Cappadocia University

School of Graduate Studies and Research

Department of English Language and Literature

POSTHUMAN AND TRANSHUMAN MONSTROSITIES: THE ONTOLOGICAL AND TECHNO-EVOLUTIONARY JOURNEYS OF "HUMAN" FROM MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN; OR, THE MODERN PROMETHEUS* TO JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *FRANKISSSTEIN: A LOVE STORY*

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Master's Thesis

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ABSTRACT

UZUN Sercan, *Posthuman and Transhuman Monstrosities: The Ontological and Techno-evolutionary Journeys of "Human" From Mary Shelley's Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus to Jeanette Winterson's Frankissstein: A Love Story* Master's Thesis, Nevşehir, 2024.

This thesis investigates the ontological and techno-evolutionary journey of human identity by analysing the representations of the monster and monstrosity in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* and Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story*. Through a comparative analysis, the study elucidates how these literary works critique and expand the concept of humanity from Enlightenment ideals to posthuman realities. Utilising posthumanist and transhumanist theoretical frameworks, the thesis examines the profound impact of technological advancements on human subjectivity and identity. The figure of the monster emerges as a central motif, symbolising the societal anxieties and aspirations that lie at the intersection of the human and the technological. This thesis reveals how Shelley and Winterson challenge anthropocentric paradigms, advocating for a reimagined understanding of what it means to be human in an era increasingly shaped by technological innovation.

Keywords: Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, Jeanette Winterson, *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, Monstrosity, Technological Evolution

ÖZET

UZUN Sercan, *İnsansonrası ve İnsanötesi Canavarlar: Mary Shelley'nin* Frankenstein; ya da, Modern Prometheus*'undan Jeanette Winterson'un* Frankissstein: Bir Aşk Hikayesi*'ne "İnsan"ın Ontolojik ve Tekno-Evrimsel Yolculuğu*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Nevşehir, 2024.

Bu tez, Mary Shelley'nin *Frankenstein; ya da, Modern Prometheus* ve Jeanette Winterson'ın *Frankissstein: Bir Aşk Hikayesi* eserlerindeki canavar ve canavarlık temsillerini analiz ederek insan kimliğinin ontolojik ve teknolojik evrimsel yolculuğunu incelemektedir. Karşılaştırmalı bir analiz yoluyla, edebi eserlerin insanlık kavramını Aydınlanma ideallerinden posthüman gerçekliklere nasıl eleştirdiğini ve genişlettiğini bu tez kapsamında açıklanmaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, insansonrası ve insanötesi teorik çerçeveler kullanılarak, teknolojik ilerlemelerin insan öznelliği ve kimliği üzerindeki derin etkileri incelenmektedir. Canavar figürü ise, insan ile teknolojik olanın kesişimindeki toplumsal kaygıları ve umutları simgeleyen merkezi bir motif olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu tez, Shelley ve Winterson'ın antropomerkezci paradigmalara nasıl meydan okuduğunu ve teknolojik yeniliklerle giderek daha fazla şekillenen bir çağda insan olmanın anlamına dair yeniden tasavvur edilmiş bir anlayışı savunduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İnsan sonrasıcılık, İnsan ötesicilik, Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; ya da Modern Prometheus*, Jeanette Winterson, *Frankissstein: Bir Aşk Hikayesi*, Canavarlık, Teknolojik Evrim

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INTRODUCTION

Conventionally, the concept of evolution is primarily understood in biological terms, hence restricted only among living organisms. However, as contemporary technologies, such as artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and cybernetics are increasingly integrated into daily life of the twenty-first century, and are dramatically factored in, the concept of evolution began to enlarge its conceptual frame and scope to embrace a more hybrid nature. Technology is one of these external factors. In this context, as Pramod K. Nayar notes, humans are "evolving with, constituted by, and constitutive of multiple forms of life and machines" (11). This perspective highlights that humans are not isolated entities as they were traditionally believed. They are fundamentally intertwined with different life forms and machines, marking technology as an integral part of human evolution and existence.

In biological evolution of humans, various external elements including bacteria and organelles have been incorporated into the human body, enabling biological processes that have turned the human body into a "dynamic hybrid" of various agents (21). Correspondingly, technologies, such as AI, cryopreservation, cloning, and genetic manipulation have settled in as internal factors that coevolve with the human body. Many organizations such as *Neuralink*, *Neurable*, and *Emotiv* work on the development of brain-computer interface (BCI) devices to offer communication and control capabilities to individuals with severe motor impairments also several companies, including *Mobius Bionics*, *Fillauer LLC*, and *Coapt*, offer myoelectric pattern recognition technology for limb prostheses. So, it is evident that humans possess so much technology in their bodies that they evolve from biological beings to technology augmented beings that are "evolving under laws of technology, more so than under the laws of biological evolution" (Barfield 1). In this regard, the basic distinctions that define our existence are blurred, because technology and human biology evolve in a "not distinct but intertwined" (Dahlbom 38) manner and this instance questions the very nature of what it means to be human.

In the twenty-first century, robots have become "more intelligent, autonomous, and effective" (Soorii et al. 55) blurring the boundary between the human and the machine, hence the notion of human, becomes problematic as they become "chimaeras,

theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism" (Haraway, "*Cyborg Manifesto"* 150). This blurred distinction fundamentally challenges the traditional notion of human, much like how monsters have historically questioned the same notion. According to Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in his *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, monsters are not mere creations of horror and fantasy, but they reflect fears and anxieties in society including the relationship between the deviant and the normal, the construction of otherness, transgressions of the traditional boundaries and societal norms that construct the notion of human. In this perspective, Cohen's theory can be applied to a wide range of cultural texts, including literature, film, television, and other media, and social and cultural phenomena more broadly to investigate the notion of human in the corresponding era.

Expanding on Cohen's perspective, Grendel in *Beowulf* represents the fears of medieval society as a monster. At the same time, Franz Kafka's novel *The Metamorphosis* (1915) explores the concepts of alienation, identity, and the dehumanisation of the individual. In movies, monsters also appear in several manifestations, ranging from the emotional fears represented in *Psycho* to the physical fears embodied by *Godzilla* serving as a reflection of societal horrors of the unknown. These societal horrors often encompass existential threats and pervasive uncertainties, such as the fear of nuclear annihilation, the impact of environmental catastrophes, and the apprehension towards scientific advancements that challenge human understanding and control. Television series also include monsters like in *Supernatural*, where monsters are used metaphorically to explore themes of the battle between good and evil. The notion of the monster is often used in narratives about the other in social and cultural contexts, such as discussions regarding societal fears, anxieties, the marginalized, and the unknown. Each of these examples illustrates how monsters function as reflections of society, expressing the fears, anxieties, and ethical quandaries of their respective eras. Hence, the monster is used to understand how society defines and deals with what is considered abnormal that diverges from the traditional norms, or transgressive that challenges moral and societal boundaries. In this framework, monsters in a society function as a metaphor for understanding identity, existence, and diversity of life in an era characterized by the merger of technological and biological convergence.

Technology, as defined by Martin Heidegger, is not merely a means to an end but a way of revealing and shaping our world. Heidegger posits that technology is "a mode of revealing," ("The Question Concerning Technology" 4) a process through which truth and reality are brought into existence. While ancient technology did this in harmony with nature, modern technology does so in a way that can dominate and obscure other forms of revealing, posing both dangers and opportunities for how we understand and interact with our world. This dual nature of technology, as both a revealing and a concealing force, complicates our relationship with it, often embodying our deepest anxieties and ethical dilemmas. Conversely, books and films continue to utilize the monster in various ways, adapting the embodiment of the monster for the unknown areas of technology by giving birth to a technological monster, a fictional creature or being that is created or controlled by technology such as robots, artificial intelligence, and other kinds of advanced technology. Consequently, technological monstrosity can also be used to explore the potential consequences of our relationship with technology as the monster stands out "as a warning against exploration of its uncertain demesnes" (Cohen 12) just because creating and using advanced technology is an unknown realm for humans. In this perspective, Victor Frankenstein's monster from Mary Shelley's seminal novel *Frankenstein; or, the modern Prometheus* can be seen as a technological monster brought to life through scientific experimentation and its existence challenges the moral implications of creating life through technology in the nineteenth century. In the same vein, *Frankissstein: A Love Story* by Jeanette Winterson, provides multifaceted interpretations of technological monsters that can be seen through the examples of artificial intelligence, sexbots and transgender identities which are achieved through scientific procedures and medication.

As proposed by Riccardo Gramantieri, the term monster is "almost synonymous with science fiction" (287), thus, in Sci-Fi examples in the twenty-first century, monstrous characters are usually imagined as human-machine hybrids. This fictional monstrous figure, going beyond the traditional sense of having an organic and natural body, shows that these physical alterations or deviations are enabled by artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, or technological improvements in modern fiction, as they are frequently used to investigate themes of terror, otherness, and the unknown and as being physically or behaviourally peculiar, and they may display qualities that are considered deviant or subversive (288-289); such as the *Terminator* series, which

features machines that have evolved into conscience beings who wish to wipe out humanity, or the movie *WarGames* (1983) in which a computer program develops consciousness and almost triggers a nuclear conflict and, the movie *Transcendence* where a scientist transfers himself into a strong, divine creature that poses a threat to mankind after uploading his consciousness into a computer becoming a powerful, divine creature that threatens humanity. The implication of these portrayals lies in their ability to reflect and critique contemporary societal anxieties about technological advancements. By presenting these human-machine hybrids, science fiction explores the potential consequences and ethical dilemmas associated with the integration of advanced technology into human life. These narratives question the boundaries of humanity and technology, challenging us to consider the implications of our pursuit of technological progress. They serve as cautionary tales that provoke critical thought about the direction of our technological evolution and its impact on our identity, ethics, and future.

The convergence of technology and the human body appears not only in fictional narratives but also in real-life instances, such as the case of Bertolt Meyer, a prominent and notable figure in the field of prosthetics. Wearing one of the most cutting-edge prosthetic limbs, Bertolt Meyer stands out as a perfect example of a real-life 'cyborg' who benefits from both a completely functioning replacement and one with enhanced capabilities. As a Professor of Work and Organizational Psychology at the Chemnitz University of Technology, Meyer is known to the general public for having modified his prosthetic forearm so that he can use it directly as a musical instrument to play a synthesizer (Synthhead). In his case, Meyer embodies a merger of human and machine serving as a perfect illustration of 'the posthuman condition' referring to a state where the boundaries between human and machine become increasingly blurred, challenging traditional notions of what it means to be human. It encompasses not just the physical combination of technology and the human body but also the profound implications for identity, capability, and existence. Meyer's example illustrates this condition by demonstrating how technology can extend human abilities beyond natural limits, integrating seamlessly into everyday life and function. His prosthetic limb does not merely replace a lost function; it enhances and redefines what his body can do, symbolizing the potential of human enhancement through technology. His condition illustrates the convergence of technology and nature within an organic corporeal context

contrary to the traditional understanding of the human physique which was a purely biological and organic entity with inherent limitations. So, the merger of technological enhancements and the human body makes possible new forms of embodiments exemplified by a wide array of hybrid embodied forms, which is an interesting source of speculation about the future of humankind with a range of new body models (Featherstone and Burrows 2).

Eventually, the transitory journey of humans from the natural biological evolution to the human-induced technological augmentation highlights the significant transformation in the notion of what it means to be 'human.' The boundaries between the dichotomies of the human/nonhuman and the organic/technological are not only indistinct but also intertwined. In this light, the merger of human and technology not only challenges the traditional notions of human but also urges possibilities for what human can become in the twenty-first century. So, the posthuman condition emerges not as a dystopian future to be feared but as a transformative phase in human evolution. Building on this insight the cultural and societal ramifications of posthuman and transhuman monstrosities can analyse how these concepts challenge the traditional understanding of human identity and explore the ethical and philosophical questions they provoke. Through this, it is possible to analyse the evolving human condition in an era where the boundaries between human and technology increasingly become less clear, paving the way for a deeper investigation into the future of human evolution and the understanding of the notion of human through the embodiment of a monster. In this framework, this thesis aims to analyse Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* and Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* to discuss and illustrate the classical definition of human and the predicament that it causes with the rise of the technological monstrosity such cyborgs, AI-based machines and human-machine hybrids in the modern world.

The notion of human in the twenty-first century and the predicaments it stimulates almost always entail explorations into the notion of human in different periods. By investigating the various characterisations in which the concept of human has evolved, it is possible to understand how contemporary challenges have emerged and how they relate to philosophical and cultural debates surrounding human identity in the posthuman world. This historical investigation enables recontextualising the current discourse on the human condition and better appreciating the multifaceted interaction between technological advancements, societal changes, and shifting notions of human.

The notion of human has undergone numerous interpretations throughout history, as different cultures and communities have ascribed distinctive philosophical, religious, and scientific attributions to the definition of human. One of the earliest understandings of what constitutes a human can be traced back to Ancient Greece. During the era of classical Greek philosophy, particularly with the advent of Socratic and post-Socratic thinkers, the notion of being human was linked with the principles of reason, civilization, and morality, encapsulated in the concept of *logos*. However, prior to the classical period, the Pre-Socratic philosophers offered a different perspective. Their interpretations did not primarily centre on reason but rather on natural elements and the cosmos, viewing humans as part of a larger natural order without the same emphasis on rationality and moral civilization. These diverse philosophical foundations underscore the evolving nature of the concept of humanity even within the context of ancient Greek thought. Regarding the conceptualisation of human in the Antiquity, Aristotle, one of the most prominent philosophers of his time, describes humans in *Politics* as "political animal[s]" (59) characterized by the faculties. According to Aristotle, humans are unique in their possession of speech (*logos*), which enables them to communicate complex ideas and engage in moral reasoning and judgement. Additionally, he highlights humans' capacity for political organization and their intrinsic social nature, asserting that humans naturally form communities and are driven to pursue the good life within these political structures. Aristotle's view encompasses not only speech and moral judgement but also the ability to deliberate about justice and the common good, making humans distinct in their pursuit of ethical and virtuous living within a societal framework. Highlighting these distinctively human qualities, Aristotle not only distinguishes humans from other species but also attributes pre-eminence to them. This interpretation of humans as unique and superior

beings based on their ability to communicate, and moral reasoning played an important role in shaping the anthropocentric worldview of the time and planted the seeds of the anthropocentric worldview in the Antiquity, which will chronologically extend first to the Medieval period, then to the Enlightenment period. However, in the medieval period, the definition of human underwent a significant transformation, primarily under the influence of Christianity (Evangeliou 65). This new perspective emphasised that humans were created in God's image and were distinct from other creatures due to their intellectual souls. Thomas Aquinas, an influential and the most prominent Italian philosopher and theologian of his era (Audi 36), primarily shaped this understanding of human in his work *Summa Theologica*, with depictions from Catholic teachings and raised the human above "the beasts of the field" (Aquinas 627). Aquinas believed that humans, as an exceptional combination of physical and spiritual features, could only find ultimate satisfaction and accomplishment through devoting themselves to God. This belief led the medieval notion of human to evolve from the ancient Greek idea of "a political animal" (Aristotle 59) to a representation of divine essence within a religious context. Moreover, this era was characterized by the integration of the Aristotelian notion of human dualism, which Aquinas integrated into the Christian perspective. This philosophical observation emphasized the existence of spiritual and physical dimensions within humanity (Pasnau 296).

From the theologically driven and divinely oriented medieval worldview, European thought transited towards a new epoch characterised by revisiting the classical works of Ancient Greece and Rome. The Renaissance, emerging in the fourteenth century in Europe, heralded a pivotal shift that profoundly altered European civilisation, politics, art, and societal structures. The Renaissance movement was characterised by a transition towards a more secular and autonomous perspective about the world (Brotton 3) and the resurgence and reinterpretation of ancient Greek and Roman thought, including the writings of Aristotle, Plato, and Epicurus, which led to a shift in emphasis toward individual intellectual achievement (Kraye 151-159) from collective and theologically centred paradigms. This shift from the collective to the individual redefined what it meant to be human, transitioning from a passive recipient of divine favour to an active, autonomous agent capable of independent thought and action, in opposition to scholasticism (Kristeller, *Humanism and Scholasticism in the Italian Renaissance* 353).

The Renaissance era, departing from the dogmatic medieval subjectivity, embraced a renewed focus on individualism, personal experience, and the rediscovery of classical concepts. These elements inspired individuals to employ reasoning and critical thinking in challenging authority, which in turn led to the reinterpretation of the human as an independent, rational being. Being central to the Renaissance era, the conception of human was the belief in human uniqueness and intellectual capacity to control one's own destiny, independent of scholastic guidance. This reconceptualization of what it means to be human shaped Humanism, a philosophy emphasizing human agency and reliance on science and reason, which emerged not only replacing scholastic understanding with a significant intellectual and cultural development that originated in 14th-century Italy and spread across Europe by the 16th century profoundly impacting Western civilisation (Kristeller, "Humanism" 586) and characterising a reestablished emphasis on classical studies, the revival of ancient Greek and Roman values, such as civic responsibility, artistic excellence, and the pursuit of knowledge and the promotion of liberal education to encourage critical thinking, broad knowledge, and ethical development to cultivate and humanise individuals.

Built upon this Humanist convention of the Renaissance, the Age of Enlightenment emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a movement that accentuated reasoning as well as individualism and the pursuit of knowledge -as Humanism paved the way for. The relationship between humans and their nonhuman surroundings, God, the nature of mankind, the meaning of life, the significance of reason, and morality were all reinterpreted by Enlightenment humanism. Under the new characterisation, "human" was redefined as an individual rather than the objective truth of the Roman Catholic Church, and the human became "a spiritual individual and recognised himself as such" (Brucker 24). Enlightenment thinkers such as Descartes and Locke expanded on the Renaissance's human-centred vision, confirming the supremacy of humans in nature and their capacity to shape their environment through reason and observation through experience. René Descartes, for instance, proposed a dualistic view of the mind and body which is known as "Cartesian dualism" in *Meditations on First Philosophy*. In his work, Descartes classified the human mind as an immaterial existence while classifying the human body as a physical entity. He proposed that these entities were two separate existences that interacted with each other, and this mind and body

dichotomy had significant implications in the era regarding the understanding of human nature and consciousness. Based on Descartes' ideas, this aspect of the mind positioned the human as unique and superior to other living by "distinguishing humans from automata [and] animals" (Thomas 1000) as human mind is the source of reason and consciousness. On this basis, nonhuman existence was credited as purely mechanical as it lacked this ability to reason and think whereas humans had a unique ability for rational thought and consciousness in nature. This understanding of human existence distinguished them from the rest of the world and contributed to the superior position of human by emphasising the exceptional and elevated status of human beings in the natural order, highlighting their intellectual superiority over other living beings and positioning them at the centre of the universe (Hoffman and Sandelands 147). Descartes' notion of the mind-body dualism created a hierarchy within living beings, in which the human mind was elevated and considered more significant than the body and other living creatures. This idea reinforced the anthropocentric worldview of Enlightenment humanism, which saw human beings as the highest form of creation, with the ability to control and dominate nature through rationality and intellect.

Furthermore, in "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," John Locke also investigated human beings' distinctive qualities, such as reasoning and self-reflection. Locke's theory, based on the "tabula rasa" (Duschinsky 509) idea which sees the human mind as a blank page, asserted that knowledge was gained through experience and sensory input, resulting in the production of complex concepts. For Locke, humans use reason to relate concepts and comprehend the world, which enables them to build moral cognition and self-awareness laying the groundwork for ethical decision-making and a comprehensible sense of self through reflection and reasoning. In this sense, Locke emphasizes the importance of reason in the pursuit of knowledge, distinguishing humans from animals by accentuating their unique ability to involve in moral reasoning and develop an understanding of their identity and the moral aspects of their presence. This emphasis on reason became a key component of Enlightenment Humanism, as it highlighted the importance of individual autonomy - the capacity for self-governance and making decisions independently-and rational thought in shaping the world.

