” (Gee 131). This struggle shows how fragile technology and civilization are and how they can collapse quickly due to external influences such as unexpected climate changes. In this context Kirsten Peters, a scientist and author specializing in geology and climate change stated in her book *The Whole Story of Climate* (2012) states in the same vein that “the Roman Empire grew in a period of good weather, a modestly balmy time long known to historians as the Roman Warming. For several centuries, harvests were good as a result of the stable and generous

climate that provided warm and dry summers that favoured crops" (143). In this context, even the Roman Empire's rise depended on a favourable climate. This historical example emphasizes how climate conditions are central to the stability of civilizations, revealing the fragility of structures made by humans. Similarly, today's technological advancements, often seen as invincible pillars of modern life, may also be vulnerable when confronted with the unpredictable forces of nature. Just as the prosperity of the Roman Empire depended on environmental stability, the technological arrogance of Maggie Gee's modern world shows us the results of accelerated climate change. Saul and the people living the extreme heat are vulnerable to disruption by unpredictable natural forces that make the environment uninhabitable, force populations to migrate and cause radical changes in settlement patterns. For example, as a British citizen of African descent Saul and his son Luke becomes climate refugees in search of survival in Ghana as they flee from a collapsing Europe. Their journey positions them at the heart of "climate-related tragedies" (Chakrabarty 103), exemplifying the burdens of climate disruption. However, the novel also implicates technology as a mechanism that enables denial and detachment for the privileged. Saul's observation that "in wealthier areas, life went on as usual" (Gee 19), underlines how technological access functions as a bumper that allows the elite to ignore environmental collapse. This technological isolation fosters a false sense of security, severing ties with nature and delaying collective action. As Purdy argues, the Anthropocene's disasters are "all but certain to be the catastrophes of the poor" (6) and Chakrabarty adds that their brunt "will be borne by the disadvantaged and the poor of the world" (103) further demonstrating how modern technological inequalities effect people in the climate crisis. Inıtially, *The Ice People* critiques technological,

economic and colonial systems that create the illusion of control over nature and reveal their fragility in the face of ecological collapse.

This period which marked by growing cold and environmental devastation arrives unexpectedly as Saul reflects, “not that anyone was thinking of a new ice age” (Gee 49). His words point to a widespread technophilic denial, where people trust that technology or modern life will prevent large scale ecological disasters. However, as the ice age tightens its grip, technological optimism fades. Saul’s description of this period “cold, cold, battering cold, cold that howls and bites and burns, cold we shrink from like an enemy, as darkness comes, as the sun slips away” (Gee 52), reveals the physical harshness of the new world. In this frozen landscape, technology is no longer a saviour but an absent, failed promise. Saul’s statement “in the middle of the night, the cold is like stone, black and solid and hard as death, and as the dawn comes it sharpens to pain, as light creeps back with the morning wind” (Gee 52), reveals that everything technological gradually disappears and the balance of the world changes. Furthermore, Saul portrays the harshness of this period as “there’s no fruit or veg except potatoes, which these kids can just about manage to grow, but most of them are rotten by this time of year” (Gee 53). This quote highlights the collapse of the globalized, technology-dependent food system, leaving only the most resilient crops to survive. The failure of agriculture, even at the most basic level, signifies the limits of technology in the face of irreversible climate change. In this context, the children’s struggle to grow food represents a shift from technophilic dependence to a more primitive, survival-based existence. The absence of advanced agricultural technologies that were once taken for granted forces them into a life marked by scarcity, decay and instability. Rotten potatoes become a metaphor for the

rotting promises of technology, the belief that technological progress will always secure abundance and control over nature.

In the novel, although Saul is initially portrayed as a passionate technophile who is enthusiastic about machines, systems and technological progress, his survival ironically depends not on technology, but on the primitive, embodied knowledge of illiterate children who live in the wild. In the ice age part of the novel, Saul is portrayed as a person who is in need of wild boys as he says they "fed me, and let me sleep with them, an old man among hundreds of boys" (Gee 262). Thus, Saul's survival is not possible without the wild children who cannot read and write. Saul has "… expertise with the machines" (Gee 52), which shows the contrast between a primitive world and technology. His temporary resort, an abandoned airport once symbolic of technological advancement, becomes a hollow shell in the face of environmental catastrophe. As Selen Sepetoğlu notes, "ironically, his technological hubris crumbles toward the end of the novel when he understands that even the best machines, which he is so proud to talk about, break down in the ice age" (34). Saul's journey from pride to dependence, from control to helplessness, reflects a deeper technophobic anxiety. Saul's hideout, an abandoned airport that once symbolized technological progress and human progress, now reflects both a personal struggle for survival and a fragile dependence on the remnants of technology as he states, "me and the wild children are shivering here in the shell of an abandoned airport" (Gee10). Thus, there is the contrast between the airport's former role as a hub and its current state of desolation reflects the tension between man's reliance on technology and its final failure in extreme conditions. Structures like airports symbolize the pinnacle of technological progress since they are spaces built for speed, precision and

global connection. Similarly in this part of the novel, the Doves are described as ruins in the frozen airport.

As Saul tells his life story to a group of children who treat him as expendable, the narrative reveals an unpleasant reflection on human disposability and the ethics of survival in an age where individual worth is measured by usefulness. The novel thus operates not just as speculative fiction but as a philosophical exploration of the Anthropocene condition. Maggie Gee's book serves as a successful example of the criticisms directed towards the Anthropocene in terms of historical change and human impact as Peters stated "the recent age of man" (Peters 239). With the two characters in the novel, Saul and Sarah, Gee connects the literary elements with broader geological concepts as Bernard Stiegler portrays "human activities have become the dominant strain above other geological and natural forces that have hitherto prevailed" (217). Similarly, Gee portrays Saul's downfall as a theme of human decentralization in the face of technological and ecological forces. As Saul says in the final pages, "I could run away, but I pick up my sword, and wait for the swordsmen to celebrate me. I have lived my day. Yes, I am ready" (Gee 265). Saul's words "I am ready" towards the end of his life are not only an individual surrender, but also a metaphor for the end of anthropocentricity. The character of Saul can be interpreted as the embodiment of the human hubris in the Anthropocene: Being a subject of the Anthropocene, Saul is a figure who is disconnected from nature, who considers technology as God but who ends up alone and exhausted. The ambiguity of this ending mirrors the uncertainty surrounding the future of humanity. Will technology redeem us or has it already doomed us? Furthermore, Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* resists the utopian narrative of salvation through science and positions technology neither as a threat. The novel presents a world that moves back and forth between

technophilia and technophobia, questioning the inconsistent relationship humans have with technology and its ethical, environmental and social implications in the Anthropocene. Concepts such as “segging” (18) in the novel reveal the troubled effects of technology on gender roles, robotic figures such as robots called Doves symbolize technophilia, with technology becoming both an addiction and a fantasy of salvation. Doves are particularly at the centre of this division. They become symbols of admiration for technology with saviour functions such as doing housework, providing emotional companionship to men and even working with organic waste. However, they malfunction and eat babies and cats alive. The Wicca community’s demonization of technology is a reflection of technophobia. In this context Jacques Ellul states that “human action, has become so “enormous,” so “immense,” that men are no longer able to cope with it as means, so that it has become an end-in-itself, to which men must adapt themselves” (xvi). In contrast, the Wicca community represents a technophobic opposition that advocates a return to nature and scepticisms towards technological progress. The nature lover structure of Wicca keeps a distance from technology, especially in matters of reproduction and body control. In particular, the demands to stop the production of Doves are in the nature of a protest against the dominance of technology over gender relations. In this context, the conflict between Wicca and Saul is not only an individual conflict but also an ideological one. One believes in the sanctity of nature, the other in the progressive power of technology. Sarah is at the centre of this conflict. Her nostalgic love for nature loses its meaning in a world where naturalness is lost even through genetic interventions. Saul’s words to Sarah, “nothing is natural anymore” (92), express the rupture between nature and technology on both an individual and ecological level. These dualities make

the novel not only a fictional dystopia but also a realistic literary representation of the Anthropocene.

The characters of Saul and Sarah, who are torn between technophobia and technophilia, become figures who carry the ethical burden of technology on individual lives. In particular, Saul and Sarah's "techfix" (39) fertility experience, which is told through Saul's fascination with technology, his distance from nature and the tragic birth of his son Luke, questions technology's control over bodies and the consequences it can create. The novel places the Anthropocene at the centre of these conflicts, portraying the irreversible effects of humans on nature. The fact that his own son Luke is born genetically defective is an ironic critique of blind trust in technological reproductive systems which is a good example of "transformative effect" (34) of technology as Allenby states. In this context, *The Ice People* becomes a dystopian warning text that exposes the environmental and human costs of technological progress. This narrative, which criticizes technology swings between hope and fear, dependency and distance, inviting the reader to listen to both the appeal of technophilia and the reasonable concerns of technophobia. Thus, Gee's novel is not just a future fiction specific to science fiction but it is a deep philosophical inquiry into the ethical, ecological and social contradictions of the age we live in which is defined as the Anthropocene.

As a result, *The Ice People* draws attention to the importance of ethical responsibility, social equality and environmental awareness in the relationship between humans and technology. Neither blind admiration for technology nor complete rejection of it offers a solution. Maggie Gee's novel alternates between technophilia and technophobia, inviting the reader to question the cost of technological progress and the fragility of the relationship established with nature. In this respect, it can be evaluated as

a critique of the Anthropocene that listens to both the seductiveness of technophilia and the stimulating power of technophobia. Therefore, the novel offers an engaging critique of humanity's complex relationship with technology through the lens of technophobia and technophilia.