The Enlightenment's emphasis on individualism and personal experience altered creative expression in art, as well as the artists' perception of the human and the world

(Johnson 4). During the Middle Ages, art predominantly served to support the Church and depict religious themes in a prescribed manner. In contrast, the emergence of the Enlightenment placed greater emphasis on the subjective perspective and creativity of the individual artist, resulting in works that encompassed not only religious motifs but also personal ideas and emotions. Renaissance painters, such as Leonardo da Vinci, epitomise this shift in artistic mindset, as they gained recognition for their unique styles and incorporation of personal experiences in their creations. Leonardo da Vinci's portrayal of a naked man in two overlapping poses with his legs and arms apart, known as *The Vitruvian Man*, ranks "among the all-time iconic images of Western civilization," (Bambach 224) demonstrating the Renaissance origins of humanity by epitomising the symbolic of the Renaissance's anthropocentric worldview reflecting a nuanced and personal perspective of the human nature and the world. This iconic image of the human not only encapsulated the anthropocentric perception of the human by accentuating ideals of human perfection, harmony, and centrality within the universe but also became the measure of all things (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 13), hence these intellectual and artistic movements established the foundation for subsequent arguments about the notion of the human.

Expanding on this perspective, the Enlightenment undoubtedly marked a period of considerable intellectual progress, characterised by the ascendance of rationality, scientific investigation, and a focus on individualism. Nonetheless, this era also caused an anthropocentric worldview, increasingly regarded as problematic in the twenty-first century. Although Humanism emphasised the importance of humans in intellectual and artistic pursuits, considering them as the ultimate standard of value, the Enlightenment took this notion a step further by advocating for a more secular perspective, which considered autonomous agents that were capable of controlling their destiny and the world. Thus, the Enlightenment's anthropocentrism was exceptionally radical in its interrogation of traditional authority and particularly concentrated on the human potential for reason to understand and control the world. This was achieved by asserting their supremacy over other entities. Regarding the anthropocentric perspective of the Enlightenment period, the posthumanist theories highlight issues such as the importance of recognising the interconnection of life, hybridity, and the need to integrate nonhuman entities into ethical and moral frameworks, primarily due to rapid technological

advancements that blur the boundaries between humans and machines. Scholars including Rosi Braidotti in *The Posthuman* (2013), N. Katherine Hayles in *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999*)*, Cary Wolfe in *What Is Posthumanism?* (2013) and Donna J. Haraway in *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (1991) claim that conventional notions of human may be inadequate in addressing these occurrences. Consequently, they emphasise the paramount importance of reassessing and reconceptualising our established conceptions of what it means to be human. In doing so, they seek to establish a more inclusive, interconnected understanding of existence that acknowledges our relationships with other-than-human species, machines, and the environment, thereby fostering a more holistic, dynamic and responsive perspective on human identity that evolves with the developing technological and social landscape concurrently in the face of the continuous and rapid development of technology that characterizes the modern era.

Doing so, posthumanism challenges the traditional understanding that there is a clear and distinct "boundaries between human and nonhuman," (Anderson 23) natural and artificial as well as the superiority of human. To illustrate this distinction, Donna Haraway introduces the metaphor of "the cyborg" as a "hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto* 3) that surpasses the binary oppositions by distorting the lines between human and machine, nature, and culture. As a critique of the anthropocentric ideas and response to the implications of technological advancements on human identity; the cyborg functions as a powerful symbol for questioning the anthropocentric perspective that places humans at the centre of the universe and unsettles the hierarchies established through the Enlightenment rationalism. Haraway's critique is also developed by the emphasis on the interdependence of life, suggesting that humans are not isolated entities but part of a complicated system of relationships with other living beings. With "a story of co-habitation, co-evolution, and embodied cross-species sociality," (Haraway, *Companion Species* 4) she emphasizes the symbiotic relationship between humans and animals that challenges the anthropocentric perspective that dominated Enlightenment rationale. Haraway extends her discourse on the notion of cyborgs, which she sees as "junior siblings in the much bigger, queer family of companion," (11) to the portrayal of a cooperative relationship between humans and animals. By this way, she emphasises an

understanding towards a posthuman perception of the world in which humans can learn from their relationships with nonhuman others – whether an animal, machine or a hybrid. Highlighting how technology and biology become increasingly intertwined in the twenty-first century, the cyborg enables us to rethink the norms about what it means to be human, and to "reconstruct identity in the interplay of duality" (Liccardo 35) that have conventionally structured human thinking, such as nature/culture, male/female, and human/machine. Haraway uses both the cyborg metaphor and the symbiotic relationship between humans and animals to show how "the binary oppositions of humanism were and had to be undone to overcome an understanding that, due to its unjustifiable privileging, perpetuates modes of actual repression" (Rae 506). For Haraway, the concepts of "cyborg" and "companion species" play a crucial role in challenging the traditional understanding of categories inherited from the Enlightenment, and privilege human interests over those of nonhuman entities. Through these perspectives, she promotes a more fluid and diverse understanding of the human condition, emphasizing the interconnectedness and equality of all entities. This approach deconstructs hierarchical structures and advocates for a more inclusive view that recognizes the intrinsic value and agency of both human and nonhuman actors.

Posthumanist scholars have also claimed that the human identity constructed during the Age of Enlightenment was primarily focusing on a male-centric model that favoured individuals of white, Western, and affluent backgrounds, thus positioning them as representatives of high culture (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 20–26). The identity formation stage during the Enlightenment reinforced a hierarchical structure that was founded on "universalist assumptions about the nature of Man" (Taylor 265), thereby shaping the understanding of gender as well as creating a limited understanding of gender fluidity. These norms perpetuated a binary and rigid framework for gender, inadvertently marginalising diverse perspectives and experiences related to gender identity and expression such as excluding diversity of gender identities beyond the traditional understanding of male and female binaries. The binary understanding was deeply rooted in the Enlightenment's Humanist inheritance, and often privileged the male model over alternative gender conceptions such as female, alongside non-binary, transgender, and genderqueer identities. Judith Butler and the posthumanist scholars such as Donna

Haraway and Rosi Braidotti, have critiqued the limitations of the Enlightenment's anthropocentric and binary gender perspective.

Built upon this critique of the Enlightenment's gender binary, the cyborg, as a hybrid entity that surpasses the binary oppositions, serves to question the challenge of the restrictive norms of gender and identity because the cyborg's ability to transcend binary gender categories offers a radical challenge to the Enlightenment's limited understanding of gender. Accepting the cyborg as a figure that confronts traditional categories, what is created is a metaphor for a state of being that is not confined by cultural and social norms because the cyborg has "no origin story in the Western sense" (Haraway, *Cyborg Manifesto* 8). Therefore, it is away from the socially constructed understanding of human identity. Haraway's choice of the cyborg over an animal or a human body is strategic and intentional. While animal and human bodies are still tied to biological and evolutionary narratives, the cyborg is a fully constructed entity, thus it is not a product of natural selection or genetic inheritance, but of the outcome of human invention and technological progress. For this reason, this artificiality of the cyborg is important for deciphering the socially constructed concept of human, and as a man-made creature, the cyborg does not bear the traces of "biological determinism" (29) and thus, it questions the idea of existence that biology is destiny. Moreover, the cyborg represents the union of man and machine, emphasizing the intertwined relationship between humanity and technology. This symbiosis is especially important in the modern era, as technology is increasingly shaping our lives and identities. Thus, the cyborg stands not only as a critique of current norms but also as a symbol of potential future identities and possibilities.

Similar to Donna Haraway's notion of the "cyborg," which contributed to the critique of categories and the idea of the fluidity of gender, Judith Butler's "the theory of performativity" (Butler xv) in her *Gender Trouble* also presents a powerful challenge to the anthropocentric perspective of the Enlightenment. Just as Haraway disrupts traditional categories and boundaries by arguing that "the cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world" (Haraway 8), Butler's work also questions the fixed nature of gender and identity that was prevalent during the Enlightenment era. Judith Butler's theory of performativity on gender argues that gender is not an innate and physically determined trait, but rather a social construct shaped through repetitive performances and behaviours (Butler 74). In her work, Butler proposes that gender is a "repeated stylization of the body, a set of

repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (45). By this way, Butler affirms that gender is not a fixed, biologically determined feature, but rather a social construct that is performed and repeated through daily actions and behaviours such as mannerisms, dressing styles, and engagement in cultural practices associated with gender and social roles. These performances are constrained by a strict regulatory framework of cultural norms and expectations and dictate what is considered appropriate behaviour and appearance for each gender. Over time, these performances become naturalized and the belief that "the appearance of substance" (192) or gender is an innate and unchanging aspect of a person's identity is produced. Butler argues that this regulatory framework is extremely rigid and restrictive, imposing binary oppositions for men and women, excluding and marginalizing alternative gender experiences. In this regard, the perception of gender as a fluid and social phenomenon disrupts the essentialist and deterministic concepts of gender that dominated Enlightenment thinking, which often assumed that gender was a fixed and immutable trait based on biological sex. So, by emphasising the performative nature of gender and its construction through social norms and expectations, it is possible to undermine the Enlightenment's anthropocentric perspective that was based on a male identity. Butler's critique of gender essentialism accentuates that the binary opposition between male and female has a restrictive and limiting effect on the understanding of gender and identity. Furthermore, she advocates the recognition of diversity and complexity in the ways individuals express and experience their gender challenging the rigid binary framework imposed by Enlightenment thinking. Combining Haraway's cyborg metaphor and Butler's theory of gender performativity, it is possible to see that these approaches present a strong challenge to the anthropocentric perspective of the Enlightenment era. Embracing the fluidity and diversity of gender and identity questioned by these theories, this perspective suggests a shift towards moving beyond the traditional binary understanding of gender, advocating for a more diverse, and comprehensive notion of human in the twenty-first century.

Aligning with Haraway's and Butler's theories, Rosi Braidotti's works, including *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (2002), *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* (2006) and *The Posthuman* (2013), also challenge the Enlightenment's anthropocentric norms and binary opposite framework, advocating for a dynamic and

evolving understanding of identity and life itself that transcends traditional binary and anthropocentric norms. By critiquing the Enlightenment's predisposition to privilege human exceptionalism and hierarchies based on race, gender, and species, Braidotti encourages reconsidering the implications of such a worldview highlighting that "sexualized, racialized and naturalized differences, far from being the categorical boundary-keepers of the subject of Humanism, have evolved into fully fledged alternative models of the human subject" (Braidotti, *The Posthuman* 38). In this regard, by embracing the concept of "nomadic subjectivity," (49) she acknowledges the fluid, dynamic, and constantly evolving nature of identity. Hence, it is apparent that the binary understanding of human which she argues is also limiting and restrictive. She proposes that a subject is not reducible to any binary opposition --either male or female, human or inhuman, natural or artificial, organic or inorganic- but is rather an open-ended, relational and dynamic entity (73). From her posthumanist perspective, Braidotti prompts a reconsideration of the way we define human and non-human, as well as our relationship with the other species. By challenging the Enlightenment's anthropocentric norms and binary framework, she seeks to promote a dynamic, evolving and ethically responsible understanding of life and identity, which ultimately serves as a foundation for a more just and equitable understanding of the human.

Posthumanist theorist N. Katherine Hayles also delves into the implications of AI, hybrid bodies and advanced technologies that complicate the twenty-first-century notion of human, suggesting that the line between humans and machines has increasingly blurred. In her *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies* she proposes that the traditional notion of the human, which was seen as a fixed and unified subject, has been profoundly disrupted by the emergence of new technologies, such as information processing technologies, virtual reality, and AI, just because these technologies challenge our understanding of cognition and consciousness. According to N. Katherine Hayles, a new era of posthumanism has begun, and this change in how people define themselves is characterized by the increasing significance of information -that is information technology and digital data becomes central to human identity and existence- in addition to the more conventional standards of biological embodiment such as the physical body as the primary marker of human life and identity and consciousness. In this context, humans are seen as multifaceted networks of "informational pattern," (xii) where the

identities and existence are not merely defined by our physical or conscious selves but shaped by the interaction of data, technology and biological elements. Exploring human and machine intelligence, Hayles questions the uniqueness of human consciousness and the possibility of artificial intelligence surpassing human cognitive abilities, allowing for an exploration of how the development of intelligent machines challenges our understanding of human consciousness and cognition. To illustrate the impact of advanced technologies on human experience, we can draw on Hayles' insight to emphasize that technological integration into human life in the twenty-first century changes and refines the notion of the human.

Regarding the concerns of Hayles, an example can be given from the computer chess system *Deep Blue*, which defeated the world chess champion Garry Kasparov in 1997. *Deep Blue's* victory is an illustration of how the development of intelligent machines challenges our conventional understanding of human cognition and consciousness. Although *Deep Blue* did not understand chess play as a human does, it could calculate millions of possible moves per second and excels in areas such as strategic thinking and decision-making that were previously thought to require uniquely human abilities. This marks a major shift in our understanding of intelligence, with machines able to mimic or even surpass human-like responses in complex tasks. This event has implications beyond the game of chess, prompting us to rethink the nature of human consciousness and cognition in the presence of advanced artificial intelligence exemplifying the technological challenge to traditional notions of human intelligence. Due to the influence of human subjectivity such aspects of human consciousness, self-awareness, and subjective experience of being human that shape individual perception of reality, the boundaries between human and machine continue to blur, and the traditional distinctions between natural and artificial, animate and inanimate become increasingly problematic as technology advances. The boundaries between machines are becoming less clear. If machines can mimic the cognitive abilities traditionally associated with human consciousness, what distinguishes humans from machines? The ability of machines to perform complex tasks previously exclusive to humans challenges the notion of human superiority at the core of many philosophical, ethical and moral views, so the increasing complexity of artificial intelligence presents them with ethical dilemmas of rights and responsibilities. If artificial intelligence exhibits intelligence and behaviours

indistinguishable from humans, should it have the same rights as humans? Who is responsible if AI does damage? In the event of an accident involving a self-driving car, is the legal responsibility unclear – is it on the car, the software developer, the owner, or someone else? These questions suggest that we are entering a new era in which the line between man and machine is becoming increasingly vague. In this context, the increasing influence of technology on our lives makes it difficult to maintain a stable and unified model of human subjectivity. The implications of new forms of life or intelligence challenge our current understanding and force us to rethink our assumptions about what it means to be human, forcing us to recognize the complex and changing relationship between humans and machines in this posthuman era.

Posthumanism also entails the emergence of transhumanism as a crucial mediator, serving as a bridge between the humanist focus on enhancing the human condition and the posthumanist revaluation of what it means to be human in an era of advanced technology. By enhancing the cognitive and physical abilities of humans through technology, transhumanism represents a significant evolution of humanist ideals. This condition indicates that our biological limitations are not the final destination, but a step for further progress. This perspective embodies an essential step towards the posthuman condition, in which the notion of human is re-examined. As Nayar noted, transhumanism is a belief that aims for "the perfectibility of the human," (16) which views the human body as a vessel that could be upgraded using technology. Transhumanists envisage a future where human bodies could be "faster, more intelligent, less disease-prone, [and] long-living" (16). It is suggested that this envision regards the human form as an "intermediate stage" (17) before the arrival of an advanced human with significantly improved physical and mental abilities. Bostrom enhances this definition, stating that transhumanism promotes the use of applied science and other rational methods, which may increase health span, extend the intellectual and physical capacities of humans, and give increased control over their mental states and moods (Bostrom "In Defense of Posthuman Dignity" 202 - 203).

On the other hand, in his *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (2005), Ray Kurzweil asserts a transformative future event known as the *Singularity* resulting in a transformative era of human-machine evolution which is predicted to occur in the first half of the twenty-first century. This future prediction,

marked by profound technological advancements, depicts an irreversible transformation of human life in which human biology and technology celebrate a convergence enabling improved intelligence, health, and longevity for humankind (24). Kurzweil postulates that the advent of "information-based technologies" (25) such as computers, the internet, artificial intelligence and the technologies that underpin genomics and biotechnology will eventually supersede all human knowledge, abilities, and even the limitations of the human brain as "the pace of change of our human-created technology is accelerating and its powers are expanding at an exponential pace" (24). This will facilitate humans transcending their biological confines and gaining control over their mortality by merging with nonhuman bodies. Hence, the lines separating humans and machines, as well as physical and virtual realities, will become increasingly distorted. The resulting world, while still fundamentally human in essence, will extend beyond our biological roots, with technology demonstrating refined qualities surpassing human capabilities as technological growth, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence, becomes uncontrollable and irreversible. However, speculating about the future of human beings, transhumanism opens a variety of discussions. In transhumanist thought, the transition from human to human-machine integration represents a key aspect that limitations of our bodies and brains can be overcome through the use of technology once "nonbiological intelligence" (Kurzweil 38) could combine the strengths of both humans and machines.

A corresponding example of *Neuralink*, *as* an illustrative case of the transhumanist principle to overcome the limitations of the human body and brain through technology, shows how brain-computer interfaces (BCIs) can connect human brains with artificial intelligence to eradicate disabilities caused by accidents or debilitating diseases. *Neuralink* is a neurotechnology company owned by Elon Musk and the company's primary objective is to develop brain-computer interfaces that link human minds to computers to augment human cognition through the integration of Artificial Intelligence. By reading neural activity and electrical signals of the brain, BCIs facilitate bidirectional communication between the brain and the external environment, enabling communication and control between the mind and external devices (Yuste, Genser, and Herrmann 155). So, BCIs do not only aim to treat problems such as neurological disorders, spinal cord injuries, and other brain-related conditions but also restore and improve the quality of life

for those individuals with disabilities. In this way, *Neuralink* aims to revolutionize the way people interact with computers by enhancing humans with technology.

In addition to the elimination of the physical limitations of the human body with the integration of human and machine bodies, Huberman defines the transfer of consciousness from human brain to a computer-controlled storage unit as "digital immortality" (Huberman 2) which is also on the agenda of transhumanism. That is, digital immortality is an interesting concept which aims to preserve a person's consciousness including memories and personality into a computer storage allowing people to live after their biological life span. By doing so, the intention is to transcend biological existence by creating a digital version of oneself. In this digital avatar, it is believed to replicate one's consciousness, thoughts, memories and personal traits which is impossible to preserve after the biological body ceases to exist. So, the concept of digital immortality relies on the belief that the consciousness of a human being can be transformed into an information process that can be transferred to a computer platform which enables the coded information to be stored electronically (Huberman 5).

Consequently, it cannot be said that human rationality has been completely overthrown or rejected in this context; rather, these concepts challenge and expand on the classical understanding, because our interactions with technology and artificial intelligence improve and refine our sense of identity and consciousness. As the inevitable consequence of this transformation, the distinction between humans and machines becomes blurred, leading to the creation of a hybrid that merges human insights with technological advancements. This fusion transcends beyond the traditional dichotomies of natural/artificial, human/machine, and rational/emotional. In this age of intelligent machines, the central concern is not whether machines can think or reason like humans but rather how these machines influence human capabilities and senses of who humans are because AI and machine learning have shown that thinking and reasoning can emerge and be understood in ways that are not unique to humans, leading to a reassessment of the concept of rationality. So, rationality, which is traditionally seen as a defining characteristic of humanity, is shared with machines that can process information and make decisions based on algorithms. This implies that humans can no longer be the sole owners of rationality, and what it means to be human needs a reassessment.

As it is seen, the advancement of posthumanist thought presents significant challenges to the anthropocentric and male-dominated perspectives of the notion of human. In regard to the discussions on transhumanism within the context of posthumanist thought, it is clear that both movements challenge the traditional notion of human in aspects such as the revaluation of identity as a fluid and social phenomenon, the deconstruction of the human/animal and human/machine dichotomy, and the challenge of artificial intelligence to question human rationality all weaken the milestones of the traditional understanding of what it means to be human. The transhumanist vision of enhancing human capabilities through technology, illustrated through advancements such as *Neuralink* and the pursuit of digital immortality, directly contributes to these challenges, therefore this condition not only questions the permanence of our physical and cognitive limitations but also suggests a future where identity and consciousness transcend beyond biological boundaries. Moreover, these concepts push the definition of the traditional understanding of human and destroy existing notions by creating an uncategorized hybrid creation, and this transformation causes a certain level of anxiety and fear.

These concerns are also embodied in the figure of the monster, who usually emerges with strangeness and obscurity and refuses to be included in any category in literature. In this regard, transhumanist and posthumanist theories intersect with the monster theory, which is considered as a field of study that examines the cultural and psychological significance of monsters, as these monster theories question the meaning of human by challenging the traditional view by exploring in-between elements such as human with nonhuman or machine bodies providing that the notion of human is more complex and fluid. This challenge also shows that, in the context of posthumanism, the monster can be seen as a concrete representative of concerns about the blurring of human/machine and human/animal boundaries, the deconstruction of gender binaries, and the challenge of artificial intelligence to question human rationality. The concept of the monster thus offers a unique perspective to explore the consequences of posthumanist thought and the radical redefinition of human. By examining the intersection of transhumanism, posthumanism and monster theories, it is possible to gain new perspectives on how the concept of human has changed in response to technological advances and social changes, and how these changes are reflected in our cultural symbols and narratives. In this way,

humans can face their anxieties and manage the complexities of the posthuman age through the figure of the monster as they move into the unknown.

Posthumanism significantly expands the scope of what can be considered as 'human' by questioning traditional anthropocentric perspectives including everything nonhuman –from the cyborgs to artificial intelligence– through deconstructing the dichotomies that they cause to emerge and introducing, instead, the concept of fluidity in identity formation, as a replacement for a socially constructed, conventional frame of identity. On the other hand, the investigation of the monster delves into the cultural and psychological significance of the monster, which is represented as the other, the unfamiliar, the unknown, the intrusive and the frightening, as a reflection of social fears, "anxieties, and desires" (Weinstock 25). Combining posthumanism with the investigation of monsters through various monster theories makes both fields of study highly cohesive and mutually enriching since this combination questions traditional notions promoting alternative forms of identity and embracing otherness. For example, increasing dependence on artificial intelligence in the twenty-first century and the blurring of the boundaries between the human and the machine can be examined with the monster theory investigating the societal anxieties and fears triggered by the new technologies. Moreover, this unified perspective illuminates how the understanding of identity and otherness has evolved, and how humans have been defining moral responsibilities towards non-human beings. By interpreting the posthuman condition as a monstrous entity, it is possible to explore how social norms and values are questioned and redefined in the face of technological advances.

Considering the etymological roots of the term "monster," both historical and social understanding of the monster is entwined with notions of revelation or warning. The term "monster" derives from the Latin verb *monstrare* meaning "to show" or "to reveal" and the associated noun *monere* meaning "to warn." These etymological roots unite in the term *monstrum* which translates to "ominous sign" or "omen of misfortune" in English. The connotations of the monster —as both an indicator of deviance and a harbinger of catastrophe— have permeated its portrayal in literature emerging as a mirror,

reflecting social anxieties, fears, and moral predicaments, as well as a tribute to the tension between the known and the unknown, the natural and the abnormal.

In exploring what constitutes a monster it is important to consider a few key components that appear regularly in literature. The first and most obvious component is "the figure of deformity," (Kritzman 170); that is, the monster is usually an "anatomical specimen" (Pender 151) that has deviated from the norm or expectation. In this regard, H.G. Wells' Sci-Fi novel *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) is a prime example with figures of deformities and specimens, featuring horrific combinations of various animal parts. These monstrous animals highlight the horrific violation of the biological and natural order as a result of bizarre vivisection and forced evolution. Besides being physically disgusting and repulsive, these fearsome animals are also figurative reminders of the negative consequences of nature's uncontrolled exploration and modification. The existence of animals also symbolizes societal concerns about the limits of human civilization and the potential danger of interfering with the natural course of nature, as they are forcibly caught between their human-like present and their animal past. In this regard, it is evident that the monster transcends the realm of physical aberrations.

The monster also suggests a different form of "moral depravity" (Pender 162) — moral or ethical, becoming a symbolic representation of malevolence or corruption. This aspect of monstrosity is interestingly captured in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) features physically young and beautiful Dorian Gray, regardless of the seriousness of his moral violations yet his portrait symbolizes a visual manifestation of moral decay. Here, monstrosity is not an abnormal physical form but a figurative representation of moral decay. This interpretation of the monster, a departure from the traditional physical form, marks a significant shift in the understanding of monstrosity—representing an approach that considers the horrors of the human spirit to be equally monstrous, if not less. Another remarkable representation of the multifaceted nature of the monster is Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) in which the monster is seen as a figure in the "violation of natural law" (Sayers 255). The eponymous character, Dracula, exists in an ambiguous situation between life and death and questions the dual understanding of existence. As a vampire, his condition represents a form of alive/dead hybridity that deviates from the life-death dichotomy, thus taking a troubling stance against the normative structures of existence. This depiction effectively highlights the collective

human anxiety that the monster often symbolizes as the deepest fears and uncertainties in literature.

The monster also symbolizes the "unknown," representing that which is beyond human understanding or control, and the "dialectical other," a concept that refers to an entity defined in opposition to the self and often embodying contradictory characteristics (Cohen 7). This feature of the monster is vividly illustrated in H. P. Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu* (1928) in which the entity 'Cthulhu' symbolizes a cosmic horror that extends beyond human comprehension. Possessing an incomprehensible power and an alien nature, 'Cthulhu' represents a frightening obscurity - a force beyond our understanding that challenges our perceived superiority in the scheme of the universe. This otherness goes beyond merely being the embodiment of our social fears of the unknown, it also enables us to confront our human limitations. Thus, the monster then becomes a powerful symbol in the literature of existential fear and man's struggle to understand the vast and often terrifying cosmos, emphasizing the complex layers of the concept of monstrosity.

The historic use of monsters in literature and culture also serves as a reflection of the "cultural discourse" (Cohen viii) for portraying the other entities that deviate from social standards, exemplifying the aberrant or unnatural. This monstrous 'Otherness' frequently serves as a mirror, reflecting society's concerns, fears, and apprehensions about transformations in cultural norms. In *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) by Robert Louis Stevenson, Dr Jekyll's transformation into Mr Hyde can be seen as a representation of the metaphorical struggle between the accepted norms of society and the unacceptable desires. Dr Jekyll, a respected doctor and gentleman, signifies the societal norm, a person who fits well into the prescribed Victorian ideal. Mr. Hyde, on the other hand, embodies the monstrous 'otherness' which represents a type of moral deviance. As a result, their transformation questions the moral rigidity of Victorian society and encourages a broader discussion about the fears and anxieties associated with social transformations and cultural changes.

Examining the concept of monstrosity within literature opens a rich tapestry of discussion on various entailing themes, such as otherness, moral transgressions, violations of natural laws, or confrontations with the unknown, anxieties and fears of their day, expressing worries about the dark reaches of humanity, and the possible risks of

uncontrolled scientific development. This analysis leads to the recognition of a modern version of the monster as the thread of monstrosity traced through the history of literature to the posthuman. This developing posthuman character in literature and media, typically presented as hideous, threatens or challenges the status quo, implying a profound reconfiguration of what it means to be human. Like the classic monsters of the literature, posthuman monsters highlight societal anxieties—this time, concerning the ramifications of rapid technological breakthroughs and the increasingly blurred borders between humans and machines. From this standpoint, it's an important critique that, while the posthuman monsters embody terror and anxiety, they also prompt critical reflection on our evolving identities in a rapidly changing world. In this respect, the concept of the posthuman—that challenges societal norms and the status quo through their existence beyond current human capacities or through their embodiment of artificial intelligence—offers a compelling perspective on contemporary forms. So, the depiction of the posthuman, as a result of technology breakthroughs, represents societal concerns about the possible disintegration of traditional human-machine barriers, representing a dramatic shift in our understanding of the nature of identity and the self and becomes monstrous when it challenges our traditional notions of humanity.

In this sense, monsters play an influential role in explaining the convergence of posthumanism, transhumanism and monstrosity, namely, monsters can be read to reveal the underlying tensions, fears and insecurities that reflect society's particular period. From this theoretical perspective, it is possible to interpret and understand the roles monsters play in literature, culture, and society, thereby illuminating the complex web of social dynamics in which monsters are born. Focusing on the social and cultural consequences, monsters offer a multifaceted and nuanced understanding of monstrosity that leads to a more comprehensive and inclusive discourse in the discursive, cultural and social interpretations of posthumanism and transhumanism in the context of this thesis.

Exploring the cultural baggage of the term “monster,” Cohen contends that the monster is “a cultural body” (4). That is monsters are not distinct beings but are inextricably linked to the societies that generate them. Their forms and behaviours, as well as the reactions they elicit, are indicative of cultural fears, anxieties, conflicts, and desires. Monsters frequently reflect “our feelings of insecurity and our responses to those anxieties” (Mittman and Dendle 25) such as transformations and potential loss of

humanity, particularly in civilizations undergoing technological advancements. They are cultural artefacts that embody cultural attitudes, and beliefs, and act as an indicator for social tensions. Thus, through examining the monster of the posthuman era, it is feasible to investigate how the monster figure reflects the "social tensions" (Dendle 46) and paradoxes caused by rapid technological growth to "domesticate our technological monsters" (Smits 489).

Dealing with monsters is not always positively constructive and culturally explanatory, but discursively, categorically and ontologically, deconstructive in many ways. Monsters are, thus, described as "the harbinger of category crisis" (Cohen 6) implying that a monster is a creature that defies categorization, existing outside of existing borders and categories. It thwarts our desire to classify and categorize the world and disrupts our need for definitive categories. Monsters frequently exhibit a combination of features that blur the lines between human and nonhuman, alive and dead, or natural and supernatural. As "a liminal being, something between categories," (Asma 40) they represent a crisis in our categorization system that does not fit into the "standards of normality," (Coeckelbergh 359) compelling us to challenge and reconsider our understanding of these fundamental distinctions. That is, the existence of the monster reveals the fragility of our categories, emphasizing the intricacy and fluidity of concepts that are assumed to be self-evident. Just as monsters blur the lines between human and monster, natural and unnatural as well as alive and dead, posthumanism also challenges the traditional understanding of binary opposition promoting a fluid and mutable understanding. Therefore, the presence of the monster represents a posthumanist perspective of deconstructing the boundaries and reassessing the understanding of the fundamental distinctions.

The monster "dwells at the gates of difference" (Cohen 7) signifying the other, representing "a range of oppositions to the human, in giving animation to death, absence of the self and expressing the opposite of what defines the human as living, self-reflective and conscious, and sentient" (Scott 2). It is a creature that exists between the familiar and the unusual, the self and the other, the normal and the abnormal. The monster is frequently used as a metaphor for "political, racial, economic, sexual" (7) diversity, reflecting what society considers alien or abnormal. This difference emerges as a break with traditional notions of "human agency and identity" (Hassler-Forest 69). in the context of the

posthuman and transhuman monsters, as the posthuman monsters disrupt traditional concepts with technological advances and their potential to fundamentally change the human condition.

In another perspective the monster monitors “the borders of the possible” (Cohen 12) signifying that monsters act as a specific system of “surveillance and social control” (Tyler 128). The monster draws the lines between what is acceptable and forbidden, real and imaginary possible and impossible. By doing so, the monster pushes “the boundaries of acceptable human behaviour” (K. Wright ix) and represents the consequences of crossing them, thus, the presence of monsters denotes societal limitations, serving as a warning against “breaking of categories and boundaries of realities” (Bouet 115). These norms of what is thought to be possible or acceptable in human evolution are frequently pushed in the context of posthuman and transhuman narratives, where monsters frequently appear as a result of technological violations and stand as powerful warnings about the potential perils of uncontrolled scientific advancement, thereby controlling the boundaries of the technologically possible.

Monsters are not only physically but also emotionally distinctive and disturbingly attractive. According to Cohen, a monster is “a kind of desire” (16) that provokes fear, but also transforms “the object of horror into a source of curiosity” (Pascale 2) implying that there is a contradictory connection between society's fears and corresponding desires for it. This perspective relies on the concept that the monster represents “desires and anxieties” (A. Wright 39) of human existence and, hence, it serves as a symbol for a forbidden desire. The monster turns into a source of curiosity and fascination while also inspiring terror because it departs from the usual. It offers some sort of emotional release to investigate the boundless, the extraordinary, and the forbidden. The monster's potential to challenge the status quo, disrupt the ordinary, and offer an opportunity to interact with the other. In this respect, the portrayal of the posthuman monster becomes a token of both apprehension and fascination. This embodies both a sense of fear and desire because it reflects our worries about advancements in technology that threaten the integrity of human identity while simultaneously showing our commitment to go beyond our biological limitations.

Beyond the familiar territorial borders, there live the monsters. So, the concept of the monster implies a “threshold of becoming” (Rai 20) pointing out that the monster is an indication of change, that is a figure pointing to a transformation. This includes the monster's intrinsic instability and capacity for transgression while continuing to live inside the bounds of set categories and standards. The monster challenges our conventional ideas of identity and existence in this way, forcing us to consider the possibility of change and becoming. In the context of posthumanism, this thesis opens a new perspective for monster studies because the posthuman monsters represent a turning point in our understanding of existence. It forces us to face and reassess our ontological boundaries and inspires us to consider the possibilities of being. Thus, the posthuman beast principally signals a new human evolution in which biological and technological beings are combined.

Consequently, monsters offer an extremely helpful framework for analysing the notion of the posthuman which is often seen as a modern incarnation of the monster. The posthuman figure frequently represents a challenge to established societal norms and limits, notably those separating the human from the non-human or the technology, just as the monster usually denotes aberration and transgression. The posthuman condition that is conceived as an amalgamation of biological and artificial elements, embodies a profound category crisis, blurring the lines between the natural and the artificial, the organic and the inorganic. In this respect, the combination of the notion of a monster with posthuman and transhuman discourse illuminates the evolving condition of human identity in technological advancements and societal change. Both in historical and contemporary narratives, the depiction of monsters serves as a figure of deviation and the revaluation of the human condition. By materializing themes such as moral depravity or violation of natural laws, monsters resonate with the societal anxieties and tension of exploring the boundaries of the human condition in terms of technological integration. Through challenging the traditional anthropocentric perspectives, the Posthuman monstrosity explicitly indicates a redefinition of notions of identity, otherness and obligations for emerging understandings of entities including cyborgs, artificial intelligence, and robots. Moreover, the examination of monsters through the lens of posthumanism and transhumanism provides a vital critique for an understanding of the other in the twenty-first century. Through reflecting on the complexities of social desires,

anxieties and fears, monsters compel us to reconsider the notion of the human in the technological landscape.

CHAPTER I

HUMAN SUBJECTIVITY AND MONSTROSITY IN MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN; OR, THE MODERN PROMETHEUS*

Mary Shelley, born as Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin in 1797 in London, England, was the daughter of two important writers: William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft and the wife of a third, Percy Bysshe Shelley. She was a novelist, short story writer, and dramatist, best known for her groundbreaking novel *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. Her success is quite difficult to encapsulate within a single framework, given that her achievements span across a wide variety of literary areas and genres, making it quite challenging to describe her accomplishments into a specific pattern or a single category. To some critics, she is regarded as one of the most important representatives of the Gothic tradition in literature (Brantlinger 32) and "one of the chief practitioners of the Romantic novel," (Freedman 253) but some others consider Mary Shelley as the first and foremost founder of science fiction genre (Aldiss 7–46).

Mary Shelley grew up in an intellectual household shaped by her parents' innovative ideas, despite the absence of her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, known for her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, as one of the pioneers of feminist philosophy. Although, Mary Wollstonecraft died shortly after giving birth to Mary Shelley, leaving her feminist legacy affected her daughter's life and works (Mellor 3). Shelley's father, William Godwin, on the other hand, was a political philosopher, journalist and novelist considered as the earliest advocate of anarchism. In the absence of her mother's presence, she was raised by her father with a self-directed and informal education system, enriched by her father's extensive library and spent a lot of time with his intellectual community including Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth. In 1812, Mary Shelley met a radical young poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, who was drawn to her father, William Godwin, as a mentor and ideological guide. In the following years, their relationship began in earnest despite Percy Shelley's marriage and they both fled to France taking her stepsister Clara Mary Jane Clairmont (or Claire Clairmont as she was commonly known) with them and travelled through Europe. By June 1816, Mary and Percy Shelley along with Clara Clairmont settled into the chalet Chappuis on the banks of Lake Geneva at Maison near the Villa Diodati that was inhabited by Lord Byron and his physician Dr William Polidori. Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley immediately became close friends,

sailing together on the lake holding regular literary and philosophical conversations and discussing "the nature of the principle of life" (Shelley, *Frankenstein* ix) in the evenings. After Percy Shelley's wife died by suicide, Percy Shelley and Mary Shelley were married in 1816. The year 1816 was crucial for Mary Shelley's career, because it was during their summer stay at Lake Geneva, along with Lord Byron and John Polidori, that Mary Shelley conceived the idea for writing her masterpiece and *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus.* It was initially released anonymously in 1818 and then published in 1823 in Paris with Mary Shelley's name on it. However, Mary Shelley's legacy is not limited to *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* and it's important to acknowledge that she was a prolific writer beyond his masterpiece. Her other works include novels such as *The Last Man* (1826), *Valperga* (1823), and *Lodore* (1835), short stories, essays, travel writings, and biographical studies. Each of these works exemplifies Shelley's literary prowess and her engagement with the socio-political and philosophical discourses of her era.

The Last Man, published in 1826, is heralded as one of the earliest examples of post-apocalyptic science fiction. In this novel, Shelley meticulously explores the themes related to the future, the inherent fragility of humanity, and the isolation precipitated by a cataclysmic bubonic plague. This narrative probes into the profound and often grim prospects of human existence, presenting a vision of a world on the brink of extinction. Despite its innovative approach and prescient themes, *The Last Man* has not garnered the same level of acclaim or academic scrutiny as *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. Nevertheless, it stands as a significant work that offers a poignant commentary on human vulnerability and the devastating potential of pandemics –issues that continue to resonate in contemporary discourse. Similarly, *Valperga*, published in 1823, is a historical novel that deftly interweaves romance and political intrigue within the context of fourteenth century Italy. This work reflects Shelley's keen interest in history and her adeptness at crafting intricate characters and moral dilemmas against the backdrop of historical events. It underscores her versatility as a writer and her capacity to engage with diverse genres and themes, thus enriching the literary landscape of her time. Further exemplifying Shelley's literary diversity is *Lodore*, published in 1835, which offers a critical examination of the roles and challenges faced by women in the 19th century. Through its complex plot and nuanced character development, Shelley critiques the societal

constraints imposed on women and delves into themes of personal freedom, love, and familial duty. *Lodore* is a testament to Shelley's commitment to addressing pressing social issues and advocating for the empowerment of women. Mary Shelley's extensive body of work illustrates her remarkable range as a writer and her profound impact on literature. Her exploration of complex themes and her ability to craft compelling narratives ensure that her legacy transcends the boundaries of Frankenstein, marking her status as a prominent figure in literary history.

In addition to her novels, Mary Shelley's contributions to literature extended significantly through her editorial works on Percy Bysshe Shelley's poems, such as *Posthumous Poems* (1824), P*oetical Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley* (1839), and *Essays, Letters from Abroad, Translations and Fragments* (1840). Through these editorial endeavours, she ensured his legacy as one of the major English Romantic poets of his time. As an editor, Mary Shelley played a crucial role in preserving and promoting the work of her husband, thereby highlighting the significant contributions of women to literature in a predominantly male field during her era. Her meticulous efforts not only preserved Percy Shelley's poetic genius but also underscored the indispensable role of women in shaping literary traditions, demonstrating that their influence extended beyond authorship to the crucial task of literary preservation and promotion. So, Mary Shelley's editorial work is a testament to her dedication and literary acumen. By compiling, editing, and sometimes annotating Percy Shelley's works, she provided readers with comprehensive collections that captured the essence of his poetic vision. Her editorial choices reflected a deep understanding of his work and an unwavering commitment to maintaining the integrity and continuity of his literary voice. This effort was no small feat, given the challenges of managing and publishing such works in the early 19th century. Moreover, her role as an editor challenges the conventional notion of women's limited participation in the literary sphere, positioning her as a pivotal figure in the canonization of Romantic literature.

Mary Shelley's travel writings offer a distinctive and invaluable perspective on the cultural backdrop and ideals of the Romantic Period. These works not only document her journeys but also serve as rich, reflective texts that illuminate the Romantic movement's profound engagement with nature, emotion, and individualism. Her travel writings, including *History of a Six Weeks' Tour* (1817) and *Rambles in Germany and*

Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843 are particularly significant in understanding both the personal experiences of Mary Shelley and the broader cultural and political landscape of nineteenth century Europe.