CHAPTER TWO

JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *THE STONE GODS*: EXAMINING TECHNOLOGY AND ECOLOGICAL COLLAPSE

Jeanette Winterson is one of the most influential writers in contemporary British literature. She was born on August 27, 1959, in Manchester, England. Merja Makinen, who is a scholar of contemporary literature and feminist criticism, examines Winterson's works from the perspectives of postmodern narrative techniques, identity and gender. In her work *The Novels of Jeanette Winterson* (2005), Makinen highlights that Winterson's early life and upbringing played a major role in shaping the themes that dominate her writing. In this context, Makinen describes Winterson's childhood as follows: Shortly after Jeanette Winterson's birth, she was "adopted by a couple from Accrington, Constance and John Winterson, who both belonged to the Pentecostal Evangelical church, Lancashire who were workers at a factory. The couple were highly dedicated members of Pentecostal Evangelical church" (1), that emphasized the Bible above all else. As Jeanette Winterson states in her autobiographical novel *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* (2011), "church was every night except Thursdays" (10) which highlights the strict religious environment in which she was raised. Her adoptive family imposed rigid religious teachings and expectations on her from an early age, intending for her to become a missionary. This plan failed "when the church was unable to accept her first lesbian love affair, at the age of 15" (Makinen 1). So, as she grew older, she began to understand her own identity coming out as a lesbian. Firm and oppressive pressure circumstances at home created a sense of suffocation for immature Jeanette. Therefore, she made the courageous decision to leave home after her discovery about her identity as Merja Makinen notes, "Jeanette Winterson left home and supported herself through Accrington

Further Education College, by working in an ice-cream van, a funeral parlour and later in a mental institution" (1). This boldness marked the beginning of her journey towards self-discovery and independent lifestyle. In her autobiographical novel *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* Winterson describes how she supported herself through various odd jobs while continuing her education at Accrington and Rossendale College, and later at St. Catherine's College:

> I had no respect for family life. I had no home. I had rage and courage. I was smart. I was emotionally disconnected. I didn't understand gender politics. I was the ideal prototype for the Reagan/Thatcher revolution. I sat my Oxford entrance exam, coached by Mrs Ratlow, got an interview and bought a coach ticket to Oxford. I had applied to St Catherine's because it had a new modern feel, because it was a mixed college, and because it had been formed out of the St Catherine's Society – a kind of sad satellite of the established Oxford colleges, founded for students too poor to attend Oxford proper. (112-113)

This quote is a reflection of the personal and social dynamics that shaped Jeanette Winterson's writing journey. From Winterson's own words, we see that the complex emotional states in her life and the conflicts she experienced with the system were heavily present in her works. The difficulties she experienced with her family and her distant approach to the concept of home may have formed the basis of the themes of identity, belonging and freedom that she frequently deals with in her stories. Her application process to St Catherine's College can be considered as an indicator of her determination and resolve to overcome the social structure. Susanna Onega who is a renowned scholar in the fields of literary criticism and narrative theory notes in her book *Jeanette Winterson* (2006) that "her determination to achieve her goal was so strong that when she failed to impress the interview panel at St Catherine's College, Oxford, she did not give up; she waited outside the campus for them to reconsider their decision" (5). Winterson's turbulent infancy and the enlightenment with her identity deeply influenced her writing

and these characteristics have a strong place in both her personal story and her literary works. Winterson first gained widespread recognition with her first novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) which is a semi-autobiographical tale of a young girl growing up in a strict Pentecostal community who discovers her sexuality. This novel won the Whitbread Award for First Novel and was later adapted into a television drama (Makinen 160). Some of Winterson's notable novels are *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), *The Stone Gods* (2007) and *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019), each of which dives into thought-provoking, imaginative, multifaceted and fantastical worlds.

The Stone Gods (2007) is a thought-provoking novel published in twenty-first century with futuristic, dystopian, post-apocalyptic features. The novel explores ecological themes such as ecocritical disasters, corporate government control, climate change, human arrogance, artificial intelligence and advanced technology. In her book *Literary Aesthetics of Trauma: Virginia Woolf and Jeanette Winterson* (2014), Reina van der Wiel mentions Winterson's novel as follows:

> Divided into four parts, set in three different time periods, The Stone Gods is narrated by different incarnations of Billie/Billy Crusoe, from a reluctant government official in a dystopian past disguised as future in 'Planet Blue', to an eighteenth-century shipwrecked sailor in 'Easter Island', and a future female scientist working on Spike, a Robo sapiens, in 'Post-3 War' and 'Wreck City' (204)

The protagonist Billie/Billy and her/his companion human/nonhuman Spike/Spikker reappear in all these narratives in a form of reincarnation.

In *The Stone Gods*, Jeanette Winterson constructs the planet Orbus which is a technologically advanced world that is on the edge of environmental collapse. Despite its sophisticated technological infrastructure, Orbus is facing extinction due to the

consequences of its own unsustainable development. In response to this awaiting disaster, its inhabitants desperately search for a new planet, hoping to start over. The novel opens with optimistic news about the discovery of seemingly habitable place referred to as Planet Blue. Winterson begins the narrative with a symbolical sentence, noting that this newly discovered planet "weighs a yatto-gram" (3). The phrase "yatto-gram" which is a reference to one of the smallest units of weight that carries deeper meanings. Derived from the Japanese word *yatto* meaning "barely" or "just" underlines the fragility, lightness and short life expectancy of this new beginning. Although the novel is introduced with the excitement of a discovery, the narrative centres around decline, decay and repetition which suggests that technological advancement alone is insufficient to escape the destructive patterns of human behaviour. Winterson sets the tone for a critical reflection on the paradox of technological progress through this opening. The discovery offers the illusion of salvation while it often maintains the conditions of a planet that seeks for urgent remedy. This fragile depiction of the new planet is reflected by Billie as "we are running out of planet and we have found a new one. Through all the bright-formed rocks that jewel the sky" (Winterson 4). The fragility of Planet Blue serves as a powerful metaphor for the instability of technological utopias and humanity's repeated failure to learn from their past. For this reason, *The Stone Gods* does not merely depict the discovery of a new world but it questions the costs and consequences of the technological drive to dominate and restart nature. Similarly, in the article "Temporality in the Anthropocene: Revisiting Jeanette Winterson's The Stone Gods", Najmeh Nouri states about the first section that "recounts the story of modern humans on an imaginary Planet Orbus which has almost run out of natural life and is dominated by mega trends of technology" (819). The first part "Planet Blue" is set in a futuristic time when dinosaurs were present but the

story mostly takes place on another planet called Orbus, which appears to be ruined. Spike and Billie both plan to move to Planet Blue after their planet Orbus has become uninhabitable for humans. The second part, "Easter Island", is set on Earth in the eighteenth century. In this part, the main character Billie becomes a sailor named Billy. The third part, Post-3 War, is set after World War II. In this time period Billie works with MORE company and Spike is a disembodied robot. The whole world is run by a corporation called MORE. The final episode is set in Wreck City which was once part of Tech City but is now full of garbage. In this part Billie and Spike discover people who have been born with injuries from nuclear war. This final part shows the dark side of MORE corporation after World War III because, the residents of Wreck City are excluded from the society controlled by MORE corporation or they escaped from the company. Hence, residents of Wreck City are declared illegal and unregistered and they are struggling for survival. The third and the fourth chapters open up differences between the technology enthusiast, highly advanced industrial Tech City and its alternative wayward, old-fashioned and technophobic Wreck City.

Throughout *The Stone Gods,* Jeanette Winterson presents a gloomy picture portraying humanity's inability or unwillingness to learn from past mistakes. As Van der Wiel notes, "in all these worlds, people repeat the same destructive ecological cycle of exhausting all natural resources, finding a new pristine place or planet, and – never taking heed of the lessons of the past – again managing to deplete its resources" (204). This observation encapsulates one of the novel's central themes which is the illusion of progress. Technological power allows Central Power to colonize new worlds since:

> Orbus has a projected remaining lifespan of around fifty years. The planet will continue, of course, but it will no longer be hospitable to life as we know it. We

> can continue here for some time after that, cooling our cities, and using developing technology, but the future is not sustainable. Nor is there time to develop Planet Blue in the way that the Central Power desires. Human beings will have to begin again. (Winterson 39)

Therefore, technology becomes a tool through which the same environmental exploitation is reproduced on a planetary scale which Orbus residents treats their "world as a store house" (Purdy 50). Winterson's narrative structure reinforces this repetition through a cyclical timeline that spans multiple epochs and planets. As Nouri puts it, "The Stone Gods' three intertwined narratives repeat the never-ending story of the many Anthropocene worlds in a way that one planet's present becomes another one's future and past" (822). The novel deliberately eliminates distinctions between time periods and geographies to argue that the destructive meshing of humanity and technology is not limited to a single era or place. Instead, it presents a persistent pattern that transcends historical boundaries. Furthermore, technology is depicted as a mechanism for maintaining human centred domination over nature rather than serving as a force for freedom. As Braden Allenby notes, "the critical role of technology and technological evolution" (6) reinforces this imbalance, suggesting that technological advancement does not necessarily equate to progress but often spreads existing hierarchies. This cyclical pattern is embodied in the character of Billie/Billy Crusoe, whose name indicates to Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, a symbol of colonialist expansion and survival. However, Winterson's Crusoe is fragmented across time and gender, reappearing in various forms across different timelines. This narrative choice challenges binary constructs such as male/female or past/future while emphasizing the continuity of human error. Billie does not represent a fresh start but rather the reincarnation of the same flawed impulses of conquest, consumption and forgetfulness. By merging a cyclical narrative

structure with a critique of technological progress, *The Stone Gods* suggests that without fundamental shifts in values and awareness, humanity is doomed to repeat its ecological mistakes, only this time, with more advanced tools of destruction. Each chapter highlights the importance of sustainability and environmental awareness, while emphasizing human actions that cause environmental destruction and the consequences of this destruction as Najmeh Nouri portrays in her article *Temporality in the Anthropocene: Revisiting Jeanette Winterson's The Stone Gods*:

> Throughout the novel, Winterson attempts to convey a crucial message that human activities on the Earth, regardless of time and place, can affect the other species including human and nonhuman in the past and future worlds. Thus, she invites readers to take responsibility towards their home, Earth, since given the lack of an alternative habitat human beings cannot keep on repeating the same mistakes over and over again. (823)

In other words, with their advanced technology, residents of Orbus discover and decide to terraform another viable planet. However, this increased control is a double-edged sword as stated by Bruce Mazlish, "technology gives humans more control over their environment" (27). This is a view that encapsulates the technophilic belief in human agency and progress. In the same vein, Billie states that "we have limited natural resources at our disposal, and a rising population that is by no means in agreement as to how our world as a whole should share out these remaining resources" (Winterson 5). So, these words emphasize the limited natural resources and the disagreement of the growing population on how these resources should be shared. She draws attention to the need for resources to be handled fairly and sustainably also pointing out that environmental and social problems such as resource depletion and population growth has a clear and explicit impact on planet Orbus. Thus, *The Stone Gods* presents a critique of capitalist society and an insightful examination of the complex interplay between human- nature- technology

relations. In other words, through the lens of a global ecological crisis, the novel presents a compelling vision that prompts readers to re-evaluate binary oppositions. According to Najmeh Nouri "the protagonists, Billie and Spike, are in a space expedition and are given a mission to make Planet Blue habitable for humans by redirecting an asteroid to the planet, thereby obliterating dinosaurs" (821). Therefore, Winterson masterfully explores the ways in which technology, human actions and individual perspectives shape human-nature relationship.

It becomes apparent that people carry the excitement of discovering an untouched new planet since they live in an uninhabitable world due to human actions. So, their efforts to establish life on this planet demonstrate a technophilic perspective, as they rely heavily on advanced technology to rebuild their existence. However, this reliance also raises technophobic concerns, as Johns-Putra states "...so-called progress would end in disaster for human and non-human species alike and, second, that changing course – ethically, culturally, and politically speaking – would secure an alternative future for humans and non-humans" (11). Consequently, as the environmental and ethical implications of such technological interventions raise questions about repeating the same destructive patterns that led to the demise of their previous worlds. Hence, Billie's statement "we are here today to witness the chance of a lifetime" (Winterson 4) serves as a proof that the inhabitants of Orbus have made their planets uninhabitable and they need a new opportunity for their future. The first question posed by an inhabitant of the dying planet Orbus steps forward and asks: "Is there oxygen?" (Winterson 3). It is evident that people have concerns about whether this new planet is clean and breathable or not. Looking at subsequent questions, such as "And fresh water?" (3), it becomes evident that the inhabitants of Orbus point out intense concerns for the availability of essential

resources like oxygen and clean water. This highlights the critical importance of environmental sustainability and the urgent need to address the depletion of these vital resources. Despite these concerns, the questions posed by the inhabitants of Orbus are largely limited to their instant lives and humanly struggles. As a result, it becomes clear that their immediate planet Orbus lacks essential qualities such as oxygen and clean water. The questions "Does it rain a lot?" and "Has anyone tried the fish?" (Winterson 3) clearly show that the inhabitants understand the importance of water. The following question "And no pollution?" (3) serves as an indication that the inhabitants are seeking a clean planet suggesting that their current planet is polluted. *The Stone Gods* offers a powerful critique of technophilia, revealing that technological progress is often driven by a materialistic and exploitative worldview rather than a concern for sustainable or ethical coexistence. The questions asked when a new planet is discovered "Are there minerals? Is there gold?" (Winterson 3), highlight a mindset dominated by the desire to extract and control resources, equating progress with material gain. This is not a practical concern. It is also a psychological drive for dominance. Orbus is technologically advanced just in the words of Sherry Turkle. In her book *Alone Together* she states that in "a whole world of machine-mediated relationships" technology often replaces human connection and ethical reasoning with efficiency and profit. Planet Orbus is full of machines and advanced systems but even with all that, it is emotionally and morally empty because they only care about getting rich instead of taking care of the environment. The final question, "Any intelligent life at all?" (Winterson 3). By asking whether there is intelligent life, they unwittingly expose their own moral and intellectual failure, the inability to see how their blind pursuit of progress has led to the collapse of their world. Therefore, the novel criticizes a form of technological development that values exploitation over sustainability

and questions whether real progress can occur in the absence of ethical consciousness. The response given by the speaker to the last question is noteworthy “depends what you mean by intelligent” (Winterson 3). Because this dichotomy reflects humanity’s timeless struggle in the shadow of technology, to embrace the benefits of technological progress while fearing the potentially catastrophic consequences of attempts to reshape their environment. The description of “the most efficient killing machine ever invented before gunpowder” (Winterson 4), highlights how the residents’ concerns are deeply intertwined with the paradox between technological exploitation and environmental protection. This statement reflects a technophilic perspective in which the use of advanced technology is celebrated as a symbol of power and innovation. However, it also reveals a technophobic tension in that this same machine represents destruction and the abuse of progress, raising questions about the moral and environmental costs of such advances.

In the novel, the boundary between naturalness and artificiality is completely erased or deliberately distorted; this criticizes both humanity's separation from nature and its attempt to replace nature with technology. The depiction of the creature discovered on the new planet as “scaly-coated monster with metal-plated jaws” and “a body the size of a stadium and a brain the size of a jam-jar” (Winterson 4), illustrates the grotesque fusion of natural and artificial elements and portrays the inhabitants of Orbus’s distorted perception of what is natural. The creature is presented as a bizarre hybrid; part-animal, part-machine, entirely unfamiliar. This blurring of the definition of the creature means that they had lost their connection to nature and now they only understand it through the lens of technological imitation. In this way, the creature becomes a symbol of both the fear of the unknown and the failure to recognize what is truly natural. Despite their technological sophistication, the inhabitants react with fear and confusion, emotions that

reveal their vulnerability. Their reliance on technology has not empowered them, but rather left them unable to interpret or engage with the living world. The creature's exaggerated features might also mirror humanity's fear from the unknown. This estrangement from the natural world is echoed in the statement of Billie, "...we searched until we found the one, we will call home. We are moving on, that's all. Everyone has to do that some time or other, sooner or later, it's only natural" (Winterson 4). So, the concept of what is natural has been distorted beyond recognition. The destruction of one planet and the colonization of another are justified by invoking nature itself. By labelling environmental collapse as a natural stage in human evolution, the inhabitants liberate themselves of responsibility, masking destruction as destiny. This viewpoint is further reinforced by their mantra "Yes, Every Day a New Day" (Winterson 4), reinforces this delusion. It echoes the rhetoric of progress and renewal, but in truth, it reveals a cycle of repetition. Like a twisted hero's journey, they are condemned to seek new worlds, not out of growth or learning, but out of necessity born from destruction. This endless pursuit is not natural. It is an artificial loop driven by their refusal to coexist with the world rather than conquer it. In short, the novel criticizes not only the technological domination of nature but also the linguistic and ideological tools used to disguise this domination as inevitable, even natural. Therefore, the repeated destruction of habitable planets mirrors our current era, in which anthropogenic actions define the Earth's geological narrative. Technology in *The Stone Gods* does not only represent salvation but it is rather a continuation of the anthropocentric mindset that caused planetary collapse in the first place. As Adam Trexler argues "further human advancement only speeds the destruction of humanity's environmental preconditions" (48). This idea supports how Jeanette Winterson portrays progress in the novel not as hope but as hubris. For example,

Winterson depicts Orbus as a planet on the edge of an environmental collapse, characterized by "golden arched gates" (Winterson 5), which are more than just physical barriers with their solid and glowing appearance that symbolizes the ontological separation of man from nature. Also, the golden "laser-gates, which look so solid" (5) embody not only technological sophistication but also a deep psychological resistance to change. Their glowing stillness suggests a civilization clinging to illusions of permanence and superiority. This strong and bright physical barrier symbolizes a belief system that prioritizes material wealth and orders over ecological balance. These symbols of power are not neutral because they reflect a cultural narrative where technology becomes a tool of control rather than restoration. Astrid Bracke, an academic who teaches English literature at the HAN University of Applied Sciences in Nijmegen, captures this well, noting that "environmental collapse brings disaster and destruction and the realization that the ideal is forever lost" (28), in her book *Climate Crisis and the Twenty-First-Century British Novel* (2018). In this sense, *The Stone Gods* is not only a critique of failed environmental destruction but also of the myth of progress itself. What Orbus reveals and symbolizes is that progress built on separation from nature inevitably leads to decay and destruction. Therefore, their golden gates shine not with hope but with denial. In other words, the gates of the dying planet symbolize humanity's desire to control and dominate while marking a clear line between civilization and the wild, natural world to be conquered. Instead of investing their resources in the construction of imposing golden gates, the inhabitants had the option to safeguard their natural habitats, preserving the delicate ecosystems that sustained their existence. Yet, they consciously chose not to follow this path. This act which resulted in the loss of their planet reflects a part of the human mind that operates with the belief that everything can or should be controlled.