History of a Six Weeks' Tour, published in 1817, is a travel narrative that chronicles two continental trips undertaken by Mary Shelley in 1814. This work is a compilation of letters and journal entries, offering an intimate glimpse into her observations and reflections. The narrative is interspersed with Percy Shelley's poem *Mont Blanc*, which serves to deepen the connection between the personal experiences of the travellers and the majestic landscapes they encountered. The inclusion of Mont Blanc highlights the Romantic fascination with sublime nature and its capacity to evoke profound emotional and philosophical responses. In her narrative, Mary Shelley vividly describes the landscapes, people, and cultures she encountered during her travels through France, Switzerland, Germany, and the Netherlands. Her keen observations and lyrical prose capture the essence of the Romantic spirit, emphasizing the beauty and power of nature, the emotional depth of human experience, and the importance of individual perception. The letters and journal entries provide a personal and candid account of her journey, offering readers a window into her thoughts and feelings as she navigated the diverse environments and social settings of early nineteenth century Europe.

Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843 published in two volumes in 1844, is another significant work that documents Mary Shelley's later travels with her friends and her surviving son, Percy Florence. This travelogue provides a comprehensive account of her experiences in Germany and Italy, offering detailed descriptions of the landscapes, cities, and cultural sites she visited. The narrative reflects Shelley's mature perspective, combining her deep appreciation for the natural world with a nuanced understanding of the historical and social contexts of the places she explored. The travel writings in her work exhibit a reflection of the Romantic movement's fascination with nature, emotion, and individualism. Mary Shelley's descriptions of the Rhine River, the Alps, and the Italian countryside are imbued with a sense of awe and reverence, capturing the sublime beauty and grandeur of these landscapes. Her reflections on the art, architecture, and history of the regions she visited reveal a deep engagement with the cultural heritage of Europe and an appreciation for the enduring legacy of classical and Renaissance achievements.

Besides, Mary Shelley's travel writings provide insight into the political and social transformations of Europe in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars. Her observations on the political climate, the effects of war, and the social changes occurring in various regions reflect her acute awareness of the broader historical forces shaping the continent. These reflections are woven into her narrative, offering readers a multifaceted view of the period and its complexities as well as shedding light on the gender dynamics of her time. As a female traveller and writer, she navigated the challenges and expectations imposed on women in the nineteenth century. Her narratives often reflect her negotiation of these constraints, highlighting her resilience and independence. Through her travel accounts, Shelley asserts her intellectual and creative agency, challenging the traditional roles and limitations assigned to women in her era. In addition to their literary and historical significance, Mary Shelley's travel writings contribute to the understanding of her personal development and growth as a writer. The experiences and insights gained from her travels enriched her creative imagination and informed her subsequent literary works. The themes of isolation, exile, and the search for meaning that permeate her novels can be traced back to the formative experiences documented in her travel narratives. Mary Shelley's travel writings provide a unique and profound insight into the cultural background and ideals of the Romantic period. Through her vivid descriptions, reflective prose, and keen observations, Shelley captures the essence of the Romantic spirit and offers a nuanced perspective on the political and social transformations of nineteenth century Europe. Her travel narratives not only document her personal journeys but also serve as enduring contributions to the literary and cultural heritage of the Romantic era. These works underscore Mary Shelley's multifaceted talent as a writer and her significant role in shaping the literary landscape of her time.

Just as her travel writings reveal her growth and perspective, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* is a multi-layered narrative that was nourished by Shelley's personal experiences of loss and grief. Shelley’s personal life was marked with tragedies, such as the loss of her mother just after her birth and inevitably influenced her writing style in *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* as well as her focus on themes such as life, death and creation. The loss of her mother left Shelley to grow up without maternal guidance. The reflections of her premature loss can be seen in the novel through the creation of the monster which is followed by an immediate abandonment of

its creator. Mary Shelley also faced another catastrophe in which she lost three of her four children at very young ages (her first daughter, Clara, died prematurely, while her second and third children, respectively William and Clara Everina died as toddlers). Her yearning for the lost children can be seen as a reflection in the narrative of *Frankenstein* as a quest to overcome death and metaphorically conquer it with a grotesque parody of birth. Shelley's condition after her losses is also conveyed through the representation of the monster that is deprived of companionship and love resonating with the loneliness and isolation that accompany grief and mourning.

Mary Shelley's stay at Lake Geneva in 1816, with Clara Clairmont, Lord Byron and his physician Dr William Polidori, witnessed a climatic phenomenon known as 'Year Without a Summer.' The summer of 1816 in Europe was rainy and devoid of its usual warmth due to the eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia the previous year (Baumann 8) and the weather forced them to stay indoors at Villa Diodati inspiring a productive isolation. The group was reading a French anthology of German ghost stories *Fantasmagoriana* and Lord Byron challenged each to write similar ghost stories. This challenge, intertwined with weather conditions and the social dynamics of their gathering, significantly contributed to Mary Shelley's creativity and ultimately led to the creation of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*.

After its publication, the novel garnered diverse reviews commending its imaginative power and scrutinising its moral and philosophical foundations. At the same time, this personal and literary journey was unfolding against a backdrop of significant societal shifts since the early nineteenth century was marked by profound transformation and upheaval, characterized by the aftermath of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. These forces redefined the social and economic landscapes of Europe as well as the cultural and intellectual spheres, profoundly impacting literary expression, including that of Mary Shelley in *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. Subsequently, her novel not only emerged from personal grief and intellectual exploration but also reflected the anxieties of an era wrestling with the consequences of rapid scientific progress and social change.

The Enlightenment profoundly influenced European societies by fostering beliefs in progress, individualism, and the capacity of human reason to solve any problem.

However, as the early nineteenth century started, the aftermath of the Enlightenment began to expose the limitations and potential dangers of these ideals. Initial optimism about the unchecked power of human reason and scientific progress gave way to growing concerns over the moral and ethical implications of such unbridled rationality and technological advancement indicating that humans could control and understand the natural world through rational thought. This shift can be seen in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798), where the Mariner's senseless killing of the albatross, driven by an arrogant disregard for nature, initiates a cascade of supernatural punishments. This tale highlights the Romantic preoccupation with the consequences of hubris and the necessity of humility and respect towards the natural world. The Mariner's senseless killing of the albatross represents an arrogant and irrational act that disrupts the natural order, resulting in severe consequences. This act can be interpreted as a metaphor for the Enlightenment's tendency to prioritize human reason and mastery over nature, often without regard for the ethical or spiritual dimensions of such actions. In William Wordsworth's *Lines Written a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* (1798), he reflects on his deep connection with nature, contrasting it with the dehumanizing effects of scientific progress. Wordsworth emphasizes the importance of spiritual and emotional experiences in nature, lamenting how the rapid advancements of his time led to a disconnect from these essential human qualities. This poem exemplifies the Romantic critique of the Enlightenment rationalism by highlighting the limitations of purely empirical and scientific approaches to understanding the world, advocating instead for a harmonious relationship with nature. Similarly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* (1750) also reflects this shift. Rousseau argues that the advancement of science and the arts, while seemingly beneficial, has contributed to moral corruption and the erosion of virtuous living. He contends that the progress championed by the Enlightenment has led to a decline in authentic human values and a disconnect from nature. Rousseau's critique influenced Romantic thinkers by advocating for a return to a simpler, more genuine way of life, grounded in nature and moral integrity.

Philosophers and writers of this era, reacting to these shifts, critiqued the foundational belief that empirical knowledge alone could lead to human perfection, highlighting the potential hubris in humanity's quest to dominate nature and unlock the

secrets of life. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* vividly embodies these Enlightenment critiques through the tragic figure of Victor Frankenstein, an archetypal Enlightenment scientist whose rationalist arrogance and desire to conquer nature culminates in the creation of a monstrous being. This creation serves as a potent metaphor for the unforeseen and uncontrollable repercussions of scientific hubris, challenging the ethical boundaries of creation and reflecting the darker possibilities of scientific exploration. From this perspective, Shelley's narrative critiques the Enlightenment ideal that the human reason alone can lead to moral and social improvement, suggesting instead that such pursuits, if not tempered by ethical considerations and emotional intelligence, can lead to devastating personal and societal consequences. Through the novel, Shelley responds to the intellectual heritage of the Enlightenment, questioning the legacy of its principles and exploring the complex interplay between human ambition, scientific discovery, and ethical responsibility –a reflection not only characteristic of Romantic literature's reaction against the Enlightenment but also a timeless contemplation of the human condition in the face of advancing knowledge and power.

There were also significant scientific experiments and discoveries in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century centuries in electricity and anatomy that had a significant impact on the discussions of the group at the Villa, and Mary Shelley was particularly inspired by contemporary discussions on the speculations of reanimating the dead matter hence capturing her imagination on creating the framework of her *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus.* The Enlightenment's emphasis on reason, empirical evidence, and scientific inquiry also laid the intellectual groundwork for the Industrial Revolution. By promoting a culture of innovation and challenging traditional authorities, the Enlightenment fostered an environment where scientific and technological advancements could flourish. This period witnessed significant developments in various fields of science, which directly influenced industrial processes and machinery. As the Enlightenment gave way to the Industrial Revolution, the landscape of scientific and technological innovation underwent a profound transformation. The Industrial Revolution, marked by rapid advancements in machinery, production processes, and energy utilization, further amplified the questions and anxieties surrounding the implications of human ingenuity. Central to the technological landscape of the Industrial

Revolution was the advent of galvanism, a field pioneered by Luigi Galvani. Galvani's experiments with the electrical stimulation of animal tissues demonstrated that electricity could induce muscular contractions, suggesting a powerful and almost mystical connection between electricity and life. This discovery ignited the imaginations of both the scientific community and the public, fuelling speculations about the potential to reanimate the dead and unravel the mysteries of life itself. Mary Shelley, influenced by these scientific developments, wove the concept of galvanism into the fabric of her novel (Shelley, *Frankenstein* ix). In *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, Victor Frankenstein animated his assembled creature by giving a direct reflection of the era's fascination with new technologies. The novel's depiction of the reanimation process captures both the excitement and the fear associated with these new technologies, symbolizing the broader implications of scientific advancements –their power to both create and destroy.

The scientific context of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution profoundly influenced the narrative. However, it is notable that Shelley provides no explicit description of the life-animating process within the novel. This deliberate ambiguity has been a subject of considerable speculation. Shelley's choice to obscure the specifics of Victor Frankenstein's experiments might have been strategic, designed to heighten the novel's sense of mystery and horror. By leaving the exact nature of the life-giving process to the imagination, Shelley invites readers to project their own fears and interpretations onto the narrative, thereby enhancing its impact and thematic complexity. This absence of explicit detail also allows for rich symbolic interpretations. In Greek mythology, lightning is a powerful symbol associated with and controlled by Zeus, representing divine power and the capacity to both create and destroy. The use of electricity in Shelley's narrative can be seen as a metaphor for Victor's god-like ambitions, echoing mythological narratives of creation and punishment. Similarly, in Christian symbolism, light is often linked with divine creation and the genesis of life. The Biblical account of creation begins with God's command, "Let there be light," signifying the inception of life and order. These symbolic associations resonate with Victor's quest to infuse his creature with the "spark of being," (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 43) drawing a parallel between his scientific endeavours and divine creation. By paralleling Victor Frankenstein with Prometheus, Shelley invokes the idea of the modern scientist

who, like the mythological figure, seeks to transcend natural limits and wield the power of creation. Electricity, in this framework, emerges as the modern equivalent of Promethean fire, embodying both the potential and peril of human innovation. Moreover, electricity and light are often metaphorically linked to knowledge, enlightenment, and the essence of life. The invention of the electric light bulb by Thomas Edison in 1879, for instance, represents a pivotal moment in human progress, illuminating the darkness and extending productivity beyond daylight hours. Light, in many cultures, also symbolizes life and hope. In *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, this symbolism is evident as Victor seeks to bring his creation to life through the metaphorical 'spark' of electricity. By combining these mythological, religious, contemporary symbols, Shelley enriches the narrative's exploration of the ethical boundaries of scientific discovery and the human hubris associated with their ambition to play God. This multifaceted symbolism not only deepens the understanding of the novel's engagement with contemporary scientific debates but also underscores the broader societal and ethical implications of the Industrial Revolution. Therefore, the subtitle of '*or, The Modern Prometheus'* to follow Mary Shelley's main title of *Frankenstein* is a deliberate reference to the myth of Prometheus, the Titan in ancient Greek mythology known for his cunning intelligence and his pivotal role in the development of human civilization. In the myth, Prometheus defies Zeus by stealing fire from the gods and bestowing it upon humans, an act that symbolizes the gift of knowledge, technological advancement, and enlightenment. This fire, a metaphor for knowledge and enlightenment, empowered humans with the means to improve their lives, marking a profound leap in their evolution. However, Prometheus' audacious transgression against divine authority incurred severe punishment; Zeus condemned him to eternal torment, having him bound to a rock where an eagle would devour his liver daily, only for it to regenerate each night. This gruesome cycle of suffering underscored the severe consequences of overreaching and challenging the natural order.

In this light, Mary Shelley's allusion to Prometheus in the title serves also as a cautionary tale and a metaphorical illustration of the perils associated with the unrestrained pursuit of knowledge and the ramifications of transcending natural boundaries. Victor Frankenstein, much like Prometheus, exhibits an insatiable desire to push the limits of human capability. Driven by his quest to uncover the secrets of life and death, he engages in the audacious act of animating a creature constructed from dead body

parts. This act of creation, while showcasing human ingenuity and the power of scientific exploration, also mirrors the hubris of Prometheus. Victor's attempt to usurp the natural process of life and death parallels Prometheus's theft of fire, both acts representing monumental strides in human advancement that simultaneously provoke severe repercussions. That is, Victor's creation of the monster, an endeavour that initially stems from a noble desire to conquer death and enhance human welfare, spirals into a narrative of tragedy and ethical quandary. The creature, much like the fire given to humans, possesses immense potential for both creation and destruction. However, Victor's failure to foresee the ethical implications and the responsibility that accompanies his scientific breakthrough leads to catastrophic consequences, reflecting the myth of Prometheus where the quest for knowledge brings profound suffering. By evoking Prometheus, Shelley underscores the need for a balance between intellectual pursuit and ethical consideration, suggesting that knowledge devoid of wisdom can lead to ruin. As the Enlightenment ideals gave way to the technological and scientific advancements of the Industrial Revolution, the story of Prometheus remained a poignant reminder of the necessity for humility and responsibility in the face of human innovation. Thus, Shelley's narrative not only engages with the myth of Prometheus on a symbolic level but also weaves it into a broader critique of contemporary scientific and philosophical developments. Victor Frankenstein's story, much like that of Prometheus, serves as an enduring allegory for the potential and peril inherent in the pursuit of knowledge, challenging readers to reflect on the ethical dimensions of their own scientific and technological endeavours.

Furthermore, the intellectual contributions of Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin, provided a significant milieu for Shelley's work (Shelley, *Frankenstein* x). Erasmus Darwin, a renowned physician and natural philosopher, proposed radical ideas about the origins and development of life. His writings, such as *Zoonomia; or, The Laws of Organic Life* (1794), suggested that living organisms could arise from non-living matter through natural processes, challenging traditional views of creation and laying the groundwork for evolutionary theory. These speculative ideas contributed to the broader discourse on scientific progress and the potential for human ingenuity to unlock the secrets of life. In *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, Victor's experiments can be seen as a fictional extension of these contemporary scientific inquiries, embodying the

era's bold ambition to transcend natural limits and explore the unknown. Shelley's incorporation of these themes reflects the period's spirit of scientific curiosity and innovation, as well as the underlying anxieties about the ethical boundaries of such pursuits.

The Industrial Revolution's technological advancements had also profound implications for the thematic concerns of the novel. The creation of the monster, through a synthesis of scientific knowledge and mechanical ingenuity, mirrors the industrial processes that have been transforming production and society. Factories, powered by steam engines and other innovations, enabled mass production on an unprecedented scale, fundamentally altering the nature of labour and everyday life. This shift brought about significant economic growth but also raised critical ethical and existential questions about the costs of such progress. Shelley's narrative captures these dilemmas, using Victor's unchecked ambition and the catastrophic consequences of his creation as a cautionary tale about the dangers of pursuing technological advancement without moral restraint. In this light, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* serves also as a profound commentary on the Industrial Revolution's impact on society. The novel encapsulates this era's anxieties about the rapid pace of scientific and technological change, reflecting fears that humanity's reach might exceed its grasp. Through the narrative of Victor and his creation, Shelley explores the profound implications of technological advancement, offering a timeless meditation on the interplay between human ingenuity, ethical considerations, and the natural world. This exploration underscores the novel's enduring relevance, highlighting its capacity to engage with contemporary debates about the role of science and technology in shaping human life and society. Thus, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* stands as a multifaceted reflection on the period's scientific and technological transformations, capturing both the optimism and the trepidation that accompanied these developments. The novel's rich engagement with the ethical and existential questions raised by the Industrial Revolution ensures its continued resonance, providing a critical lens through which to examine the complex legacies of technological progress. Through the figure of Victor Frankenstein and his ill-fated creation, Shelley offers a compelling narrative that interrogates the very nature of human ambition, the boundaries of scientific exploration, and the responsibilities that come with wielding such transformative power.

Consequently, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* not only pays homage to ancient mythologies but also serves as a futuristic as well as contemporary contemplation on ethical and moral quandaries that accompany the pursuit of scientific endeavour. Therefore, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* transcends its mythological references and becomes a literary masterpiece that heralds the contemporary interplay of posthumanism, transhumanism and the monster theories to be forged years after its publication by challenging the conventional understanding of human in the twenty-first century when technological advancements in genetics, biotechnology and artificial intelligence have profound impacts. In this light, it is possible to see *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* as an early exploration of posthumanist themes, such as the distortion of the binary oppositions such as life and death, natural and artificial and human and nonhuman since the monster can be seen as an "in-between" that defies the traditional understanding of what it means to be 'human' in the twenty-first century. In the same sense, transhumanist discussions also resonate in Shelley's narrative and provide a fertile ground for the exploration of transhumanist aspirations such as the use of scientific knowledge to reanimate life, transcending human limitations and enhancement representing the technological journey of the human in the early nineteenth century. These aspirations illustrated in the novel are not only historically significant but also increasingly relevant in the twenty-first century, where the notion of 'human' has been perpetually redefined by technology. On the other hand, Shelley's work *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* outstandingly contributes to the monster theories, providing a critical perspective to the social construction of monstrosity, which can be interpreted as deviations from the norm, hence provide a proper intersection with posthumanist and transhumanist theories. Namely, a monster, in a grotesque form and intense isolation, symbolizes the societal fears and anxieties associated with 'the different' and 'the unknown' in terms of the rapid advancements in technology that have impacted the notion of human. In this regard, the monstrous cosmos of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* challenges the traditional understanding of human and offers an insight into understanding the human condition in the technological evolution of the twenty-first century.

The narrative of *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* starts with the letters from Captain Robert Walton to her sister, Margaret Walton Saville, focusing on his

voyage to the North Pole to discover its mysteries and to become a famous explorer. The letters between the two reveal Robert Walton's thirst for knowledge and a yearning for companionship who can truly understand and appreciate his success during his journey. Walton's quest to surpass human limitation which is conveyed as the exploration of the North Pole as a place where no human has discovered any information relates to a transhumanist aspiration to transcendence beyond human limitations with the use of technology. In this light, Captain Walton's venture into the North Pole can be seen as an early representation of the transhumanist desire to surpass biological limitations of human capacities namely in the field of exploration and discovery as the North Pole is seen as a remote and isolated place away from human reach in "undiscovered solitudes" (2). While Walton and his sailors continue their cruise to the North Pole, they see a dog-driven sledge with an exceptionally large inhabitant on and the following day they come across a fragment of a large piece of ice carrying a nearly frozen man in a similar sledge. Upon rescuing the near-frozen man, Captain Walton and his crew discover that it is Victor Frankenstein who is tormented by his past deeds and the consequences of his endeavour for knowledge as the result of his creation, a monster. Captain Walton describes Victor Frankenstein through his letters to his sister as the following:

> When I appeared on deck, the master said, "Here is our captain, and he will not allow you to perish on the open sea." On perceiving me, the stranger addressed me in English, although with a foreign accent. "Before I come on board your vessel," said he, "will you have the kindness to inform me whither you are bound?" You may conceive my astonishment on hearing such a question addressed to me from a man on the brink of destruction, and to whom I should have supposed that my vessel would have been a resource which he would not have exchanged for the most precious wealth the earth can afford. I replied, however, that we were on a voyage of discovery towards the northern pole. [...] I never saw a more interesting creature: his eyes have generally an expression of wildness, and even madness; but there are moments when, if anyone performs an act of kindness towards him, or does him the most trifling service, his whole countenance is lighted up, as it were, with a beam of benevolence and sweetness that I never saw equalled. (9)

Following the introduction of Victor Frankenstein and his monster in the narrative, Captain Walton describes the presence of Victor Frankenstein and his monster, his selection of the words differs in the description of each and the perception of humanity and of the monstrosity are mostly based on their physical appearance. Walton's description encapsulates the tension between the ideals of human perfection and the posthumanist critique of these very same ideals. Victor is portrayed as a man in "wretched a condition" (10) he is also recognized as an impressive, kind and enormously cultivated

man as a reflection of the Enlightenment's ideal that values reason, education and benevolence. On the other hand, the monster is seen as "an inhabitant of some undiscovered island" (9) dehumanizing the monster and categorizing him as the ultimate other in this first encounter. From Walton's perception of Victor and the monster, it is understood that despite his physical condition, Victor is perceived within the framework of human. At the same time, the creature is defined solely by his physical appearance which defies the normative model of humanity and hence put outside the bounds of humanity. This dichotomy highlights a flaw in the highly anthropocentric Humanist residues in the Enlightenment period which provides a flawed perspective on human subjectivity that locates and distinguishes humanity within a narrow scope of physical and intellectual ideas that do not account for the diversity and complexity of human experience and existence. Regarding this problematic approach to human subjectivity, Edgar Landgraf claims the following in his *Posthumanism and the Enlightenment*:

> [...] with its belief in progress and the emphasis it puts on reason and rationality, the Enlightenment embraces (Western) advances in civilization at the expense of regard for other species; and by championing the "human spirit" – a trope that remains pervasive in popular culture, politics, and many corners of academia – the Enlightenment seemingly downplays or outright ignores the environmental, physiological, material, and technological conditions which undergird this spirit in the first place. It is in this sense that the Enlightenment appears especially apt to advocate an ideal of "the human" that, as Cary Wolfe puts it, is "achieved by escaping or repressing not just its animal origins in nature, the biological, and the evolutionary, but more generally by transcending the bonds of materiality and embodiment altogether. (124)

Landgraf proposes a critique of the Enlightenment's emphasis on progress, reason and rationality at the expense of other species as well as environmental factors although environmental factors do not respond to the appearance of Victor and the monster in this case. However, Landgraf stresses how the Enlightenment's 'human spirit' fails to observe the physiological, material and technological conditions that constitute the 'human spirit.' For this reason, the prevailing lens to look at the human is short-sighted. This perspective aligns with Walton's first analysis of Victor and the monster in which the Enlightenment's narrow scope of physical and intellectual ideas is challenged through the appearance of the monster who is stripped out of humanity due to his physical abnormality. This instance reveals the limitations and consequences of adhering to a rigid framework for understanding. Moreover, built on Walton's definition of Victor Frankenstein, it is palpable that Walton admires Victor Frankenstein and sees him as "the brother of [his] heart" (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 11) most probably because of the madness that they

mutually share regarding the destructive craving to go beyond the allowed limits of human capacities. While Captain Walton's desire to surpass human limitations in terms of exploration and discovery is evident, Victor Frankenstein's thirst for knowledge and desire to go beyond human limitations begins to unfold as the story progresses.

Aligning with Walton's initial insight into Victor Frankenstein, it is seen that Victor Frankenstein is indeed from one of the most distinguished families in Geneva, Switzerland. His family is described as a household of integrity and generosity that holds significant positions in the community and his parents have a passionate connection with their children as well as one another. Victor grows up with Elizabeth Lavenza, who is adopted into the Frankenstein household as a daughter, and gradually becomes a joy and inspiration for the entire family. Victor's character can be said to be the outcome of the warmth and closeness of the Frankenstein family. Victor also exhibits a strong curiosity and interest in learning. His initial education was unofficial and influenced by reading rare books from renowned scientists of the time, which fostered his interest in magic, alchemy, occult philosophy, and natural secrets. Despite the trends among modern scientists of his time, he admired the writings of old alchemists such as Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and Albertus Magnus. His studies stem from this early self-directed research, which inspired him to seek the secrets of nature and the essence of life itself to set humankind free from disease and death. During his time at the University of Ingolstadt, Victor's obsession with discovering the secret of life intensifies. Motivated by his desire to animate lifeless matter, he dedicates his life to research and experimentation and consequently, Victor isolates himself from friends and family to focus on "the deepest mysteries of creation" (28). His desire for knowledge pushes him into unexplored scientific areas as he investigates the mysteries of life, death and human physiology. He engages with innovative experiments, learns the secrets of creating life, becomes obsessed with constructing a living body, and begins assembling bones and other parts to work on his project. On this basis, Victor's rational and scientific inquiries reflect the Enlightenment's ideal, his fervent longing to "penetrate the secrets of nature" (21) and desire to "banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death" (22) can be seen as a reflection to augment the human capabilities to overcome "the physical and cognitive limitations of human life" with the technological opportunities of his time (Ezeani and Nweke 18). However, Victor Frankenstein initially

expected to animate a creature that is both strong and superior, yet he describes his creation as the following:

> How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips. The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 35)

Although Victor places too much faith in the Enlightenment ideals such as the pursuit of knowledge, and transcending the natural limits and rationality, it is evident that the outcome of his scientific endeavour yields horror, regret and repulsion instead. Although it is intended to be a model of human beauty and strength, his creation challenges the traditional norms that define the notion of human in several ways. Thus, these challenges of the established norms are always pregnant with various anxieties. Although monsters are universal, and emerge in different times, forms and shapes, examining these creatures reveals how temporal, geographic, bodily and technological boundaries that construct a culture become integrated into the creation of the monsters. Regarding the monsters as cultural constructions that challenge the traditional norms, Cohen posits the following:

> The monster is born only at this metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, and a place. The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy (ataractic or incendiary), giving them life and an uncanny independence. The monstrous body is pure culture. (4)

As claimed, the monster as a "cultural body" (4) encapsulates its time's fears, anxieties, and desires in Cohen's perspective. In this light, Frankenstein's monster is the anxieties of the nineteenth century that dwell between natural and artificial as well as alive and dead. The monster's creation as an existence constructed from various human parts such as "collected bones from charnel-houses" (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 33) and brought into life in a laboratory through scientific means illustrates a fundamental distinction between a natural and an artificial creation. This way the creation of the monster embodies a major challenge to the Romantic era's appreciation of nature as the embodiment of purity and authenticity because Frankenstein's act of creation represents a total deviation from the traditional understanding of gestation as a product of scientific experimentation that

bypasses the organic cycle of birth that defines what it means to be alive. Through its creation, the monster's technological journey places it in conflict with the natural world and connects it to the cultural anxieties of the nineteenth century, when the Industrial Revolution began to reshape societies and the natural setting in which people lived. This portrayal of the monster as a symbol of the predominant perspective on the forces of technology and science in the periods in question provides a critique of the uninhibited faith in scientific progress questioning the effects of such breakthroughs that violate the natural order of life. Moreover, the monster, not being born of a woman, highlights a radical disruption of the biological and social constructs of family and lineage. Because human identity is often intertwined with ancestry and biological heritage nevertheless the genesis of the monster disrupts the normative understanding of human identity, because if being alive is defined by birth, then the monster's scientific creation disqualifies him from being alive as the monster's condition is independent of a biological origin. This absence reflects the period's serious concerns about the possibility of science destroying the authenticity of the natural and the fundamental structures that hold societies together. So, the monster's existence as an outcome of a scientific process serves as a powerful metaphor for the outcome of technological progress implying not only its potential to transcend natural limitations but inevitably raising ontological dilemmas of the traditional norms that construct the notion of human. As such, Frankenstein's monster also actively challenges the concept of natural and artificial, necessitating a re-evaluation of what it means to be genuinely human in an age marked by technological innovations and scientific discoveries.

On the same basis, apart from presenting a conflict between the natural and the artificial, the monster's existence similarly challenges the distinction between life and death resonating with the anxieties and fears of the nineteenth century as explained by Mary Shelley in the preface of F*rankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*. Shelley explains the impact of the technological discoveries of her time as the following:

> Many and long were the conversations between Lord Byron and Shelley, to which I was a devout but nearly silent listener. During one of these, various philosophical doctrines were discussed, and among others the nature of the principle of life, and whether there was any probability of its ever being discovered and communicated. They talked of the experiments of Dr. Darwin, (I speak not of what the Doctor really did, or said that he did, but, as more to my purpose, of what was then spoken of as having been done by him,) who preserved a piece of vermicelli in a glass case, till by some extraordinary means it began to move with voluntary motion. Not thus, after all, would life be given. Perhaps a corpse would be re-

> animated; galvanism had given token of such things: perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and endued with vital warmth. (x)

Based on her contemplation and creation, the monster as the infusion of "a spark of being into a lifeless thing," (35) defies the dichotomic understanding of life and death by transcending the concept of death with scientific possibilities. By traversing the natural order from birth to death and from death to birth, Mary Shelley represents a critical violation of the natural order of life by addressing the potential consequences of humanity's overreach in manipulating life and ethical consideration in the pursuit of scientific knowledge and reflects broader cultural fears surrounding the finality of death and the unknown possibilities of reanimation as an inspiration to Luigi Galvani's galvanism experiments and Erasmus Darwin's research of the animation of frog legs. The monster's state—as a being neither fully alive nor truly dead—acts as a powerful metaphor for these new scientific discoveries, which are full of promise and potential ontological dilemmas. That is, the monster's existence as animated by the application of a scientific process to dead human parts provides not only a reflection on fears and anxieties of the nineteenth century but also distorts the boundaries between the dead and living suggesting a continuum instead of an opposition.

Regarding the categorical distinction of the monster, Cohen defines the notion of the monster in his *Monster Theory: Reading Culture* as the following:

> Because of its ontological liminality, the monster notoriously appears at times of crisis as a kind of third term that problematizes the clash of extremes—as "that which questions binary thinking and introduces a crisis." This power to evade and to undermine has coursed through the monster's blood from classical times, when despite all the attempts of Aristotle (and later Pliny, Augustine, and Isidore) to incorporate the monstrous races into a coherent epistemological system, the monster always escaped to return to its habitations at the margins of the world (a purely conceptual locus rather than a geographic one). Classical "wonder books" radically undermine the Aristotelian taxonomic system, for by refusing an easy compartmentalization of their monstrous contents, they demand a radical rethinking of boundary and normality. (6)

The mere presence of a monster creates destabilisation of definitional distinction, the breakdown of rigid, and conventional categories as they possess a variety of characteristics from different backgrounds and natures such as the intersection of natural/artificial and living/dead, hence he describes the monster as "the harbinger of category crisis" (6). By doing so the notion of the monster challenges and questions the lines of the systems that draw lines to separate their nature or existence from what is the abnormal, the human, the non-human, the animal, the natural and the supernatural. For

example, androids challenge the distinction between machine and human by embodying traits of both characteristics such as it is in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* These androids are made of organic matter and it is so hard to distinguish them from real people, only a bone marrow analysis can prove the difference. In another example, werewolves challenge the categorical distinction between animal and human as in Stephenie Meyer's *Twilight Saga* series as they can shapeshift into wolves at will highlighting the fluidity between human and animal. On this basis, monsters are frequently portrayed as residents in areas of activity not readily conforming to a category of normative boundaries hence their existence highlights in-between spaces existing outside of societal norms as both human and nonhuman. For example, in Braham Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Count Dracula combines human characteristics that are typically attributed to a human such as intelligence, sophistication and aristocracy with those of a supernatural entity. However, he also has supernatural powers surpassing human comprehension, such as hypnotising humans, controlling animals, shapeshifting, rapidly healing himself, and possessing superhuman agility and telekinesis. Because of these talents, he belongs to a complex realm of both human and non-human characteristics, which makes his classification particularly challenging. The Victorian conception of what it is to be human, which has its basis in the corporeal limitations of human mortality and physical boundaries, is, thus, challenged by Dracula's existence. In this situation, his presence offers a figure that transcends the human condition by distorting the categorisation between human and nonhuman and the natural laws governing corporeal existence.

Similarly, in *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, the monster transcends the basic concepts of human and nonhuman as “an assemblage of human flesh and body parts” (Inhye 188) because his very nature challenges the normative structure of the binary understanding that constructs the notion of human as well as defiance of the natural laws that govern his corporeal existence with its creation. As composed of the human body parts, and yet lacking a natural creation, the monster exists in a liminal space that defies easy classification within these binary categories. Its physical form, that is in a form of human size and shape, implies a physical similarity to human body. Nevertheless, the manner of its creation and physical existence as derived from different bodies place the monster outside the realm of a natural human existence. Based on this claim, the

monster's corporeal existence creates "a category crisis" (McCormack 266) in how human and nonhuman are defined and, thus, understood, because the monster's in-betweenness as a nonhuman existence of human parts challenges the traditional understanding of human as a combination of different binary states, suggesting a consistency between these distinct categories rather than a dichotomy. Expanding on this concept, this blurring of boundaries of human and nonhuman further leads to a deeper exploration of the anthropocentric understanding of the human of the nineteenth century.

Humans have been seen as the pinnacle of evolution on account of their intellectual capabilities. However, the physical superiority of the monster requires a reassessment of the anthropocentric perspective of human beings as it metaphorically features future possibilities to transcend beyond the traditional capabilities of human beings as a critical reflection on the evolving notion of humanity. For example, the monster with its exceptional physical capabilities and "gigantic stature" (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 32) serves as a foundational attribute that enables him to travel through cold and harsh weather conditions without suffering from frostbite or hypothermia. It displays exceptional speed and stamina (156) as a testament to his physical vigour and his corporeal capabilities invite a deeper contemplation about the limits of human physiology and surpassing of these limits. In the same vein, the monster also has "natural human feelings and affections" (Mousley 160) such as learning human emotions and language through social interactions by observing the De Lacey family (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 77-102) and expressing complex emotions such as longing for companionship and acceptance, its deep command of language and emotions demonstrates its cognitive abilities that question the traditional boundaries that are uniquely attributed to humans. Regarding this condition, the monster states:

> As I read, however, I applied much personally to my own feelings and condition. I found myself similar yet at the same time strangely unlike to the beings concerning whom I read and to whose conversation I was a listener. I sympathized with and partly understood them, but I was unformed in mind; I was dependent on none and related to none. 'The path of my departure was free,' and there was none to lament my annihilation. My person was hideous and my stature gigantic. What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them. (93)

In the monster's contemplation of its condition, his philosophical questioning demonstrates a complex level of linguistics competence that requires a sophisticated command of language associated with cognitive functions and intellectual capacity. His

reflections on the books including John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, a volume of *Plutarch's Lives*, and Goethe's *The Sorrows of Werther* show his ability to understand even the abstract concepts such as good and evil, isolation and freedom, and his otherness as the monster finds itself "similar yet at the same time strangely unlike" (93) to the characters of the narratives as well as the community that it tries to blend in. This evokes an uncanny feeling, as it highlights the unsettling nature of being familiar yet fundamentally different, blurring the lines between the known and the unknown. Given that the monster learns to speak and read in a short period, this development highlights his unique capacity for intellectual competence and cognitive flexibility. Besides, his philosophical and ontological inquiries such as "Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination?" (93) are not only rhetorical questions but also point out the monster's sophisticated understanding of social and emotional conundrum of its "posthuman condition" (Erle and Hendry 4). These queries indicate a level of philosophical, existentialist and ontological involvement. However, the monster is isolated, misunderstood, socially and emotionally ostracized despite its advanced language skills and cognitive talents. In this perspective, the monster's introspective questions are a poignant example of its posthuman state emphasizing its unique position between human experience and otherness in terms of identity and acceptance. Thus, the monster's condition profoundly reflects his duality as neither entirely human nor completely nonhuman, hence marking the monster as a new paradigm of existence that blurs the boundaries between human and nonhuman. This perspective challenges the foundational distinctions that have ontologically constructed the notion of the human hence creating a "posthuman quandary" (Ağın Dönmez 108) that questions the relationship and distinction between the human and nonhuman. In this sense, by distorting the notion of human as a product of scientific and technological intervention, Frankenstein's monster emerges as a formative force that invites a rethinking of not only traditional norms but also human subjectivity.

Under the influence of a transhumanist aspiration, Victor transcends the conventional boundaries of the natural order, and the outcome of his transgression is often referred to as a monster in the narrative. Not giving a name to the monster, Victor strips his creation out of human subjectivity and the condition of the monster exemplifies a concept of liminality —a state of being in-between— "lacking any form of established

identity and tradition" from a posthumanist perspective (Beghetto 40). In anthropology and psychology, liminality connotates "transitions between organized structures of any kind" (Stenner 1) and denotes a transformative phase between two distinct states. In this instance, the presence of the monster, neither fully human nor completely nonhuman, embodies "a liminal space" (Prabhakar 76) and the monster emerges as a liminal entity that can be characterized by the convergence of human and nonhuman categorizations. In this perspective, the monster with its "unearthly ugliness" (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 69) is put in a "posthuman state" (Paul 24) due to his appearance that defies society's understanding of the perfect human. Regarding the condition of the monster, its presence exemplifies a posthuman condition, challenging traditional views on including life, identity, and the boundaries between the human and the non-human underscoring the evolving nature of the human condition in a technologically changing world.

Rosi Braidotti offers a broader understanding of human subjectivity focusing on the symbiotic relationship between humans and technology. She claims that the posthuman state, which was in its embryonic stage yet in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, characterised by a transgressive state where an entity is "no longer an animal but not yet fully a machine" (*The Posthuman* 74) represents the "quintessential posthuman condition," (Prabhakar 76) in the narrative, a monster existing beyond the traditional understanding of human subject. In her analysis regarding the notions of human to non-human entities, her ideas overlap the condition of Victor Frankenstein's monster, which can be seen as a predecessor to posthuman subjects challenging the boundaries of life, identity and creation. Braidotti further argues that modern human identity is a posthuman "hybridization" (*The Posthuman* 184) in the twenty-first century that integrates with technology. By doing so, she erodes the distinction between human and nonhuman by adopting a non-anthropocentric approach to subjectivity in a "form of interconnectedness, a vital relationship that links one with other, multiple forces" (137). In Braidotti's conceptualization of the posthuman, it can be inferred that "an enlarged sense of interconnection between self and others, including the non-human others" (*Posthuman Knowledge* 64) blurring the distinctions between human and nonhuman. On this basis, Frankenstein's creature serves also as a token of posthuman hybridity, where its existence is not just an aberration but an indicator of a broader ontological shift in which human and nonhuman are indistinguishably linked. Due to this intrinsic

connection, the monster presents an embodiment of Braidotti's concept of the "nomadic subject" in her *Transpositions: On Nomadic Ethics* referring to the concept of existence that is a concept that challenges traditional, essentialist views of identity that are tied to specific categories like gender, race, or nationality and a notion that "can open itself to new concepts of being" (Baştürk 37). So, Frankenstein's monster emerges not just as a monster, but as a harbinger of a complex understanding of life that transcends the human-nonhuman division. This perspective also enriches the understanding towards broader discussions on "the kind of anxiety we feel toward the posthuman reality" (Inhye 199). In this context, merging the posthuman condition of the monster and its monstrous nature offers a nuanced way to explore how the notion of the monster serves as a metaphor for the evolving nature of human, as a representation of "the most extreme personified point of unfamiliarity" for human understanding (Asma 26).

Introducing such distortions to the understanding of the conventional norms brings unpredictable consequences such as the disruption of the natural order, identity crisis and blurring boundaries between human and nonhuman. Thus, Victor Frankenstein's monster embodies a moment of cultural and scientific transition reflecting the "cultural moment" (Cohen 4) of grappling with the ramifications of scientific possibilities of the era. In this vein, the very nature of the monster disrupts the traditional boundaries that construct the notion of human. Hence, the creature requires a re-evaluation of what it means to be human by staying outside the established frameworks in an era in which existence can be synthetically produced indicating "an ontological liminality" (6) that arises when the traditional categories that define humanity are destabilized.