Therefore, the "central power" which "has funded the space mission for hundreds of years" (Winterson 5), represents the power of humans in order to transform the world through science, technology, innovation and progress. The central power, as the name suggests, represents the power of humans in order to transform the world through science, technology, innovation and progress. In this constant quest for progress, technology continually pushes humanity to seek new frontiers and possibilities. This situation is summarised in the following lines as, "we are here today to witness the chance of a lifetime. The chance of many lifetimes. The best chance we have had since life began. We are running out of planet and we have found a new one" (Winterson 4). These lines perfectly highlight human nature and its unchanging structure that they have always been in search, always on a quest, seeking elsewhere. Instead of valuing and protecting what they have, humans consume what they possess and create a cycle by chasing the next object or concept to be consumed. Similarly, just as with the gates, humans see the robots they create, build, and manufacture from metal as objects of consumption. "The great thing about robots, even these Robo sapiens, is that nobody feels sorry for them. They are only machines" (Winterson 6). This reflects a part of the human mind that operates with the belief that everything can be controlled. Furthermore, despite their complexity and sophistication, no one feels sympathy for the robots, and instead, they proceed to recycle them without hesitation. Billie's words "She's been across the universe, and now she's going to the recycling unit" (Winterson 6) reflects the indifference towards advanced autonomous humanoid robots like Robosapiens. Although robots coexist with humans in *The Stone Gods*, they are stripped of any legal or moral rights, highlighting a deeply hierarchical and utilitarian view of technology. As Billie remarks, "the great thing about robots, even these Robo sapiens, is that nobody feels sorry for them. They are only

machines" (Winterson 6). This statement underscores a pervasive indifference toward sentient technologies, revealing how emotional detachment is normalized in human-robot relations. Later, Billie describes security robots by saying, "CanCops are always around for back-up at high-security events — all they are is robots, soup cans with the power of Arrest" (Winterson 12). This mocking metaphor as referring to robots as "soup cans" further reduces them to disposable, dehumanized instruments of control. Such language reflects a broader social tendency to objectify and instrumentalize technological beings, regardless of their cognitive or emotional sophistication. In doing so, Winterson critiques the ethical failure of advanced societies to recognize moral agency in non-human intelligences, and invites the reader to reconsider what it means to be "only a machine." The denial of rights to sentient machines like Spike raises critical ethical questions: if robots can think, learn, and even love, what justifies their continued subjugation? Winterson uses this dynamic to criticize the power dynamics in technological societies while also warning against repeating the historical cycle of exploitation in new, silicon forms.

The people of Orbus represent a technophilic society that idealizes progress through artificiality while simultaneously rejecting the natural world. Their belief in technology as the salvation is encapsulated in a triumphant narration of the main character Billie:

> This is a great day for science. The last hundred years have been hell. The doomsters and the environmentalists kept telling us we were as good as dead and, hey presto, not only do we find a new planet, but it is perfect for new life. This time, we'll be more careful. This time we will learn from our mistakes. The new planet will be home to the universe's first advanced civilization. (Winterson 7)

This celebratory tone masks the repetition of historical errors under the guise of scientific progress. The use of the term “advanced” implies a hierarchy in which Orbus, with its environmental collapse and artificiality, still views itself as superior to anything natural or untouched. In addition to this, civilization is framed as a goal precisely because nature and everything associated with it is degraded. The inhabitants of Orbus who pass through gates made of gold and embark in search of another planet in their “shiny titanium pressure suits” (Winterson 6), seek to recreate a controlled, artificial replica of their world. This technological colonization reflects themes of othering and domination and underscores the violence embedded in shaping a new world according to anthropocentric and mechanized ideals. For this reason, Winterson critiques the blind faith in technological advancement and reveals how progress, when unmoored from ethical and ecological awareness, becomes a form of ideological conquest.

Jeanette Winterson's description of the “Central Power” in *The Stone Gods* reveals the contradictions of a technologically advanced society that weaponizes progress to justify exclusion, domination, and veiled violence. In a moment of triumphalist rhetoric, the Central Power declares “We’ll leave this run-down rotting planet to the Caliphate and the SinoMosco Pact, and they can bomb each other to paste while the peace-loving folks of the Central Power ship civilization to the new world” (Winterson 7). Although the Central Power frames itself as peace-loving, its discourse is steeped in a logic of othering and superiority. The “ship civilization” (7) phrase implies that only technologically dominant societies possess the right to define, carry and implant civilization while others like the Eastern Caliphate or SinoMosco Pact are portrayed as inherently violent, backward and disposable. The act of abandoning the “run-down, rotting planet” (Winterson 7) is not only a logistical manoeuvre but a symbolic gesture of technological

elitism that uses environmental catastrophe as an excuse for selective salvation. In this context, othering becomes an ideological tool, legitimizing indirect violence through technological escape. The president's declaration "[we]'ll shoot 'em down before they land" (Winterson 7), further unveils the aggressive militarization of technology. Although the Central Power advocates for initiatives such as "No War" (7), its dedication to peace remains superficial at best. In reality, technological proficiency serves as a form for geopolitical dominance and the exclusion of others. Paradoxically, Winterson suggests that a society that appears technologically advanced may, in fact, be ethically and socially underdeveloped. Its dependence on domination, segregation and environmental neglect undermines the very values it claims to uphold.

The Central Power's vision of progress is not based on cooperation or sustainability but on displacement and control. This perspective turns technology from a beacon of hope into a tool for imperialism. Similar to this collective attitude, Manfred's relentless desire to rise symbolizes the internalization of control and power as personal ambitions, reflecting how technological ideology permeates even individual identities. When Billie describes her boss Manfred, she portrays him as "a man born to rise and rise higher: a human elevator" (Winterson 12). This metaphor does more than to illustrate Manfred's ambition as a man who uses technology but also it dehumanizes him by turning a person into a machine of upward mobility. He is conceptualized as technology being a "human elevator" (12), suggesting that in this technophilic society, human worth is measured by efficiency, productivity and elevation through artificial systems. Also, this interesting "human elevator" (12) description emphasizes Manfred's capacity to move continuously upwards. However, this also means that human potential is reduced to a mechanical process and people are evaluated solely on the basis of performance and

success criteria, ignoring their individual identities and emotional depths. This glorification of technology and progress sees humans as machines, ignoring individual human values. So, the fact that people are moving away from their own nature and human features in the name of technological progress shows that technology has become a modern idol and obsession becoming the final goal of humans. This portrayal reinforces how deeply the Central Power's values have been shaped by technological metaphors. Even human beings are no longer seen in organic or emotional terms but as programmable, mechanical entities. The metaphor reveals how extensively technophilia deprives complexity and empathy, replacing them with an obsession for progress that mirrors the society's larger imperial ambitions. Thus, while Winterson critiques the political use of technology for the purpose of domination, she also questions the inherent psychological consequences of living in a world where mechanization is prioritized over humanity. However, this dynamic also brings a significant cost which is alienation. The very tools that grant humans greater efficiency and authority can also make them mechanical, emotionally distant and dehumanized.

Technology, in this context, does not merely assist humans but it begins to reshape what it means to be human. As Billie observes her boss Manfred, the embodiment of this transformation, we see how far this process can go. In one interaction, Manfred looks at Billie's notebook and asks, "Why are you writing in a notebook? Nobody reads and writes any more — there's no need. Why can't you use a SpeechPad like everybody else?" (Winterson 9). Writing which was once a symbol of intellectual reflection, now appears outdated in a society driven by efficiency and speed. This discharge of traditional reading and writing suggests a deeper cultural shift where individuality, memory and creativity are undervalued. As Billie later states, "S is for Solo — a single-seater solar-powered

transport vehicle. L is for Limo, a multi-seater hydrogen hybrid. S is for short-distance. L is for long-distance. Single-letter recognition is taught in schools" (Winterson 11). Language itself is reduced to fragmented symbols, reflecting the broader reduction of human cognition to fast, functional and shallow processing. This transformation directly echoes what Maryanne Wolf identifies as the decline of "deep reading" in the digital age in her 2018 book *Reader, Come Home: The Reading Brain in a Digital World*. As Wolf argues, "from start to finish, the basic neurological principle— "Use it or lose it"—is true for each deep-reading process" (58). In Winterson's imagined world, the effects of such a shift are taken to an extreme. People do not struggle with long sentences. The entire literacy practices are abandoned in favour of minimal, mechanized recognition. This loss of intellectual capacity has a cognitive part as well as an educational dimension. Nicholas Carr in his 2010 book *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains* notes that the internet damages his capacity for concentration and contemplation by stating that "the Internet might be changing the way my brain was processing information" (32), adding that "the very idea of reading a book has come to seem old-fashioned, maybe even a little silly—like sewing your own shirts or butchering your own meat" (Carr 15). This is an opinion that mirrors Billie's reliance on her "Omni — the phone that does everything" (Winterson 16). Hence, technology does not merely assist thought but replaces it. The emphasis shifts from thinking to accessing, from forming ideas to consuming data. Moreover, Sherry Turkle critiques this constant communication for undermining emotional depth. She observes that "the text-driven world of rapid response does not make self-reflection impossible but does little to cultivate it" (Turkle 172). In Winterson's novel, people start thinking fast and feeling less, turning deep emotions into quick exchanges. The result is a society that are emotionally and intellectually reduced and

socially disconnected where people function more like machines. In this way, Winterson's critique goes beyond dystopian fiction. It opens up a discussion about how technological environments have been redefining what it means to be human. When reading, writing and language are reduced to tools of function rather than means of expression, humans are reframed as efficient, optimized systems rather than thinking, complex individuals. In this perspective, the novel's vision of the future becomes a warning about the present. This situation restricts people's empathy skills, their ability to understand others and to establish emotional bonds with them, making social relationships mechanical and superficial.

Technology penetrates deeply into human thought systems, transforming them into a less humane and more mechanized structure. This transformation may cause the individual to reconsider their own existential meaning and their relationships with others. From a philosophical perspective, such a blurring of the human capacity to understand themselves and their environment can create an existential crisis and radically change the ways in which people understand and express themselves. Thus, she offers a sharp critique of the increasing mechanization of humanity and the authority of technology over humans portraying a situation in which organic human perception is devalued. In the novel, Billie defines "CanCops" as "robots, soup cans with the power of Arrest" (Winterson 12) reducing law enforcement to mechanical agents devoid of empathy or discretion. Rather than being a protect, these robotic figures function to predict and discipline, subordinating human agency to automated protocol. This shift also marks the erasure of subjective judgment in daily life. Billie tells receiving a fine through an automated light system as "a bright yellow laser-light covers the windshield. That's my penalty notice" (Winterson 12). So, the system photographs the car, checks the driver's

balance and sends a digital receipt which is all done without human contact. Therefore, the act of punishment is swift and silent. Here, Michel Foucault's words in his book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1995), becomes relevant as he states that "disciplinary power, on the other hand, is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time, it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility" (187), indicating that the individual, constantly visible to invisible systems, learns to regulate themselves out of fear of surveillance. Sherry Turkle likewise warns against relying on technologies to perform roles that require human complexity by stating about ai that "[AI is] a machine that has no feelings, can have no feelings, and is really just a clever collection of "as if" performances" (Turkle 9), pointing to a broader cultural shift in which machines are granted social and ethical responsibilities they cannot fulfil. What Winterson illustrates through CanCops is not just the automation of public order but the automation of ethical judgment, a transfer of power that reduces citizens to data and reduces justice to a bunch of codes. What is more Billie is unable to drive away unless they press the yellow button on the parking meter to clear the notice, demonstrating how individuals are subjected to technological oversight and control as follows: "The meter then photographs your licence plate, connects to your Parking Account, which you must keep in credit at all times, and sends a digital receipt to your HomeScreen or your Work-Screen" (Winterson 12). This clever automated system showcases the intricate balance between convenience and surveillance as Jedidah Purdy states "AI is becoming indispensable to militaries, intelligence agencies, and the surveillance apparatus in authoritarian states" (232), highlighting the implications of living in a highly technologized society. Billie also argues that "we have no need for brains so our brains are shrinking" (Winterson 17), linking this phenomenon to what she describes as "the

inevitable part of progress" (17). These contradictory words actually emphasize the fact that human beings do not realize that they are regressing while they are running towards progress. Similarly, when her car just beeps and shows a bell sign on the screen without words Billie defines etymology as "one of the victims of State-approved mass illiteracy" (Winterson 15), implying that language and word roots have been significantly lost and that the historical and cultural richness of language has been ignored or destroyed. It becomes clear from this sentence that technology has disconnected humans from the roots of what it means to be human, including their linguistic and etymological foundations. This expression emphasizes how totalitarian and authoritarian regimes such as "Central Power" can harm knowledge and education, and how many cultural and intellectual values, including language and word roots can be lost. There are road robots that have "very limited speech ability" (Winterson 20), portrays Billie because communication is unnecessary and unimportant. So, although technology attracts humans with the promise of a safer and more orderly society, it essentially triggers a process that limits the moral and existential freedom of the individual, turning them into a passive component of a mechanical structure. People are in an artificial community. They have an individual life alone, just like Billie's vehicle's name is Solo. Since language is an important conveyor of human history and culture, etymology traces this history and culture by examining the origins and evolution of words. State-approved mass illiteracy can and has caused these traces to be lost. It is not surprising that people in search of new planets have become unable to understand their own history and cultural heritage. Billie, by drawing attention to "staying still is so last-century" (Winterson 16), has revealed the root cause of the selfish people who live isolated lives, disconnected from their cultural heritage, dreaming of escaping from Orbus and searching for new habitable planets. Similarly, according to

Rosen and Weil "rather than technophobia disappearing with the increasing role of technology in our society, this process may actually promote the continuation of negative reactions to computers and other forms of technology" (26). In this context, Winterson's critique is a warning against the danger of losing the human values that make humans human and their individual freedom in an increasingly automated world. This paradox transforms the fear of technology from an individual concern into a universal warning, providing a meaningful framework for analysis of the end of the world in the Anthropocene.

Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* critiques the anthropocentric mindset of the Anthropocene by juxtaposing technological modernity with Billie's off-the-grid lifestyle. Billie's farm, located "in the middle of this hi-tech, hi-stress, hi-mess life" (Winterson 13), is more than a personal retreat. It is a symbolic act of resistance against the consumerist system that defines human dominance over the planet. Her natural environment "is the last of its line —like an ancient ancestor everyone forgot" (Winterson 13), serves as a counter-narrative to a civilization obsessed with control, efficiency and artificiality. In a world where technological advancement often masks ecological collapse, Billie's rejection of modern convenience becomes a political statement grounded in the ethics of ecological humility. Billie's home "a bio-dome world, secret and sealed: a message in a bottle from another time" (Winterson 13), functions not as escapism but as a critique of the very logic that created the need to escape. Bruno Latour argues that "Gaia has no place in the Nature/Culture schema" in the sense that the divide between nature and culture has always been artificial enabling further environmental degradation (85). Similarly, Jason W. Moore emphasizes that the Anthropocene is not simply about climate or carbon but about a system in which "Cheap Food, and Cheap

Nature as capitalist project, could be realized only through the symbolic regimes of abstract social nature" (79). So, Billie's lifestyle disrupts this system by refusing to treat nature as a commodity. Through Billie, Winterson invites readers to question whether survival in the Anthropocene requires not more technology, but a radical re-evaluation of what it means to live in relation to the Earth.

This section addresses a potential problem in the deliberate modification or exploitation of the natural environment to meet human needs or purposes. That is, when humans manipulate or exploit nature for their own benefit, it can lead to the degradation of ecosystems and environmental imbalance as the narrator highlights how "we made ourselves rich polluting the rest of the world, and now the rest of the world is polluting us" (Winterson 37). From this perspective, it is clear that altering nature for human purposes can destabilize the ecological balance mentioned as humanoid robot Spike states that "when we destabilized the planet it was in the name of progress and economic growth" (Winterson 38). This sentence is underlining that the reason why people are destroying the planet is for the sake of progress and economic growth and development without protecting nature and the environment. In other words, when people act only for economic gain, the balance of the planet is disrupted. If humans dominate nature without considering the long-term effects, it can cause environmental damage. This is evident when Spike informs Manfred about the decline of the planet's vital values by declaring "Carbon dioxide is five hundred and fifty parts per million," (Winterson 37), techno-enthusiast Manfred reacts and opposes. He says "That's delusional, depressive and anti-science. We have the best weather shield in the world. We have slowed global warming. We have stabilized emissions. We have drained rising sea levels, we have replanted forests, we have synthesized food, ending centuries of harmful farming practices"

(Winterson 37). This response emphasizes the importance of using scientific knowledge responsibly and ethically. Manfred implies great technological advances and overcoming environmental problems. However, Spike's claims have been described as misleading or exaggerated, namely "delusional," "depressive," and "anti-science" by Manfred (Winterson 38). Such grand claims lead us to question the limits of technology and the ethical implications of these limits. Technological advances often have the potential to solve social and environmental problems but misuse of these advances or misguided expectations can lead to ethical and practical problems. Technology is seen as a triumph over nature but this may be an approach that ignores the complexity of nature and its ability to regulate itself. The desire of people to create a perfect world using technology reflects a kind of utopian thinking as Manfred says, "we need infrastructure, buildings, services. If I'm going to live on a different planet, I want to do it properly. I want shops and hospitals. I'm not a pioneer" (Winterson 38). However, utopian visions often ignore the complexities and uncertainties in the real world. Winterson's work criticizes such utopian thinking, emphasizing that technology may not always produce the desired results and may have unexpected side effects. Manfred starts "waving his arms like a wind turbine" (Winterson 38) and continues his statement as "I like city life, like everyone likes city life. The Central Power believes that the biggest obstacle to mass migration will be setting up the infrastructure in time. We can't go back to the Bog Ages" (Winterson 38). For this reason, he underscores the importance of adopting sustainable practices and policies that prioritize the well-being of the environment, ecosystems and future generations. However, Billie defines "the first pictures of Blue Planet" (Winterson 15), "on the smart screens of the buildings" (15) as "pristine, diamond-cut, and the zooms show miles and miles of empty beauty" (15) while "everyone on the highway is watching"

(15). Therefore, Billie, in her Solo vehicle equipped with ultra-luxury features, watches two contrasting planets on the highway where no one can move forward due to the crowds of the planet equipped with superior technology that they will leave behind. Although Manfred explains that he is not a pioneer and will not compromise on technology, his desire and even the desire of the whole society is embodied as the desire to migrate to this virgin, vast, natural planet. In this context, Billie states that "we just stay in line and get there someday" (Winterson 15), representing the tendency of people to passively conform to social norms in order to achieve a certain goal. In her statement, Billie emphasizes that humans have become slaves to technology, leading to a divergence between their dreams and lives.