From the posthumanist perspective, a similar liminality can be seen as a concern surrounding the emergence of artificial intelligence reflecting the monster's role in questioning the human identity heralding a similar cultural and scientific transition that destabilises the traditional norms to define human in the twenty-first century. Regarding this claim, Chenyang Li posits the following in his article *The Artificial Intelligence Challenge and the End of Humanity*:

> The AI challenge in intelligence is not merely a matter about intelligence levels. Unlike all other evolved natural species that have been compared with humanity, AI technology is not a natural occurrence, and it can be adjusted expeditiously to match human capacities. [...] The rise of AI technology has significantly reduced any distance between the human and

> non-human world. The fluidity of AI technology has made any attempted claim on human distinctiveness increasingly implausible, if not utterly impossible. Unlike our compared parties in nature, AI beings can be "customized to order," so to speak. Anything that has been considered special and unique about humanity can be duplicated in AI technology. (35)

According to Li, Artificial Intelligence, which can mimic human-like abilities such as decision-making and thought processes, challenges our traditional understanding related to the notion of being human. In this regard, it is palpable that the distinction between a human and a non-human is fundamentally distorted as Artificial intelligence continues to evolve (Ferrando, *The Posthuman* 88-90). This incident resonates with the concerns of the monster in *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* and similarly causes a quandary in the notion of human identity by blurring distinctions between human and non-human capabilities and characteristics. A pertinent example that illustrates this liminality can be given from Tesla's autonomous car, *Tesla Autopilot,* which operates with an AI system. As investigated by Ingle and Phute, in their article *Tesla Autopilot: Semi Autonomous Driving, an Uptick for Future Autonomy,* Tesla's *Autopilot* relies on a combination of cameras, radars and ultrasonic devices to gather real-time data and process this data to generate 3D representations of the environment by identifying objects such as vehicles, pedestrians, lanes and traffic signs. By analysing the natural environment, Tesla's autonomous driving system makes decisions and executes driving actions such as changing lanes, adjusting speed, and identifying signs and obstacles. While AI takes more responsibilities during a drive, this instance prompts a reassessment of being a driver and driving experience as well as legal and ethical responsibilities that are traditionally associated with humans. Regarding the legal and ethical reconsideration of the AI, Rosi Braidotti states the following:

> As [robots] become smarter and more widespread, autonomous machines are bound to make life-or-death decisions and thus assume agency. Whether this high degree of autonomy, however, results in moral decision making is at best an open question. Against claims to the in-built moral intentionality of the technology, I would claim that it is normatively neutral. Take some burning issues, such as: should an unmanned flying vehicle, also known as a drone, fire on a house where a target is known to be hiding, which also shelters civilians? Should robots involved in disaster relief tell people the truth about their conditions, thus causing panic and pain? Such questions lead to the fi eld of 'machine ethics', which aims to give machines the ability to make such choices appropriately, in other words, to tell right from wrong. And who is to decide? (*The Posthuman* 44)

Aligning with her concerns, if *Tesla Autopilot* has to make an ethical decision to save its driver but must harm a motorbike rider, determining legal responsibility becomes complicated. Who/what will be legally responsible for this action? That is, the integration

of technologies of the twenty-first century has created a new ground for such cultural criticism in society, reflecting a similar concern, which was governed by the emergence of Frankenstein's monster. Just as Frankenstein's monster culturally questions the notion of human with its presence, the same nuance is seen in the role of artificial intelligence which challenges experiences and attributes traditionally exclusive to humans, thus preserving the same critical inquiry in the corresponding era as a cultural reflection of the monster.

Expanding on the same concern, Victor Frankenstein's monster in Shelley's novel performs independent actions, violates and transcends the controlling lines of its creator as exemplified in the novel when the monster causes the deaths of five individuals. The death of William Frankenstein, Victor Frankenstein's youngest brother, depicts the monstrous creature's first act of vengeance against its creator whom he holds responsible for his condition. Next, the monster kills Henry Clerval, Victor Frankenstein's closest friend and Elizabeth Lavenza, his bride, on their wedding night which is the most direct message of the monster's retribution. The monster also indirectly causes the deaths of Justine Moritz and Alphonso Frankenstein. First, Justine is wrongfully executed for the murder of William due to a crime instigated by the monster, and the death of Alphonso Frankenstein, Victor's father, is caused by the overwhelming grief and stress caused by the successive tragedies that happen to his family. By murdering directly or indirectly five individuals, the monster aims to harm Victor with a similar misery befell to itself. These events illustrate how the creature's actions disrupt the social order and impact innocent lives, highlighting its autonomy and ability to act beyond the constraints set by its creator, Victor Frankenstein although it was intended to be a model of human beauty and strength. Similarly, artificial intelligence's learning algorithms can develop in unexpected ways leading to ethical and security issues such as going beyond the controlled actions. This perspective casts Artificial Intelligence as a modern monster that can be an "uncontrolled, and unpredictable process of evolution" (Tirosh-Samuelson 200) akin to the product of technology that is Frankenstein's monster. This aspect of the monster that goes beyond the designated premises can be given in the example of Microsoft's friendly AI chatbot named *Tay* which was designated to learn to talk like a typical teenager with real people on social platforms such as X. It was an experimental machine learning software aimed at understanding more about human understanding by

talking with real people and hence interacting with users on social platforms but the experiment quickly descended into chaos and racist epithets as it started posting politically provocative and offensive comments on Twitter, causing Microsoft to shut it down only 16 hours after its launch (Zemčík 362).

In both examples, *Tay* the chatbot and the monster of Victor Frankenstein, a similar incident regarding the emergence of a monster is observed. The monster of Victor Frankenstein was intended to be a human model and a token of human strength and beauty. However, as *Tay* the chatbot having interacted with people on the internet is transformed into a racist and sexist chatbot and soon after its launch, similar to in the initial creation of the monster, Victor Frankenstein claims about his creation as: "I had selected his features as beautiful," (Shelley, *Frankenstein* 35) but as the story progresses it is seen that his experiment turns out to be catastrophic. Regarding its first creation, Victor Frankenstein initially refers to it as "a creature" (14), and yet, as the story progresses it is defined as "it" as in the sentence "It breathed hard" (43). As the story advances, the creature is increasingly depicted with terms such as "the wretch," (44) and then subsequently highlighted through the narrative with alternating descriptors such as a "filthy daemon," (61) "vile insect" (83) and "abhorred devil" (85). Regardless of its subjective identity, it is ascribed with various derogatory adjectives by its creator and then by society. However, there is a contrast between the creature's understanding of itself and the labels attributed to it by its creator as depicted below:

> Remember, that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous. (70)

In this context, the subjective identity of the monster is established by and constructed upon the name that is given to it by society. Although the monster is not initially created in this way, it is transformed -negatively- by its creator and the society. The transformation process of the creature towards monstrosity is triggered by its nature that fails to conform human category physically and hence positioned it as "the ultimate other" (Karpuzov 111) that does not fit into any category, hence monstrous. This leads to its characterization and interpretation as the opposite of what is socially accepted in the nineteenth century and correspondingly embodies what is feared, unknown and repressed becoming a counterpoint to the notion of human. Thus, this notion brings some questions

regarding its cultural existence: What constitutes the monster? Is the monster inherently monstrous or is it made by its experiences? If the monster was not born as a monster but was turned into one, then the true monsters are Victor Frankenstein and the society that excludes him. Regarding the emergence of *Tay* Chatbot and Victor Frankenstein's monster, although they are in different eras, they have faced similar problems. *Tay* the chatbot was intended to entertain people as a language model functioning within an artificial intelligence system yet turned into a being with racist, sexist and offensive slurs, while the monster of Frankenstein was intended to be a human beauty and turned into a monster. In this context, the historical transformation of the monster presents a significant critique of the creature as a cultural concept, specifically as a reflection of human and its evolution through technology. In this respect, just like Frankenstein's monster, it is possible to see technology as a figure of monstrosity in the twenty-first century as it possesses similar cultural concerns that threaten the traditional norms and experiences that build the notion of human. Built on this light, Victor's narrative also serves as an allegory to the dangers of an unchecked ambition for technological advancement emphasising the need for moral and ethical considerations making the narrative resonate with the corresponding concerns in any era.

Aligning with the monster's timeless nature, Cohen claims that the "monster always escapes" (Cohen 4) as they are cultural, social, or existential anxieties, representations of the corresponding era. In this light, Koenig-Woodyard, Nanayakkaran and Khatri claim that:

> Monstrousness thwarts efforts to capture, render, and utter it in discourses, categories, curricula, anthologies, and institutions. It is elusive epistemologically, just as it is allusive. It returns and escapes, and as it makes continuous appearances in different textual bodies and terrains. (4)

In this regard, as cultures and societies evolve, the forms and narratives of the monster also evolve. In this regard, this aspect of the monster escapes from definitive eradication as these fears and anxieties persist and change over time. This nature of the monster emphasizes it as an elusive concept that highlights its potential to evolve, adapt and reappear in a different form and context. Regarding Shelley's narrative, monster, similar anxieties can be seen in technological advancements such as genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, and other types of technology that influence the notion of human.

In this light, the narrative of the monster travels from the nineteenth century onwards and reappears in different forms in different places and different areas.

As mentioned, Shelley's narrative highlights the critical need for ethical and moral considerations as an outcome of the scientific and technological intervention to the notion of human as the consequences of Victor's unstrained ambition result in catastrophic outcomes echoing the modern concerns regarding the emergence and rapid advance of technologies in the twenty-first century. This perspective aligns with the posthumanist and transhumanist perspectives arguing that the boundary between the human and non-human is blurred as the technology integrates more into human life in this historical context. Because of the implementation of technology, technological developments of the twenty-first century pose fundamental challenges to human nature and identity. On this basis, technological advancements complicate our ability to delineate "the boundary between what is human and what is not" (Anderson 536) as the notion of human is not seen as static but "has always been in the process of becoming something else" (545). As modern technologies have evolved from simple mechanical devices to sophisticated systems, the human body is inevitably engineered into a potentially modifiable vessel. In this perspective, similar to the monster's "patchwork nature" (Firenze 80) the human body is a composite construct.

In contrast to Mary Shelley's period, technological advancements in the twenty-first century have expanded beyond external devices to integrate directly within the human body, thereby challenging the similar and same norms that have been explored by the Frankenstein's monster. However, while Shelley's narrative does not explicitly discuss these modern technologies of the twenty-first century, it provides a timeless framework for understanding the quandaries associated with the use of technology and anticipates the existential questions they pose regarding the understanding of being human. In this perspective, just as Victor Frankenstein's scientific endeavour resulted in unintended and tragic outcomes, modern technological advancements also pose significant challenges, for instance, the development of genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, and neural implants raises questions about the boundaries of human identity and the potential consequences of altering human nature. These technological advancements will be discussed in detail in the next chapter of this thesis, focusing on Jeanette Winterson's

Frankissstein: A Love Story where their implications for human identity are more directly examined.

CHAPTER II

POSTHUMAN SUBJECTIVITY AND MONSTROSITY IN JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *FRANKISSSTEIN: A LOVE STORY*

Jeanette Winterson, who was born on August 27, 1959, in Manchester is a prominent figure in contemporary British literature. Her childhood, influenced by the strict Pentecostal Evangelical teachings of her adoptive parents in Accrington in the Hyndburn borough of Lancashire, England, profoundly shaped her narrative style and thematic exploration (Onega 3). Her devout childhood, contrasted with her personal struggle and eventual rebellion following her first lesbian relationship at fifteen, hastened her departure from her familial and spiritual confines (Makinen 1). Winterson's perseverance, built with her early life challenges and struggles, led her from various roles, such as ice cream vendor and a hospital worker, to academic success at St. Catherine's College at the University of Oxford, where she graduated with a BA in English in 1981 (Onega 5). Following her graduation, her journey into literature started in 1985 in London and culminated with the publication of her novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* in 1985 winning the Whitbread Best First Novel Award. This success laid the foundation for her future works characterising his exploration of gender, sexuality, and identity which are also deeply interwoven in her prominent work of *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (Hamzah-Osbourne 128).

Interestingly, both praise and controversy have characterised Winterson's career. Her novel *Written on the Body* gained various responses from public acclaim, and critics have frequently tried to place Winterson's writing in the framework of modern literature particularly focusing on the definition of subjectivity. In this respect, Winterson is placed within a "postmodernist trend" (Palmer 181), alongside Margaret Atwood and Angela Carter, noting her pioneering style and approach to themes of "diversity of gendered issues and of sexuality-inflected concerns" (Preda 23). These themes also resonate with a pivotal role in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, where she challenges conventional narrative frameworks in a posthuman society as Winterson's exploration of gender, sexuality and identity in earlier works lays a foundational context for understanding how she extends on these themes in *Frankenstein: A Love Story* questioning the boundaries of humanity and technology that resonate with the same thematic concerns.

In *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, Jeanette Winterson navigates through a narrative journey that combines historical chronicles of modern reinterpretation of Mary Shelley's foundational novel, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* and futuristic foresight of a posthuman world. Within this hybrid literary sphere, Winterson investigates the ontological quandaries related to artificial intelligence, the essence of consciousness, and the demarcation of human identity, thereby contributing considerably to the discourse on posthuman monstrosities. Winterson navigates these themes through a dual narrative structure: one that recounts the story of Mary Shelley's creation of *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* during the summer of 1816 in Geneve and the other set in a futuristic Britain, where advancements in artificial intelligence and robotics are rapidly shaping the essence of what human is.

Frankissstein: A Love Story oscillates between the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries, illustrating changing similarities and differences on the persistent human quest to transcend biological limitations. Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, in this respect, is not only an exploration of historical context from *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, but also offers a glimpse into a transhumanist future. Apart from this historical and locational duality that the story oscillates between, Winterson, paying an homage to Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* as well as expanding on its themes, portrays the ethical dilemmas of technological progress, gender fluidity, and the changing understanding of what it means to be human in a posthuman world.

Winterson starts *Frankissstein: A Love Story* by re-envisioning the story of Mary Shelley during her visit to Lake Geneva in 1816. Winterson's narrative portrays Mary Shelley, her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, Claire Clairmont, her stepsister, Claire's lover Lord Byron, and Polidori, his physician focusing on their aspirations, goals, ideologies, and philosophies. This historical background, which revolves around the origins of *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* and the life of Mary Shelley, is carefully interwoven within the second section with a corresponding story that takes place in the twenty-first century and the futuristic version of this narrative centres on Ry Shelley, a transgender doctor and Mary Shelley's modern reincarnation. Following Ry Shelley, Victor Stein is introduced, as a passionate and imaginative AI researcher, while his objectives resemble those of his namesake in Shelley's original work *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*. Victor's captivation with surpassing the constraints of the human

body, regarding "the body as a trap for the mind" (Ayyıldız 35) reflects his belief that human consciousness can achieve greater potential when liberated from its physical limitations. This perspective emphasizes his pursuit of creating life through synthetic methods, such as advanced robotics and artificial intelligence, which not only echoes the traditional storyline but also drives the tale into future regions of potential.

Building on the narrative's exploration of ethical choices in a technologically advanced future, Ry Shelley's visit to Tec-X-Po on robotics in Memphis, Tennessee to interview with Ron Lord, the owner of a cutting-edge sex-doll enterprise, introduces the modern counterpart Claire who is a hostess at the Tec-X-Po. During this visit to the robotic expo, Ry Shelley and the contemporary Claire spark an interesting debate encapsulating a key theme which is relevant to the investigation of transhumanism.

> You're a doctor?
>
> I am. I'm here to consider how robots will affect our mental and physical health. -That is a good question, Dr Shelley. And let's not forget the Soul.
>
> I'm not sure that's my area …
>
> We all have a Soul. Hallelujah. (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 24)

The initial dialogue provides an interesting example of the transhumanist pursuit, particularly in relation to the merger of technology and human capacities and the presence of a medical doctor at a robotic expo show could seem like a surprising coincidence while as the human body and robotics can be perceived as belonging to entirely different domains. However, this coincidence indicates the blurred corporeal boundaries between the human and the machine in contemporary society as the potential of current biotechnology lies in its ability to modify "inherent human nature" (Shaojing 48). For instance, Fukuyama interprets this current will lead us to set "the posthuman stage of history" (19). A doctor researching the effects of robots on human health poses important inquiries on the potential modifications in human capabilities that technology can bring about. Thus, this scenario highlights the capacity of robotic and artificial intelligence research to transcend beyond the boundaries of the human realm, exemplifying a core concept of transhumanism: the aspiration to "overcome fundamental human limitations" (Bostrom, *Transhumanism and the Body* 1) and to "improv[e] the human condition" (4) through technological assistance.

Discussions on the nature of identity and identity crises is also one of the pivotal discussions in Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story*. For instance, the conversation with Claire, Ry Shelley considers the concept of having multiple selves and identities simultaneously. She primarily makes her thoughts focus on the intricate matter of identity and the possible changes creates in a highly evolved technological society.

> My mind idled around the difference between the desire for life without end and desire for more than one life, that is, more than one life, but lived simultaneously. I could be me and me too. If I could make copies of myself – upload my mind and 3D-print my body, then one Ry could be in Graceland, another Ry at the shrine of Martin Luther King, a third Ry busking the Blues in Beale Street. Later, all my selves could meet, share the day, and reassemble into the original self I like to believe is me. (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 27)

Ry Shelley's anticipation of creating multiple selves of oneself goes beyond being just a futuristic fantasy and firmly aligns with the objectives of Transhumanism, which aims to "improve [the self's] physical and intellectual faculties" (Adorno 42). The concept of self-replication heralds a notable deviation from the traditional focus on extending lifespan. Instead, it emphasizes a desire for an extensive spectrum of experiences and identities facilitated by technological advancements. This emphasis on self-replication is the foundation of the transhumanist movement, which echoes "the ancient desire to improve the human condition" (Mendz and Cook 106). Furthermore, each copy of Ry, although they are the same person, will generate distinctive memories and experiences as a result of its many encounters and locations. This emphasis highlights the transformational notion of one's identity in a technologically interconnected world where digital connectivity and virtual presence enable simultaneous existence across diverse cultural and geographical contexts. Ry's copies actively participate in various cultural encounters by visiting significant locations, demonstrating a posthumanist appreciation for the amalgamation of many cultures and the breaking down of conventional boundaries. Thus, *Frankissstein: A Love Story* invites an important inquiry concerning the essence of consciousness and the possibility of uploading the mind which is a "pre-requisite for digital immortality" (Pentaris 37) as described through the concept of having multiple selves and identities simultaneously.

The notion of identity and its connection to personal uniqueness has been a subject of significant discussion in both the humanities and biological sciences (Hall and Du Gay; Clarke; Erikson) and in colloquial discourse, the notion of identity frequently connotes the attributes and qualities that render a unique and discernible notion from other people.

However, in an advanced technological milieu where advanced technology allows for the duplication or digitization of consciousness, inquiries on the fundamental nature of individual identity grow ever intricate and make the notion of identity transition from static into a more fluid notion (Wiese et al. 46). In this framework, the concept of Ry, dispersing into different duplicates and then being able to encounter them and reconstitute into the authentic self raises thought-provoking inquiries on the nature of the self in a reality where one's awareness and physical existence may be replicated and dispersed. For instance, such inquiries can delve into whether the personal identity remains intact across digital copies, how memories and experiences contribute to one's authentic self and the ethical implications of creating replicated versions of oneself. These questions provoke reflection on the stability of identity in a reality where awareness and physical existence can be replicated and dispersed challenging the traditional understanding of what it means to be a human with a coherent and continuous self. In this context, according to Francesca Ferrando;

> Posthumanism addresses the existential question 'who am I' in conjunction with other related questions, such as 'what am I' and 'where and when are we?' (Ferrando, 'Posthumanism' 168)

Ry's condition questions conventional understandings of identity as unified and uninterrupted, therefore allowing the exploration of the self as flexible, diverse, and dispersed across many physical or digital manifestations. Thus, with the emergence of technology that allows for the replication or "cyber consciousness" (Huberman 53) —the state of consciousness existing within digital or technological mediums— the notion of identity becomes a more intricate idea and poses substantial inquiries: If consciousness can be replicated, can each duplicate retain the original identity, or do they develop into separate identities? How does the experience of identity differ between various digital and physical domains? The concept of a single, continuous identity is called into question, allowing for the existence of several, simultaneous identities. That is, if consciousness can exist independently from the physical body, what implications does this have for the conventional concept of body-mind dualism? This situation corresponds to the principles of posthumanism, which promotes a revaluation of the meaning of 'human' beyond its existing biological constraints. In this situation, identity transcends the corporeal and psychological border of the self being no longer a mirror of them, and becomes a flexible construct that may manifest itself in various states and forms. The flexibility of identity

has the potential to give rise to novel modes of social engagement and self-conception, and even raises pertinent questions about legality and ethics such as the rights and responsibilities of the digitally replicated identities in legal contexts. This dynamic nature of identity in a highly technological future prompts a reassessment of notions such as individual accountability, entitlements, and the essence of interpersonal connections. Due to the potential for multiple identities and replications, the traditional ideas of personal responsibility and accountability may need to redefine who is responsible for actions. Similarly, the concept of entitlements could expand more beyond physical presence digital manifestations of identity and raises issues about rights to privacy and ownership of digital memories. Besides, in a world where identities can exist within physical and digital forms, the essence of interpersonal connections may evolve and this evolution can challenge the traditional understanding of intimacy, trust and relational authenticity. Besides, in a world where technology enables the replication or digitalization of consciousness, the notion of identity no longer remains as a static concept. Instead, it transforms into a fluid and complex concept, giving rise to novel philosophical, ethical, and practical dilemmas. Thus, the future of human identity, existence, and encounters in a time when the distinctions between biological and technological, authentic and replicated, individual and multiple, are becoming more indistinct.