As stated in the "Introduction" of this thesis, technology is one of the primary engines of social change and affects various aspects of society. Elaine Graham, a researcher known for her work on the relationship between technology, society and social change demonstrates the social impact of technology during the Industrial Revolution in her book *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens, and Others in Popular Culture* (2002) by stating that, "there has always been a close relationship between technological innovation and social change. The great spinning machines and the manufactories engendered new economic relations during the Industrial Revolution, and affected new patterns of work, social class and urban life" (1). Graham explains that with the emergence of large rotating machines and factories, new economic relations were formed, working styles changed, social classes were reshaped expressing how technological innovations transformed the social structure and how "new technologies have done more than simply introduce new patterns of work, leisure and social interaction" (Graham 1-2). Graham expands on this argument, noting a point that

resonates with Franc Mali's views "these technologies are seen as a means to increase the plurality of social life and human existence" (185). Mali states that new technologies have the potential to make people's social lives and ways of being more diverse and multifaceted. This suggests that technologies are flexible and changeable, unlike previous perceptions. For example, Billie tells that "Robo sapiens is evolving. The first artificial creature that looks and acts human, and that can evolve like a human — within limits, of course" (Winterson 17). Thus, categories such as human, animal, machine, artificial and natural are no longer as clear as they used to be because these categories are blurring and intertwining with each other with the advancement of technology as Billie portrays, Robosapiens as robots that "can remember everything—faces, information, numbers, conversation — and they can make connections. These are robots who join the dots. Ask them for advice, and they will give it to you" (Winterson 17). The dissolution of boundaries marks a significant evolutionary change in which traditional distinctions between the natural and the artificial no longer apply. This transition is exemplified in the context of Orbus, where the environmental crisis is overshadowed by the residents' perpetual pursuit of youth. Birthdays, once a celebration of natural individuality and life, have been replaced by the social celebration of genetically determined correction dates that allow individuals to achieve the appearance they desire and delay aging. Tirosh-Samuelson argues that "the convergence of nanotechnology, biotechnology, robotics, information and communication technology and applied allied sciences is creating a new situation in which the human being becomes a design project" (Winterson 19). This idea emphasizes that technological advances are radically transforming human experience and redefining what it means to be human. This perspective invites critical reflection on the ethical and existential implications of scientific innovation that shape humanity. Jeanette

Winterson addresses these concerns directly in her novel *The Stone Gods* through the concept of G Days, offering a trenchant critique of the prioritization of scientific progress. Winterson demonstrates that while the transformative potential of such progress is celebrated, it often brings with it a restructuring of values in which technical mastery trumps existential questions. By dramatizing a world consumed by an obsession with technological perfection, Winterson draws attention to the dangers of ignoring the moral and philosophical dimensions of human existence. The intersection of these two perspectives reveals a shared concern about the consequences of uncontrolled technological progress. Tirosh-Samuelson's suggestion that humanity has become a design project finds a significant echo in Winterson's critique. People have G days which "is the day and year you genetically fix" (Winterson 18). Billie describes G Day as "In the past, people had birthdays. I have charted all of that through the Central Archive" (Winterson 17-18). Hence, the celebration of G Days has replaced traditional birthdays, symbolizing how biotechnology has radically transformed and denaturalized human life. Taken together, they call for an urgent question: Does the relentless advance of science risk eroding the essence of a meaningful and human life? By combining Tirosh-Samuelson's theoretical framework with Winterson's speculative inquiry, it is possible to make a powerful argument for the ethical dimensions of technological innovation and its effects on human happiness. In the same vein, Franc Mali, in his chapter in *Perfecting Human Futures: Transhuman Visions and Technological Imaginations* (2016), critically examines the cognitive and practical implications of technological advancements. In his chapter titled "The Cognitive and Practical Relevance of Technological Visions," Mali explores how these technological imaginaries shape societal trajectories and the future of human development by stating that "In discourse on emerging biotechnologies in general,

various dimensions of natural and social life are problematized, for instance, safety and security, questions of human dignity and privacy, and the boundaries between the natural and the technological" (180). Unlike birthdays, which celebrate the natural and unique birth of individuals, G Days mark a date artificially determined by human intervention. While birthdays emphasize a person's individuality and inherent characteristics, G Days reflect the possibility that humans are designed according to predetermined genetic templates, thus raising questions about the reality of human uniqueness. Hence, biotechnology is redefining traditional human values and behaviours as narrator Billie states "now birthdays don't matter because they mark the passing of the years, and for us years don't pass in the way that they once did" (Winterson 18). Thus, the lines between the natural and the technological have become increasingly blurred, transforming the very essence of human experience. In particular G Days serve as powerful symbols of this transformation, reflecting a shift in social norms and cultural rituals. Traditional celebrations that honour individual milestones and achievements have been supplanted by ceremonies that emphasize genetic perfection and predetermined timelines. The narrator Billie carries this transformation even one step further and states that, "We don't breed in the womb any more" (Winterson 26). From this perspective, the future of women is uncertain and artificiality has become normal, furthermore, human bodies and minds are moving toward the next stage of evolution under the influence of technology. So, in her novel, Winterson explores both the hopeful and frightening aspects of this transformation examining the human-technology relationship with its deep meanings while bringing a different perspective to the human-technology duality. For this reason, by tracing the impact of these factors throughout the story line, the novel provides a

nuanced portrayal of the complicated web of interactions that exist between science, humans, technology and the environment.

While developing technologies threaten human identity, they also lead to the loss of this identity. Jeanette Winterson's novel *The Stone Gods* reveals this transformation. In this respect this section will spotlight the human, human body, hybrid bodies, hybridity, monstrosity and intertwined human-technology relations. Winterson opens up the concepts of cybernetic organisms, and otherness to discussion, and makes it possible to display social reality through the characters she creates. Just like Haraway's cyborg metaphor, Winterson also makes a projection of what can happen when the developing technology frees the human species from our bodily boundaries with the character Spike, a Robosapiens. In this context, the concept of cyborg, just like the character Spike, provides a permeability between concepts, brings another dimension to binary oppositions with a posthuman perspective, purifies the concepts of cybernetic and organic from the concepts of machine and human, and opens them to question.

The careless and selfish people who think of themselves instead of the wellbeing of the planet, represented by Mrs McMurphy, a client of Billie from enhancement has had "genetic reversal" which "has strange effects on the body" (Winterson 20), and now demands the body of a celebrity because her husband is "mad about Little Senorita" (Winterson 19). As we learn from Billie that "little Senorita is a twelve-year-old pop star who has Fixed her-self rather than lose her fame. She sees no point in growing up" (19). Although Billie Crusoe works in an enhancement service, the dialogues between her and Mrs McMurphy reveal the limits that rejuvenation studies can reach thanks to biotechnology by exceeding the limits of the human body, thus opening up the situation

that the human species, which has created a new form of existence, has fallen into for discussion because Billie is surprised the extend her client wants to reach.

The increasing entanglement of humans and machines in Jeanette Winterson terms "robosapiens", is at the heart of current technophilia and technophobia debates. Donna Haraway's iconic statement, "our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert" (10), underscores the unsettling reversal of agency in the age of artificial intelligence. This idea is vividly embodied in Winterson's *The Stone Gods*, particularly through the character of Spike, a sentient robot capable of reading the "data-chip implant" (Winterson 33) embedded in human wrists. Spike's advanced cognitive and emotional capacities allow her to operate as a fully autonomous being who is described as "a legend of her own lifetime" (Winterson 32), while humans are increasingly portrayed as dependent, passive, and even obsolete. This aligns with Elaine L. Graham's claim that "social change is no longer driven by the dynamics of material production and consumption, but by the circulation and commodification of *data*" (Graham 4). Spike is not only a technological marvel but a symbol of a new socio-technical order, where the data-driven logic of algorithms and machines surpasses human agency. From a technophilic standpoint, Spike represents progress which is an ideal posthuman figure who transcends biological limits. Yet, the novel's underlying technophobic critique reveals that this admiration for machine liveliness masks the growing disempowerment of humanity. The characters' increasing reliance on implants, chips and AI systems suggests a future where autonomy is outsourced to machines. Thus, Winterson's description of Spike and her interactions with humans serve as both a celebration of technological possibility and a warning about the erasure of human vitality

in a world dominated by intelligent systems. Thus, Spike aligns with Haraway's view of the contrast between the liveliness of machines and the inactivity of humans.

As a form of technological mediation, media operates not merely as a communication tool but as a powerful agent that reconfigures human relationships, expectations, and identity performance. In Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*, the interaction between Billie and Manfred illustrates how media-driven technological environments can distort emotional and social connections. When Billie prepares for the final televised interview with Spike, she is instructed by Manfred to buy a dress from the "scented, mauve-coloured, cool interior of the fishpond-fitted intelligent shopping experience," a hyper-commercialized, AI-operated setting that reflects the technologization of even the most intimate human experiences. Manfred's command "a live TV interview with that Robo sapiens they're dismantling. You are going to front it. I want you to look good" (Winterson 27) which exemplifies how the media's obsession with appearance and control reshapes the authenticity of human interaction. Within this framework, media functions as a technophilic extension of power while also revealing its technophobic undertones through the dismantling of Spike. The scene thus reflects a dual tension. Media technology provides visibility and influence. It also reinforces superficiality and dehumanization, contributing to the erosion of real human agency in the face of performative expectations. Manfred being a product of a technology and media obsessed society is oppressed by the media's constant demand for perfection. He also internalizes this pressure and projects it to Billie. This shift, from oppressed to oppressor illustrates the cyclical and contagious nature of technological domination. As scholar Edwin Epstein from University of California states in his book chapter "The Good Company" that "in an open, democratic society, the media plays a critical role in

informing the public about and rendering accountable all institutions which possess power" (9). Ironically, in Winterson's dystopian future, media does not hold power to account, rather it becomes a power structure in itself shaping ideals of beauty, value and identity. From a technophilic perspective, media is often seen as a tool of empowerment and transparency. Yet, Winterson's portrayal aligns more with a technophobic critique, showing how media can become a mechanism of surveillance, self-discipline and social control. Manfred is a victim of this oppressive system. He is also the system's enforcer highlighting the paradoxical position of individuals in a society where media technology dictates not just appearance but emotional and moral value. Within the broader context, this interaction unfolds media-driven socio-cultural constructs, in which Manfred is influenced by the pervasive media and becomes a participant in the oppressive forces that affect him personally. The power dynamics in this situation highlight how individuals, can unintentionally uphold oppressive norms, making them unconscious instruments of the systems that control them. For example, Billie takes the head of Spike to a walk and has to "take a WristChip to monitor" (Winterson 176) them. As can be seen, chips and bracelets are used in the novel to create a control mechanism over individuals. A clear example of the ambiguous role of technology can be seen through Tasha, the artificial intelligence shop assistant. As Billie recounts, "As soon as my dusty unacceptable feet triggered the sensor, Tasha's face appeared smiling on the wall. Tasha is in all the best women's clothing stores. It's a way of giving clone-clothing the exclusive but personal feel" (Winterson 27). Therefore, Tasha represents the paradox of artificial intimacy. While she offers a personalized shopping experience, it is a simulation, reinforcing consumerism and uniformity through technological charm. This reflects Winterson's critique of how technology, even when designed to feel intimate or luxurious, often

replaces genuine human interaction and promotes conformity masked as uniqueness. Billie's dusty feet is noticed by computer Tasha. She declares her detection to Billie as "You look a little dusty" considering the dust as unacceptable in a perfectionist realm in which everybody looks good as Billie says "…we all look good" (Winterson 27). The smart shopping experience offered on the Planet Blue offers the same service to all customers since there is a standard shopping assistant in each store. The role of technological salespeople can be defined as providing a unique experience to each customer by adding a personal touch in this standardized environment. In this environment, as individuals find themselves in a position where they are unable to make their own decisions.