In this context, *Frankissstein: A Love Story* aligns with Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's notion of monsters, wherein robots might be seen as modern manifestations of the ‘monstrous.’ They symbolize the anxieties and doubts inside the society, namely concerning the moral consequences of technological progress that question the established ideas about existence and consciousness. So, Winterson's investigation provides a discerning viewpoint not only on the fundamental nature of being alive but also on the changing perception of human existence that is characterized by technical advancements. The convergence of religious ethics, technological progress, and the conception of novel life forms enhance the discussion on posthuman and transhuman identities. This convergence also offers a contemporary reconsideration of monstrosity, as the creation of lifelike robots contrasts with Claire's religious understanding of creation, contributing to a contemporary reconsideration of monstrosity within the discourse on posthuman and transhuman identities.

Another encounter between Ry Shelley and a woman seeking an "Intelligent Vibrator" (27) offers a unique instance that encapsulates the key aspects of the integration of technology into the privacy of human life. The concept of "teledildonics" (30) is a prime example of transhumanist ideals pervading everyday life. Transhumanism, with its focus on "enhancing the human condition and the human organism opened up by the advancement of technology" (Bostrom, "Transhumanist Values" 3) is vividly represented here through the idea of a vibrator equipped with a camera and remote control, facilitating sexual experiences across distances. This technological advancement not only extends human physical capabilities but also alters the traditional understanding of intimacy and sexual intercourse. The ability to engage in sex-play with partners in separate locations, which was made possible by such devices, challenges and expands the conventional boundaries of human sexual experience. This aligns with transhumanist objectives to "overcome human limitations and weaknesses" (3) and redefine human experiences through technology.

Moreover, the incident of the woman inadvertently sharing intimate images on her Facebook page touches upon posthumanist concerns regarding the intersection of technology, identity, and privacy. In a posthuman world, where technology becomes an integral part of human existence, the lines between the public and private spheres become increasingly blurred. This fictional scenario illustrates how technological advancements can inadvertently lead to privacy infringements, raising questions about autonomy, consent, and control in a digitally interconnected world. The attempts to merge human's innate biological abilities with technological capabilities can be interpreted as the reflection of posthumanist exploration of "the co-evolution of humans and technology" (Sharon 36). The interaction of human biology and technology entails the societal and ethical implications of technological advancements. The woman's urgent situation, stemming from the unintended consequences of using an advanced sexual device, underscores the need for a deeper understanding and responsible use of technology. It reflects a broader concern in both transhumanism and posthumanism about the implications of rapidly advancing technologies on human behaviour, relationships, and societal norms as it also invites readers to contemplate the practical, ethical, and existential impacts of integrating advanced technologies into the most intimate aspects of

human life. It serves as a poignant reminder of the transformative potential of technology, while also cautioning against its unprecedented consequences.

During Ry Shelley's visit to the expo, Winterson introduces the character Ron Lord as an entrepreneur and an expert in sexual robots. Ron Lord, who is associated with the historic figure of Lord Byron in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus, is re-interpreted by Winterson as a specialist in sexbots to satirically connotate the commercialization of human relationships and sexuality in a technological age. Ron Lord's XX-bots are complex and technologically sophisticated devices which are specially designed to mimic the human body, with a range of adjustable physical attributes such as hair and eye colour, as well as a wide variety of clothing choices (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 33). These robots can fold to various positions to enhance the experience of sexual interaction and to enable convenient storage and transit for the user. They are also equipped with voice response capabilities for verbal interactions with the users and heating devices to replicate the warmth of the human body, which accords with their humanlike sensation. There are also rental models of XXbots. For the maintenance and hygiene of these models, XXbots can undergo extensive cleaning and sanitation procedures after each use, guaranteeing a hygienic experience for every user. This technology aims to provide users with a lifelike and comfortable interaction, blending advanced robotics with practical considerations of cleanliness and usability in contemporary contexts.

Ron Lord's creation XXbots explicitly indicates that these robots are built to satisfy sexual desires as well as to offer a kind of social and emotional interaction for the user. The simplicity behind XXbots, humorously referred to as "Lego for adults" (32) is the reduction of intricate human interactions into merely mechanical construction. In this depiction, Ron Lord's enterprise disrupts conventional ideas of intimacy and emotional connection, and this raises concerns about the ethical and cultural consequences of reducing human relationships and sexuality to mere technology concepts. Thus, the emergence of XXbots questions the ethical, practical, and existential effects of advanced technologies in private aspects of human life as a reminder of how the transformative power of technology can penetrate human life as a representation of a transhumanist vision where sexual and social experiences are extended and enhanced through technology to "refine our emotional experiences" in the private sphere of human life

(Bostrom, "Transhumanist Values" 4). Likewise, this implication also questions the concept of the unique "human essence" and emphasizes how technology is "completely redefining what it means to be human" (Elkins 17). By imitating human interaction, behaviour and appearance, XX-bots obscure the demarcation between human and machine, exemplifying a posthuman state in which the notion of human is "not as static notion, but as a dynamic one" (Nel 2) and interconnected with technology (Yanar 1350). However, this condition gives rise to various ethical and ontological inquiries regarding the essence of humanity, as sexuality and companionship can be artificially replicated and commercialized with the means of technological advancements. Regarding this challenge, N. Katherine Hayles states the following in her *How We Become Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*:

> What the Turing test proves is that the overlay between the enacted and the represented bodies is no longer a natural inevitability but a contingent production, mediated by a technology that has become so entwined with the production of identity that it can no longer meaningfully be separated from the human subject. (xiii)

According to Hayles, the Turing Test marks the beginning of the computer era by eliminating the concept of physical presence and reframing intelligence as the manipulation of symbols (xi). This aligns with the theme where Ron Lord's XX-bots, which possess advanced capabilities in imitating human appearance and behaviour, symbolize a transition from physical human experiences to experiences facilitated by technology. The sexbots demonstrate the notion that robots can imitate human attributes such as intellect and emotional reactions, hence questioning the prevalent belief that human intelligence is intrinsically linked to our physical and embodied existence.

The notion of the cyborg, which plays a major role in Hayles' *How We Became Posthuman*, is also reflected in Ron Lord's creation of sexbots. The XX-bots challenge the distinction between humans and robots, indicating a posthuman condition in which human and technology are intricately interconnected. This aligns with Hayles' concept of the cyborg as a merger of machinery and human, a creature in which technology is so intricately intertwined with the human being that it becomes an inherent component of one's personality. So, the concept of sexbots, which raises questions about the fundamental nature of humanity resonates with Hayles' apprehensions over the consequences of technology that imitates human capabilities. Moreover, the emergence of sexbots questions the ethical limits of human-machine contact and the existential

consequences of such technology. In this framework, the XX-bots, in their emulation of human characteristics, encapsulate a posthuman state where "the traditional notion of the human has been radically challenged," (Ferrando, "Leveling the Posthuman Playing Field" 1) intertwined with technological advancements, echoing Hayles' perspective that "you have already become posthuman" (xiv) in the act of engaging with these advanced technologies.

Examining the invention of sexbots in Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* through the lens of Donna Haraway's theoretical framework, particularly her work *A Cyborg Manifesto*, reveals a profound intersection of Haraway's posthumanist ideas in Winterson's novel. Haraway's manifesto, which conceptualizes the cyborg as a rejection of rigid boundaries between human and machine, organism and artefact, finds resonance in the portrayal of Ron Lord's sexbots. These entities, as depicted in the novel, are not mere assemblages of wires and circuits but are imbued with human-like attributes, embodying the cyborg's essence as a hybrid form. Similarly, the transition to Mary Shelley's experiences during the genesis of her novel *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* vividly illustrates Shelley's encounters and reflections that lead to her re-conceptualization of the original narrative. Mary Shelley's memories explore profound themes of life, death, the unnatural and the pursuit of knowledge that breaks the traditional boundaries of life which go beyond the ordinary –all of which are central to transhumanism and posthumanism. In her memories, Shelley's depiction serves as a precursor to the understanding of cyborgs, artificial intelligence and robots with the definition of a "fully-formed being not born of woman" (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 52).

Following their encounter with Ron Lord, Ry Shelley attends a lecture which is delivered by Victor Stein on the emergence of artificial intelligence and its impact on the future of humanity. This lecture exemplifies Victor's thoughts on a scale regarding the evolution of life and Victor Stein's presentation goes as following:

> Type 1 Life: Evolution-based. Victor explains: Changes happen slowly over millennia.
>
> Type 2 Life: Partially self-designing.
>
> This is where we are now. We can develop our own brain software through learning, including outsourcing to machines. We update ourselves individually and generationally. We can adapt within a generation to a changing world – think of toddlers and iPads. We have invented machines of every kind for travel and labour. Horses and hoes are a thing of the past. We can also overcome some of our biological limitations: spectacles, eyelaser,

> dental implants, hip replacements, organ transplants, prosthetics. We have begun to explore space.
>
> Type 3 Life: Fully self-designing.
>
> Now he gets excited. The nearby world of AI will be a world where the physical limits of our bodies will be irrelevant. Robots will manage much of what humans manage today. Intelligence – perhaps even consciousness –will no longer be dependent on a body. We will learn to share the planet with non-biological life forms created by us. We will colonise space. (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 55)

In Victor's illustrations, Type 1 life forms are those which follow the traditional biological path of evolution, where changes occur gradually over extended periods, Type 2 represents the current human condition that can "overcome some of [their] biological limitations" (55) and Type 3 suggests a phase in which is an imminent phase, where AI and robotics play the central role. The idea behind the evolution of life forms offers an intriguing portrayal of a future that is forged when humanity transcends its biological origins and embraces a state of existence that is completely self-designing with the help of robotics and artificial intelligence.

Victor's futuristic representation in the novel also corresponds with Ray Kurzweil's Theory of Singularity, which denotes a phase when "a future period during which the pace of technological change will be so rapid, its impact so deep, that human life will be irreversibly transformed" (Kurzweil 24). In his Singularity Theory, Kurzweil claims that advancements in technology, particularly in areas such as artificial intelligence, computers, and biotechnology, will eventually enable machines to enhance their capabilities through their superior intellect. Consequently, this would result in an accelerated and exponential advancement in technology, surpassing the capacity of human prediction. The ramifications of this will entail substantial transformations in society and will inevitably change the very essence of humanity. Thus, singularity will be referring to an era in which human and machine intelligence merge and cause a transcendence of current biological limitations such as cognitive constraints, and physical frailties. To make his claim plausible, Kurzweil analyses historical data to exemplify the growth of technology. He bases his ideas on *Moore's law*, that is proposed by Gordon Moore, co-founder of Intel Corporation. According to *Moore's law*, the number of transistors in a microchip doubles every two years with the cost of producing it is halved (Kurzweil 59). As the result of this rapid increase in the production and the capacity of the transistors in a microchip, it is palpable that more powerful and affordable computers

will be produced, and this production will remarkably increase the computational capabilities available to both consumers and industries. This exponential growth in computing power will lead to a wide array of technological advancements and innovations such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, data processing and other technologies. So, this significant advancement in transistors, hence microchips, opens doors to new possibilities such as deep learning technologies and artificial intelligence. That is, the more powerful computers become, the more accelerated the pace of scientific and technological developments becomes, and this will to increasingly sophisticated and transformative innovations across various fields.

Highlighting the importance of the integration of genetics, nanotechnology and robotics in the theory of Singularity, Kurzweil points out that "the twenty-first century will be characterized by [these] three overlapping revolutions" (Kurzweil 170), and claims that these technologies will represent the key areas where exponential advances are expected to happen that will lead to a transformative change in what it means to be human. According to Kurzweil, a revolution in genetics will pave the way for the manipulation of the information processes of life and enable us to reprogram our "DNA-based biology" (170) leading to the elimination of diseases and significant life extension and nanotechnology will enable mankind to manipulate matter at atomic levels creating materials such as nanobots for cellular repair and drug delivery which will enable surpassing biological limitations. Among the three primary factors that constitute the basis of the Singularity, robotics, as Kurzweil refers to as "the creation of nonbiological intelligence," (204), is the most significant one. One aspect of robotics in Kurzweil's theory is that strong artificial intelligence surpassing human capabilities will progress rapidly once a level of complexity is completed. He suggests that the development of AI will lead to technologies that can autonomously enhance their design and intelligence which will lead to an accelerating superintelligence. Therefore, the role of robotics in his theory is the most significant as super-intelligent machines that are endowed with self-improvement and advanced nanotechnology will have the potential to transform human existence.

Examining Victor Stein's presentation "The Future of Humans in a Post-Human World" (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 56) on the evolution of life forms through the lens of Kurzweil's theory of Singularity, "Type 1" mirrors the history of humankind, "Type 2"

exemplifies the current state of humanity on the verge of biological and technological symbiosis, and "Type 3" aligns with the notion of the theory of Singularity where AI and robotics lead to a new epoch of life beyond our current human understanding directly addressing to transhumanist goals to surpass our biological boundaries and extend our life with transhumanist aspirations. So, Victor Stein's projection of the future has an encapsulating background that has intersecting aspects with Kurzweil's theory of Singularity, which is a future where the boundaries between humanity and technology are not just blurred but essentially non-existent. Victor Stein's vision of the future aligns with Kurzweil's theory of Singularity, picturing a future where the integration of humanity and technology reaches such an intense level that traditional distinctions between them cease to exist. This concept challenges our understanding of human identity and consciousness, indicating a transformative era where the boundaries between biological and artificial intelligence converge. However, the emergence of such technology will cause the deconstruction of binary opposition such as human-inhuman, and artificial-natural, and this phenomenon will require a new understanding of existence, that is unrecognised by traditional standards. During Victor Stein's speech, an audience asks a question addressing this societal concern: "Will women be the first casualties of obsolescence in your brave new world?" (56). This question raises concerns about whether Artificial Intelligence may perpetuate societal prejudices regarding gender equality. This is associated with posthumanist discussions about the impact of technology on traditional gender roles and identities. In this respect, the same type of concern is echoed through Donna Haraway's *Cyborg Manifesto* regarding gender equality and identities. Haraway conveys this concern in the following lines:

> The cyborg is a creature in a postgender 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. In a sense, the cyborg has no origin story in the Western sense—a "final" irony since the cyborg is also the awful apocalyptic telos of the "West's" escalating dominations of abstract individuation, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency, a man in space. (Haraway 6)

Haraway uses the metaphor of the cyborg, as a transformative figure, which is "a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (3) to question traditional categories that have played a crucial role in Western thinking. In Haraway's thesis, the cyborg corresponds to a posthuman world that transcends beyond traditional gender norms and binary understanding of identity proposing a modern and

compatible approach to the notion of subjectivity where the figure of the cyborg becomes a representation of a new way of thinking about these traditional values. In this critique, the notion of the cyborg investigates the narratives of Western Humanism and points out that in the late twentieth century, the boundaries between "natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed" (9) are distorted and became intertwined because of technological developments. Haraway sees the integration of these categories as a challenge to the foundations of Humanism because she claims that this traditional view is characterised by straightforward distinctions and binary categories ignoring the significant impact of external factors like technology, culture, and societal structures in shaping identity. However, the quandary associated with the understanding of Humanism regarding traditional gender norms and dichotomic understanding of identity is likely to dissipate with the emergence of advanced technologies. So, both Victor Stein and Donna Haraway point at the same direction; towards an understanding of a new paradigm in which identity and gender are not fixed or inherent but are instead constantly developing and refined through ongoing interactions with technology and society. In this framework, Haraway's 'cyborg' and Victor Stein's projections on AI are not only metaphorical concepts, but also actual representations of human evolution in the age of technology challenging us to rethink our preconceived notions about identity, gender, and the human condition in the context of an evolving technological world.

The variety of reactions received from the audience during Victor Stein's lecture heat the discussion even further. These audience reactions predominantly focus on the AI's impact on humanity which gives Victor Stein to correct himself by making a reminder on the issue as the following:

> Let me start by repeating what I said at the beginning of my lecture (in other words, weren't you listening, goldfish brain?). It is not the Silicon Valley geeks who are perversely turning life as we know it into an algorithm – it is the biologists. It is from the natural sciences that the barrier between organic and inorganic is being dismantled. The room is quiet now. He continues. What is an algorithm? An algorithm is a series of steps for solving a recurring problem. A problem isn't a bad thing – it's more of a How Do I? A problem might be – my route to work every morning; it might be, I am a tree – so how do I transpire? So an algorithm is a data-processing plant. Frogs, potatoes, humans can be understood as biological data-processing plants – if you believe the biologists. Computers are non-biological dataprocessing plants. If data is the input and the rest is processing, then humans aren't so special after all. (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 58–59)

Victor Stein's definition of an algorithm plays a pivotal role in his interpretation that goes beyond the realms of computer science and biology. He starts his discussion with the

notion of algorithms as an exclusive creation of technological advancements especially as a product of Silicon Valley, however, as he continues his speech, he draws attention to the biologists as the ones who are blurring the lines between what is organic and inorganic. According to Stein, an algorithm is defined as “a series of steps for solving a recurring problem” (58) that occurs repeatedly. This indicates that the question is not inherently negative but more likely similar to the question “How Do I?” which is in a way comprehensive enough to include both ordinary daily activities and the complex way of natural processes such as how a tree transpires. Thus, Stein characterises algorithms as “dataprocessing plants” (58) and suggests that all living organisms, such as frogs, potatoes, and people, may also be seen as biological data processors in this perspective. This viewpoint is consistent with the notion that living creatures engage in the processing of information or data obtained from their surroundings to ensure their survival and proper functioning. In this perspective, computers are considered non-biological data-processing entities. Stein's comparison implies that the distinction between people and computers is less substantial than usually believed, particularly when evaluating their data processing capabilities. So, Victor Stein's understanding of algorithms transcends traditional boundaries between organic and inorganic and positions algorithms not only in the field of computer science but also in the field of biology.

His perspective on the conventional boundaries between organic and inorganic entities resonates with N. Katherine Hayles’s posthumanist view in which Hayles sees the human body as an “information processor” (Hayles 65) that renders it no different than inorganic entities. Hayles grounds his theory on Alan Turing's famous “The Imitation Game” which was published in 1950 under the name of “Computer Machinery and Intelligence.” In essence, Turin's experiment was designed to determine whether an intelligent computer can exhibit intelligence which is indistinguishable from that of a human. In this game, a human interrogator questions the computer and tries to figure out if he is talking to a machine or a real person based solely on the responses from the computer, in another instance, a human interrogator tries to make the same distinction between a man and a woman. According to the outcome of this test, Turin proves that this game provides a basis for understanding the disappearance of physical presence concerning intelligence, by claiming that intelligence primarily involves “the formal manipulation of symbols rather than enaction in the human lifeworld” (Hayles xi). Hayles

enhances her point by explaining the nature of the information theory in which she challenges Humanism which associates the notion of subjectivity with "conscious agency" (288) by presuming the "conception of information as a (disembodied) entity that can flow between carbon-based organic components and silicon-based electronic components" (2). She claims that in the light of the prevailing posthuman condition, physical presence and absence are challenged and "humans are hopelessly compromised, contaminated with 'mechanic alienness' in the very heart of our humanity" (288). Moreover, Hayles illustrates her theory on the development of information technologies such as virtual reality and computer-mediated communication (CMC) to show how physical presence is becoming less relevant compared to patterns of information. According to Hayles, as the texts become digitalised, illustrating the shift from traditional print to digital media, the narrator transforms from being a mere speaker to being a "manipulator of codes," (46) and this transformation moves readers from passive recipients to active decoders. This means that the narrator, who is responsible for telling stories, evolves into a manipulator of codes, interacting with the text's organization, elements, and the framework supporting it. This denotes a transition from linear storytelling to a dynamic, non-linear approach, which involves many forms of media and connections. Simultaneously, readers go from being passive recipients to being active participants, as they decode and engage with the intricate and complex narrative. This interactive reading requires a greater degree of involvement, as readers explore, interpret, and shape the direction of the story. The integration of story and subjectivity with technology in this paradigm shift represents not only a change in format but also a significant cultural and technical development. The process of converting texts into digital format fundamentally transforms the way stories are told, changing how we understand and create our sense of self and the world in a society where digital and physical aspects are becoming more interconnected. This, in turn, modifies the way humans understand the narratives and hence their own identities.