Contrary to Elaine Graham's claim that "technologies are tools, existing merely to carry out the will of their maker(s)" (8). *The Stone Gods* shows how technology takes on a more controlling and ideological role. Billie's statement "I'm depressed, which is pretty much illegal" (Winterson 27), reveals a society in which emotional regulation is enforced through technological surveillance and control. This is not just about tools serving human will but it is about tools shaping and limiting what it even means to be human. For example, artificial shopping assistants were originally designed to simplify daily life on Planet Blue but they have become part of a broader system that monitors behaviour and reinforces conformity. Rather than neutral instruments, these technologies are part of a socio-political system that disciplines citizens under the guise of efficiency and support. Therefore, Winterson's novel challenges the idea that technology is passive or innocent. It shows that technology can become an active agent in systems of control. In fact, each customer has his/her own shopping code. In this way, the customer's name, features, size, and the list of previously purchased items are transmitted to Tasha, which

means that individual privacy is compromised as the central government possesses comprehensive information about its citizens. Quite the contrary, these technologies have been used as a means of surveillance, monitoring and potentially manipulation. The role of technological salesperson is to match the sizes to the occasions. The task of the electronic seller Tasha is to make choices among individuals who are almost indistinguishable because on Blue Planet, "…there are only two sizes, Model Thin and Model Thinner" (Winterson 28). Tasha can be defined as providing a unique experience to each customer by adding a personal touch in this standardized environment however Billie thinks quite the opposite by putting her opinion as Tasha decides the best dress and size for her declaring "before I have time to make a pretence of being part of this intelligent shopping experience" (Winterson 28). Therefore, Winterson's novel *The Stone Gods* portrays a world where advanced technology eliminates the delight, joy and innocence of human nature which leads citizens of Planet Blue to a realm of controlled, cold and ruthless computer algorithms.

Winterson critiques the unchecked expansion of technological systems and emphasizes the ethical necessity of regulation. The bracelets and chips embedded in the characters' daily lives symbolize this duality. While wristbands protect individuals and enhance competence, they also serve as instruments of surveillance and control. Through these devices, Winterson reveals both technophilic hope as the belief in progress through innovation and technophobic anxiety as the fear that humanity may lose its agency in the face of technological domination. By dramatizing this tension, the novel underlines the importance of ethical boundaries in an increasingly dystopian world. In her book Winterson reminds us that technological innovations, social awareness and responsibility are needed in solving environmental problems.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has explored the complex and often paradoxical relationship between technology and humanity through the dystopian narratives of Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*. By investigating how technophilia and technophobia shape the portrayal of environmental degradation, identity and agency in these texts, the study has demonstrated how speculative fiction functions as a critical lens for reflecting upon the Anthropocene and its existential crises.

Technology emerges not merely as a neutral tool but as a transformative force that has been reshaping human subjectivity and ecological consciousness. As Martin Heidegger suggests, human beings are "chained to technology" (4), regardless of whether they embrace or reject it. This bond is echoed in both novels, which illustrate how technological progress also positions ethical and existential dilemmas. The narratives of Gee and Winterson critique the search of innovation by exposing its role in ecological collapse and social alienation. In her book *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens, and Others in Popular Culture*, Elaine Graham articulates that "advanced technologies as threats to human integrity or means of facilitating its further evolution" (Graham 11). Elaine Graham's assertion aligns with the idea that advanced technologies may either threaten or advance human evolution.

In this regard, this thesis offers a comprehensive analysis of Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*, focusing on the implications of technology, climate change, dystopian imaginaries, and the transformation of natural conditions as a result of human intervention. Therefore, this thesis contends that literature plays a critical role in reimagining human futures. Through their complex narrative

structures and thematic depth, *The Ice People* and *The Stone Gods* highlight the urgency of nurturing a responsible relationship with technology promoting both its potential and its risks. Therefore, these works contribute to discussions on sustainability, ethics and identity in an era shaped by technological and environmental transformation. Recognizing this duality is not only vital for literary scholarship but essential for addressing the actual challenges of the Anthropocene. By examining the connections between Saul and Sarah in *The Ice People*, and Billie and Spike in *The Stone Gods*, this study highlights the destabilization of conventional binaries such as human and nonhuman, natural and artificial. Moreover, this research underlines the role of technology in *The Ice People* and *The Stone Gods*, revealing how both technophobic anxieties and technophilic desires shape the characters' experiences of identity, survival and relations in worlds marked by ecological collapses.

As Elaine Graham articulates, "technological advances, especially in biotechnology and cybernetics, blur the boundaries between the human and the non-human, the natural and the artificial" (11). This tension is mirrored in both novels, where societies become emotionally insensitive and socially fragmented due to their increasing dependency on technological systems. In *The Stone Gods*, the charm of innovation is depicted through a technophilic lens. Humanity embraces carbon capture, geoengineering and limitless energy as tools for planetary escape and salvation. Yet, Billie's technophobic perspective exposes the dangers of blind faith in progress, highlighting how such attitudes worsen the very crises they aim to resolve. Similarly in *The Ice People* Saul represents a technophilic stance, ridicules the Wiccans for their rejection of technology. The narrative challenges Saul's obedient belief in science and technology. So, the narrative critiques a society that has become emotionally numb and environmentally

devastated, offering a bleak vision of unchecked innovation. Therefore, both novels depict dystopian futures as cautionary tales, questioning the sustainability of modern technological trails.

Despite their transformative potential, technological advances have simultaneously deepened the environmental and ethical crises confronting humanity today. As scholar Edwin M. Epstein observes;

> High-tech, biotech and simply technological developments in traditional economic sectors have radically altered our global political economy. Nuclear power, computer chips and genetically engineered agricultural and pharmaceutical products are manifestations of the technological revolutions which have affected virtually every human being for good and for ill. (5)

The narratives of Gee and Winterson embody the very dilemma Epstein highlights. While technology has the capacity to heal and transform, its misuse often worsens existing crises. This two sided impact of technology carrying both beneficial and destructive impact is reflected in *The Stone Gods* and *The Ice People*. Jeanette Winterson presents a dystopian future shaped by Central Power which the planet Orbus is in ecological ruin and which they have blind faith in technology. The novel's cyclical narrative suggests that humanity is trapped in a cycle of self-destruction by its embrace of technological advancement. Similarly, Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* envisions a near-future Earth devastated by climate change, where gender relations and politics collapse and social inequality widens. In both novels, technology is not inherently evil but its use by humans without ethical insight leads to catastrophic outcomes. From a technophilic perspective, innovations like climate engineering and artificial intelligence are praised as saviours. Yet the technophobic tone in both novels warns against overreliance, portraying technological progress as inseparable from political control, exploitation and ecological

degradation. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson in her book chapter argues that advances in genetics, nanotechnology and robotics have radically changed the human condition and redefined biological and cognitive boundaries by stating that;

> The new genetics enables us to enhance our biological state; nanotechnology enables us to manipulate materials on an atomic scale; and robotics not only replaces the human brain with nonbiological computing power, which will exceed the human brain, but also facilitates the integration of biological and information technology. (34)

So, this perspective invites a deep inquiry into the ethical and existential implications of scientific progress which is explored in Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*. The novel's depiction of synthetic beings and the cyclical collapse of civilizations reveals the contradictions of progress. While these technologies promise salvation for humanity, they also deepen existential vulnerabilities. The same can be said about Gee's techie character Saul. Therefore, similarly, Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* explores the ethical and existential costs of scientific advancement. Set in a world of environmental collapse and gender reversal, the novel dramatizes the unforeseen consequences of technological and biological manipulation. The novel reflects Tirosh-Samuelson's concerns about the integration of biology and information technology, suggesting that this combination risks putting efficiency and control ahead of human values such as empathy and connection. In other words, both Winterson and Gee offer frameworks that strengthen Tirosh-Samuelson's critique.

The Ice People by Maggie Gee and *The Stone Gods* by Jeanette Winterson argue that scientific progress does not necessarily equal human progress. In fact, these novels suggest that science and technology, when in the hands of centralized power, can actually deepen inequality and worsen environmental collapse. One can argue that rather than

liberating humanity, technological development becomes a new form of control. In *The Ice People* the elite class controls the resources, leaving the lower classes to suffer in worsening climate conditions. So even though there is advanced technology only a small group benefit from it. Similarly, in *The Stone Gods* Winterson shows how Central Power is ruling over a planet that is literally dying. The environment is destroyed, overpopulation is out of control and the government continues to rely on technology instead of changing anything. This clearly shows how technological advancement without ethical or sustainable thinking only accelerates decline. What is also interesting is how the novels contrast two different types of government. In *The Stone Gods*, the Wiccan society is more nature-oriented, more decentralized and careful with technology. It suggests an alternative way of living that could be more sustainable. On the other hand, *The Ice People* shows a centralized authority that uses tech to maintain control and suppress change. This comparison raises a crucial question; does power centralized in the hands of a few always lead to exploitation, no matter how advanced technology becomes? The novels push readers to think about the role of political structures in shaping how science and technology are used. So, it is not just the tech itself that matters, but who controls it and for what purpose is important as well.

In *The Ice People*, the robots reflect the emotional collapse of human relationships, while in *The Stone Gods*, the robots gain an evolutionary awareness along with ethical and ontological questions. In both works, the robots are not just technological beings, but mirrors of humanity in the future. In *The Ice People*, robots such as Doves, Mobots, Sexbots are generally used for housework and can give emotional reactions. They are mostly in the form of objects used but over time they start to gain personalities. In *The Stone Gods*, especially artificial intelligence Spike that is a Robosapien is highly

developed with its learning, questioning qualifications. Complex enough to form a love relationship with humans. In both novels, robots exhibit human-like behaviours but have different representations. While Doves stand out as a vehicle representing human emotional collapse, Spike serves as an ethical conscience. Although both species were technologically created by humans, their human resemblance brings with its elements of control and anxiety. This clearly demonstrates the tension between the fascination with technology and the fear of technology. In *The Ice People*, technology has caused people to become cold and robots have replaced emotional bonds. It increases alienation in society. In the future, robots serve as emotional substitutes. In *The Stone Gods*, robots like Spike have the potential to learn from humanity's mistakes. A more ethical and rational being than humans. In this case, the future role of robots is not just to serve but it could be an ethical compass for humanity and perhaps the next evolutionary stage. While Winterson's robot Spike is a consciousness that defines humanity's mistakes, Gee's Simons are the result of these mistakes. In *The Ice People*, people turn to robots instead of forming emotional bonds. Concepts such as love, care and sexuality are also experienced through robots. In *The Stone Gods*, the relationship between Spike and Billie questions human love. Spike can carry more emotional responsibility than a human. In this way, both novels offer strong insights into how the relationship established with technology will transform human nature. Robots are characters that reflect technological progress and the emotional and ethical evolution of humanity. In this context, *The Ice People* offers a dystopian warning, while *The Stone Gods* opens a window of potential hope and transformation. When the robot species in *The Stone Gods* and the robot companions in *The Ice People* are compared, it becomes clear that both novels criticize humanity's limitless dependence on technology. Both novels portray technophilia and

technophobia as dual, conflicting forces in shaping the future of society. In both novels, robots serve as symbols of technological progress while also emphasizing humanity's dependence on these species. Similarly, in *The Ice People*, robot companions highlight the fundamental role of technology in a frozen, desolate world. The selection of these two novels allows for an exploration of how technophilia, a blind faith in technological solutions, clashes with technophobia, a fear of technology's potential to harm humanity and the environment. By examining robots as central figures in both narratives, this thesis highlights technology's dual role as both a tool of salvation and a forerunner of destruction. Therefore, the robot companions in both novels reflect contemporary concerns about artificial intelligence, environmental sustainability and the ethical use of technology, making these narratives timeless reflections of humanity's tense relationship with its own creations.

It will not be wrong to argue that technological developments and global disasters such as climate change affect our planet's ecosystems on micro and macro scales. Maggie Gee and Jeanette Winterson both highlight technology as an important factor as well as a tool resorted during the moments of ecological crises, hence portray the various outcomes of its usages. As a result of this study, it has been understood that the interrelationships between humans and technology have individual and social effects of technology and the environment should not be considered as something pristine. Quite the contrary, it should be considered as an active player in the planetary process. It is important to recognize that the unbreakable bond between humans and technology is not without its complexities as Mark J. Brosnan states in his book *Technophobia: The Psychological Impact of Information Technology* (1998), "as new technology continues to proliferate through almost every aspect of our existence, a large group of individuals have been identified

who possess a fear of this technology" (2). So, while technology has enabled remarkable advances in fields such as medicine, communication and environmental research, it has also intensified problems such as resource depletion, environmental degradation, and social inequalities as Jason W. Moore States "the Anthropocene makes for an easy story. Easy, because it does not challenge the naturalized inequalities, alienation, and violence inscribed in modernity's strategic relations of power and production" (173). So, in this sense, technophilia and technophobia can be seen as competing and complementary perspectives on the role of technology in addressing the challenges of contemporary societies. They invite humans to consider the ethical and philosophical implications of our relationship with technology and to think about how we can use it in a way that is respectful and responsible.

In Maggie Gee's *The Ice People* and Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*, environmental disasters shaped by human hands and their connection with technological advances are addressed in a remarkable way. In *The Stone Gods*, the planet Orbus becoming unbreathable due to human intervention forces the search for a new planet, while in *The Ice People*, the excessive heating and then excessive cooling of the world clearly reveals the uncontrolled effects of humans on the environment. In both of these novels, technology is presented as both a hope for salvation and a source of destruction, forming the basis of the fear of technology; technophobia. For example, the use of advanced technology to escape Orbus in Winterson's novel or the survival strategies of people in Gee's world reflect the dependence of technology on humans and its threatening nature at the same time. While technology is used as a tool to save humanity, it also goes beyond being a solution and becomes the source of new disasters on the other. This contradiction transforms the fear of technology from being a mere individual concern into

a universal warning. Thus, the concept of technophobia offers a framework for analysis of the end of the world in the Anthropocene and invites a deep questioning of humanity's relationship with technological progress.

The Ice People and *The Stone Gods* both focus on the paradox that technology can solve problems while also creating new ones. David Bell, an academic known for his work on sociology, cultural studies and technology is one of the leading writers examining the relationship between technology and society. David Bell asserts that "things get faster, smaller, more useful, more user-friendly, and this is a good thing" (7). This quote of Bell's reflects a technophilic perspective that emphasizes the positive effects of technological developments on society. Bell argues that the rapid advancement and increased usability of technology is a development that improves society. Technophilia holds the belief that the continued development and advancement of technology promises to lead people to a better future. This belief is based on the idea that faster, smaller, more efficient, and user-friendly technologies will make social life more efficient. The tension between technophiles who see technology as a blessing and technophobes who fear technological effects is characteristic of the digital age. Scholars like Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova state that, "there is the pressure of old and new contemporary concerns, such as the changes induced by advanced technological developments" (1). Braidotti and Hlavajova's view on changes caused by advanced technological developments finds meaning in *The Stone Gods*. Since artificial intelligence and biotechnology are at the centre of the novel. Humanoid character Spike represent the potential and appeal of technology and the romanticization of technology as a saviour. This can be associated with the idea that technology can improve human life on both an individual and societal level. In the context of the human-machine relationship, the bond

between Spike and the human character Billie shows that technology has become a tool and an object of love. So, the blurring of the boundaries between humans and technology can be addressed. Technophilia manifests itself with the love between man and machine and the view of technology as a saviour. However, the excessive trust in technology leading to a disaster while the world is being destroyed points to technophobia. As the world is being destroyed in the context of the dangers brought by technology, the fact that excessive reliance on technology leads to disaster emphasizes that technology can be an uncontrollable force. In the context of deepening problems from the past to the present, modern technological developments bring ethical and existential questions to the agenda and deepen the problems of the past with an android like Spike. Thus, as a symbol of modern technology Spike reflects and magnifies these persistent challenges, showing how unresolved issues from the past resurface in more complex forms. Although technophobia and technophilia are opposites, they actually feed on the same root: the impact of technology on our lives. Technophilia is shaped by hope and innovation, while technophobia is shaped by loss of control and fear. Both novels examine the dynamic, showing how the two concepts are intertwined. Understanding and addressing these complexities is essential to moving forward in a balanced and responsible manner in the future of human-technology interactions. It is clear that these interactions reveal the capacity of nature to respond to human activities in its own way. In this context, nature and culture are seen two mutually items that shape each other. In addition, Anthropocene discourses provide a fertile ground for humans to question their actions, beliefs and attitudes. Thus, the bond of technology and humans should be considered as a dynamic process that determines the future of our unique planet that we live in. Future research

can provide a better understanding of the link of humans, technology and literature by comparing the representations of technology in literary works in different literary periods.

Technological advancement is often celebrated as a symbol of human progress, but this celebration overlooks the deep ecological and cultural costs it imposes. Our widespread technophilia—a cultural tendency to embrace innovation uncritically—blinds us to the ways in which our machines, systems, and values are reshaping the planet. As Braden Allenby argues that these disruptions are not accidental but deeply cultural, stating that "culture and values are embodied on a global scale and human activities change the evolutionary path of fundamental natural systems such as the carbon, nitrogen and water cycles or the climate and atmospheric systems" (161). Amitav Ghosh warns that in our obsession with innovation stating that "we fail to see the deepest roots of our present failures" (183). So, what truly deserves examination is not the machines themselves but the meaning and direction humans assign to them. Adeline Johns-Putra highlights the environmental damage that is either irreversible or will last far longer than human timescales can handle as melting polar ice caps, extinct species, and more (30). These are not just theoretical warnings but they are already happening and we are living the consequences. As Kerim Can Yazgünoğlu puts it quite clearly in his book that climate change is transforming not only the world but also human life[1] (11). So, if technology is both part of the problem and possibly part of the solution, where does that leave us? Maybe the issue is not whether we should embrace or reject it but whether we can stop assuming that technology is neutral. The real challenge is to recognize the values embedded in our machines and systems. Understanding this ambivalence and the power

[1] This sentence has been translated from Turkish to English by Nilüfer Dinç Demirok.

for both sustainability and destruction might be the first step in imagining a more responsible and balanced future.

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