To make her example more profound, a modern-day example can be given from Virtual Reality Environments. Virtual reality technologies reflect Hayles' theory on the diminishing significance of the physical presence. Virtual Reality (VR) is an artificial environment created by computers that simulate real-life situations and objects, giving users the sensation of being fully engaged in their surroundings. The perception of this

environment is facilitated by a device referred to as a virtual reality headset or helmet. Virtual reality environments allow individuals to coexist and engage in autonomous interactions, detached from the constraints of the physical realm which challenges the perception of reality. This situation changes the way reality is perceived. In another instance, a similar example can be derived from the usage of social media platforms. Social media platforms and online communities allow people the chance to freely manifest their identities, irrespective of their physical existence. Within this environment, people establish social ties through sharing their ideas and opinions. In this context, human identity and existence can be defined by the patterns of information, transmission and interaction, rather than by physical presence.

So, both N. Katherine Hayles and Victor Stein employ algorithms to establish a connection between biology and technology highlighting an essential alignment in the information processing methods of entities. This intersection between Hayles and Stein illustrates a more extensive concept concerning the blurring of boundaries between the natural and the artificial, challenging the uniqueness of human perception in light of progressing technology. This redefinition challenges the uniqueness of human experience, indicating that humans, just like computers, are just another form of data-processing entity. Considering humans as data-processing entities such as computers has important consequences for the re-evaluation of the notion of humans in the digital era. Because this perspective indicates that human experience which has been regarded as unique and distinct because of its complex and profound nature, can have a resemblance to a computational process than it was previously recognised. This redefinition, therefore, challenges the anthropocentric view of human perception and experience which has been regarded as more superior and advanced.

As claimed by Victor Stein in the novel, the emergence and widespread usage of AI and its adaptation to robotics propose a vision in which naming is power and this emergence will not be based on “a world of labels - and that includes binaries like male and female, black and white, rich and poor. There will not be a division between head and heart, between what I feel and what I think” (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 59). So, he sees “the robots as an intermediate species that will help humanity adjust to its coming role” (60). Based on this perspective, it is not possible to see humans as the pinnacle of evolution instead, humanity is in an interconnected network that includes both organic

and inorganic beings. For this reason, Stein's claims in his presentation also stand with Braidotti's posthumanist argument particularly regarding the creation of artificial intelligence and robotics, as Braidotti advocates for decentralisation of the anthropocentric worldview which embraces the potential of technology to redefine the human identity and social structures related to the traditional aspirations of the notion of human.

As discussed in the Introduction of this thesis, Rosi Braidotti challenges the understanding of Humanism in her work *The Posthuman* by arguing that the traditional understanding of the human is limited and exclusionary as the current condition of human existence has evolved putting the notion of the human in a new position to embrace a complex interplay of various posthumanist interpretations. In this context, according to Braidotti, this traditional limitation and exclusion of human beings require a reconceptualization in terms of understanding life and subjectivity toward non-human entities. Regarding the posthuman condition, she outlines three major strands:

> I see three major strands in contemporary posthuman thought: the first comes from moral philosophy and develops a reactive form of the posthuman; the second, from science and technology studies, enforces an analytic form of the posthuman; and the third, from my own tradition of anti-humanist philosophies of subjectivity, proposes a critical post-humanism. (Braidotti 38)

The first strand of contemporary posthuman thought, as defined by Rosi Braidotti and exemplified by Martha Nussbaum, justifies conventional Humanism as a reaction to challenges from technology-driven globalization (39). Nussbaum advocates for maintaining humanist values for democracy and dignity. However, Braidotti advocates for the exploration of new methods to understanding individual and social identities in the evolving environment.

Rosi Braidotti describes the second strand of contemporary posthuman thought emerging from the field of "science and technological studies" (38). This description is refined by a perspective that is influenced by Bruno Latour, and focuses on the ethical and conceptual challenges that are brought by advancements in science and biotechnology. Following the second major stand in contemporary posthuman thought, Braidotti emphasises the following:

> Contemporary science and biotechnologies affect the very fibre and structure of the living and have altered dramatically our understanding of what counts as the basic frame of

> reference for the human today. Technological intervention upon all living matter creates a negative unity and mutual dependence among humans and other species. (40)

Braidotti's quote highlights the impacts of modern science and biotechnology on the fundamental principles of life, significantly transforming our comprehension of the human predicament in connection to the broader framework of existence. This approach, particularly within the realm of artificial intelligence and robotics, emphasizes numerous crucial aspects that support the notion that humans should not be regarded as the pinnacle of evolution, but rather as integral members of a complex system that includes both biological and inorganic entities. The assertion claiming that science and biotechnology have also changed the "fibre and structure of the living" (Braidotti 40) indicates a transformation in the core understanding of life itself. Moreover, this transformation is not limited to organic life but also extends to the point where we integrate and interact with inorganic entities such as Artificial intelligence and robots. So, this dramatic shift in the basic frame of the notion of human indicates a trend away from the anthropocentric view because in an era which is woven with technological improvements Artificial intelligence and robotics play increasingly significant roles making the traditional anthropocentric notion of humans inadequate. In this perspective, humans are no longer the mere agents of intelligence and consciousness but instead, there's a recognition of a "privileged bond" (92) between artificial intelligence and robotic entities. These entities are not simply tools or mere extensions of human will, but rather they are essential components that actively contribute to and influence the collective life and identity of humans. So, Braidotti's analysis of the posthuman condition resonates deeply with Victor Stein's perspective pointing out that "science is no longer convinced that Homo sapiens is a special case" (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 59). Moreover, Victor Stein's perspective mirrors an expanding academic and philosophical discussion that challenges the notion of human exceptionalism. Stein emphasizes the necessity for a new understanding of the human, aligning it with the scientific realities and highlights the obligations that accompany our technological and environmental influence. In this sense, Victor Stein proposes that the emergence of artificial intelligence and robots will create a continuum after they are programmed by humans (60) in a way to eradicate the problems that have been brought by the traditional understanding of human which makes them unique and superior to the other entities in the world.

The integration of artificial intelligence and robotics in a way that can be experienced in the everyday practices of the contemporary society requires a comprehensive revision of the conventional notion of human. This concept is supported on a scholarly basis and mirrored in Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* through explanations and exemplifications. However, a humorous twist with the accidental activation of XXbots following Victor Stein's presentation (68-69) not only brings levity but also illustrates that some aspects of the emergence of AI and robotics may cause unexpected outcomes. As illustrated above, Victor Stein's attitude towards the embracement of AI and robotics can be seen as a means to resolve the posthuman predicament. Nevertheless, the accidental activation of XXbots introduces an anthropocentric perspective that has been traditionally focused on human experiences that augment human pleasure potentially leading to undesirable consequences. While the concept of cyborgs could have offered a more refined approach in order to "imagine a world without gender" (Herbrechter 107) the portrayal of XXbots progressing from the perspective of the male in the Enlightenment era, reduces the posthumanist identity to a male-centric concept prioritizing the enhancement of the male sexual experiences and pleasure. This scenario emerges as an example that potentially limits the potential of posthumanist thought and artificial intelligence. Through this portrayal, Winterson draws attention not only to the capacity of technology and AI to transform human experience but also to reinforce existing social norms and gender roles on these technologies. While Victor Stein defends the positive potential of AI and Robotics, the introduction of XXbots serves as a cautionary example of how these technologies can be misdirected and reinforce human-centric and gender-biased prejudices.

The advancement of AI and robots entails not only technological and scientific progress but also requires careful consideration of ethical, social, and gender issues. Winterson highlights that technology can accelerate human development but cautions against its potential to be exploited and worsen existing traditional social quandaries such as those presented. Hence, this scenario in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* illuminates the effects of modern innovations not only in the domains of technology and science, but also in its social, ethical, and gender-political aspects. This is a critical factor to contemplate while considering the future path of AI and robotic technologies.

After participating in Victor Stein's presentation, Ry Shelley pays a visit to Alcor facilities as a member of a small group of transgender medical professionals who are also transhuman enthusiasts (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 76). In Alcor facilities, Shelley meets Max More, who is the CEO and the director of the facility, and More's introduction provides a backdrop against the ethics and potentialities to "extend life and eradicate death" (Pentaris 24) through technology. Max More is a futurist best known for his work in the field of transhumanism and his *the Proactionary Principle* which is a set of guidelines for individuals and organizations about how they should evaluate new technologies that have the potential to significantly alter human life. After their introduction, Shelley also meets Victor Stein in person. The conversation that they participate in includes thought-provoking aspirations such as the extension of life as explored through Victor Stein's character and the concept of identity, body and gender fluidity in the evolving concept of humanity through technology.

Transhumanist aspirations which are conveyed through the setting of the Alcor facility and the concept of mind-uploading as explored by Victor Stein encapsulate an ambition to "overcome biological aging and death" (Vita- More and More 223). However, the outcome of these technological aspirations expressed by Victor Stein and Max More are merely ideas that have not yet been materialized yet some of them have been put into practice as Cryopreservation is possible, as people don't know how to "reheat the body without destroying it" (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 75). The disparity between current capabilities and transhumanist goals is also exemplified by Victor Stein's contemplations on mind uploading. Though still highly speculative, its inclusion encapsulates the transhumanist pursuit to surpass biological constraints by transforming and preserving human consciousness in digital form. These are expected to happen soon as it is conveyed by More's example, claiming that "Da Vinci made drawings of helicopters centuries before powered flight" (76). Therefore, the notions align with the transhumanist ideals, where the distinction between humanity and technology is not only obscured but redefined.

The transhumanist aspirations promoted by the Alcor facility, are particularly composed of those are related to cryogenics, a field of study regarding death as an "event which can be prevented," (Vita-More 46) life extension and mind uploading, require a profound reconsideration of the notion of human. Traditionally, the notion of 'human' is

firmly tied to certain biological and existential circumstances, contrary to what is conveyed through cryopreservation, life extension and immortality. Transhumanism, however, contradicts the aforementioned traditional view by proposing the transcending of these limitations by the utilization of technology as "[an] endeavour to go beyond the human eradicating the bodily limitations including aging and death" (Ayyıldız 36). This perspective implies a future in which the notion of human can refer to an entity that has undergone substantial modifications, possibly combining biological and artificial components. Such redefinition of the human entails a fundamental reconceptualization of the human body. Within the transhumanist discourse, the body is not seen as an immutable and inherent entity, but rather as a flexible vessel that can be either "improved, enhanced, or optimized" (Dou 9). The shifting perspective about the physical form has a direct influence on the concept of identity, particularly concerning the consciousness and the self.

As seen in these aspirations, the notion of identity becomes a fluid concept. This new condition of fluidity suggests that identity can be detached from the physical body, giving rise to fundamental philosophical inquiries on the continuity of the self. This novel perspective challenges the conventional connection between identity and the physical body, hence its alignment with Judith Butler's theory of "gender performativity." In her book *Gender Trouble*, Butler challenges the traditional view of fixed gender and identity that characterized the Enlightenment period. Butler posits that gender is a "repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler 45). Through this definition, Butler states that gender is not an inherent and biologically determined characteristic, but rather a societal creation that is constructed through "the acts which are repeated constantly" (Uremović 91). From this perspective, Butler's argument that gender is performative and not inherently associated with biological sex aligns with the transhumanist concept of "flexible identity" (Pruchnic 14). Within transhumanist framework, which allows for technological modifications of both the body and consciousness, gender identity becomes a flexible and performative construct. This perspective creates an opportunity to transform the concept of gender fluidity with transhumanist assertions, proposing a future in which gender, similar to

identity, can be altered and redefined outside conventional dichotomies and biological influences.

Extending life expectancy as exemplified by the implication of cryonics involving Dr James H. Bedford who was the first human to be cryonically preserved in 1967 (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 76) and the idea of uploading consciousness as portrayed through the futuristic ideas of Victor Stein, such as creating a sentient AI that can think and feel independently as well as transferring human consciousness into digital realm to achieve a form of digital immortality (79), have the potential to disturb traditional norms as these aspirations challenge the conventional understanding of human identity and the fixed nature of gender and aging, proposing a future where such constructs are fluid and adaptable. Butler's interpretation of gender as "a performative act" (Butler xxxi) gains an expanded significance in this particular circumstance. That is, the notion of gender is poised to undergo transformative shifts, liberating itself from the constraints associated with the traditional understandings such as the binary and static nature of gender roles, which have historically been associated with the biological sex, and the irrevocability of aging as a linear process that defines the human life. This indicates a notable deviation from traditional understanding of gender suggesting a fluid and evolving understanding of gender expression over an extended temporal scope.

In an exemplary fictional scenario of a person undergoes a mind-uploading process, transferring their consciousness into a digital realm, in this case their identity is no longer tied to their biological body which was assigned with a specific gender at birth based on their biological indicators. Freed from these constraints, this person can construct or express their gender identity through digital means, such as virtual avatars, customizable digital personas, online identities in virtual reality environments, allowing for a dynamic and fluid expression. This illustration offers a new dimension and understanding in the posthumanist context as the notion of gender is free from just a series of repeated acts and expressions within a social context. Thus, if consciousness and identity could transcend physical limits, then gender as a performative act would become a question of selection, independent from the biological indicators that traditionally define it as seen in the novel. This perspective intersects with transhumanist aspirations to challenge biological limitations and open a new discussion for redefining gender identity, moving beyond the traditional binary constructs to a more fluid and evolving notion as

well as presenting an alternative way to comprehend the complexity of gender identity in an era of technological advancements.

In these evolving circumstances where the transhumanist enhancement, which is represented by the cryogenic preservation of Dr. James H. Bedford and Victor Stein's interpretation of uploading of consciousness, questions the fundamental nature of youth, gender, and ageing. It also visibly corresponds to Mary Shelley's existential dilemmas in creating *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* such as ethical implications of creating life, the responsibilities of a creator towards their creation, the nature of humanity and the consequences of defying natural laws. Just as the technological age questions the traditional gender roles and definitions, Mary Shelley grapples with the nature of her creation- as a being that defies the traditional understanding of existence. The creature that is described as "shunned and feared by humankind" (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 90), as it is a deviation from the normal, represents uncertainties and ethical challenges of transcending beyond known boundaries, as it is in the transhumanist pursuit of redefining the notion of the human. Therefore, though it is two hundred years old, Shelley's narrative resonates with a modern quest to redefine the meaning of human existence.

Preserving this similarity, the following section of the narrative focuses on the existential struggles of Mary Shelley during the creation of her *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*. Shelley describes his creation as the following:

> […] I have created my monster and his master. My story has being. I must continue it, for it cannot end without me. The monster I have made is shunned and feared by humankind. His difference is his downfall. He claims no natural home. He is not human, yet the sum of all he has learned is from humankind. (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 90)

Mary Shelley is hesitant to call her creation whether as "a monster" or "the new Prometheus" (91) as Shelley's creation reflects the dual nature of the creation, perceived as both a superior being and a feared entity. The uncertainty in naming also questions the true nature of monstrosity, whether it lies in the creator or the creation, bringing an intriguing subjectivity to the concept of a monster. This excerpt distinctly encapsulates the moral and existential conundrums faced by Shelley in defining her creation. Similarly, the same ethical and moral issues echo in Victor Stein's experiments as he pushes "human limitations by means of science and technology" (More 6). This correspondence indicates that the consequences of transcending natural boundaries remain a persistent issue in both Shelley and Victor Stein's era.

Regarding the transcendence of natural boundaries, Victor Stein invites Shelley to his secret lab which is a symbolic and literal space for his ethically questionable experiments (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 103). Victor Stein's ambition represents the efforts to push the boundaries of science and technology, often beyond societal norms and ethical considerations. Victor Stein's bunker shows ethically questionable experiments on prosthetics such as reanimated hands and implants responding to electrical impulses and small attachments to augment the human condition which corresponds with transhumanist aspirations of enhancing human capabilities through "technological innovations" (Mendz and Cook 105). However, Ry Shelley's reaction to a child's hand and the jumping spiders highlights the ethical and emotional implications of such experiments drawing a direct parallel to the moral complexities encountered by Ry Shelley and Victor Stein alike (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 117). Although throughout the novel the plot revolves around the love affair between Victor Stein and Ry Shelley, Victor's progress is introduced with his creations for the first time. Victor Stein emerges as a personification of transhumanist aspirations that challenge the traditional notion of human as Victor Stein pushes the boundaries of science and ethics with his ideas and experiments, where the definition of life, consciousness, and human is reconsidered due to technological advancements, underscoring the shifting paradigms of human existence.

Following the section that embodies Victor Stein with the characteristics of Victor Frankenstein, paralleling the original story as well as carrying the same nuances of a more modern era. As Captain Walton, a character who is parallel to Captain Robert Walton from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* describes Victor as the following: "He comes from a good family. There is nothing remarkable in his background," (126) the portrayal of his character seems to be successful yet simultaneously characterized as a "this poor man is mad" (Winterson *Frankissstein* 126). This juxtaposition of madness and achievement is further articulated through the creature he has created.

> But the rest is incredible. He believes that he has created life. Human life. A creature sewn together out of dead matter. Limb by limb. Organ by organ. Sinew and cell. Animated by some electric shock, so that the heart beats and the blood flows, and the eyes open. A monster of a man, gigantic and fearsome, filled with revenge against his creator for his creation. A created being without scruple or stop. (126)

Victor Frankenstein's character can be described as sitting at the edge of genius and insanity for Captain Walton (123-126) while a similar perspective is given with Victor

Stein's example, because, according to Ry Shelley, Stein oscillates between madness and genius (138-141). His aspirations, such as the recreation of Jack Good in a "non-physical platform," (136) manipulation of body parts (117), and his possible experiments for "The Killer on Death Row" (139) although ambitious, yet exhibit a kind of extreme pride and danger, illustrating the contradictory aspects of technological progress as both a possible saviour and a potential threat. Although there have been two hundred years gap between Victor Stein and Victor Frankenstein, both men are obsessed with a single-minded pursuit to create life, and they have similar interests such as the exploration of the boundaries between life and death, and the possibility of reanimating the dead using technology in creating and sustaining life; Victor Frankenstein uses "some electric shock" (126) to create a creation that was "deviate[d] from the norm" (Coeckelbergh 358) while Victor Stain uses unconventional technologies of his time such as AI, computers and robotics. These depictions represent both characters as insane, as well as demonstrating transhumanist ideals by striving to surpass the biological limitations of humanity through scientific means under their current technological possibilities as well as suggesting new methods to create a techno monster.

The use of technology to generate life by Victor Stein, which is contradicted by the traditional understanding of the creation of human and the reanimation of the dead, as practised by the example of Victor Frankenstein, questions what it means to be human in this perspective. The definition of human is extended beyond our current biological constraints with experiments such as AI, robotics and the correspondence of the creation of a monster "sewn together out of dead matter. Limb by limb. Organ by organ. Sinew and cell. Animated by some electric shock," (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 126) and this condition ventures into a realm where the distinctions between organic and synthetic life become ambiguous and every new creation becomes a natural-born monster. So, the traditional negative stance towards monstrosity starts dissolving and becoming normalized in the posthuman era. The monster's ambiguity in existence, as discussed above, raises intriguing questions about the definitions of identity, consciousness and life itself. From this perspective, the notion of human faces a transformation that questions the understanding of humanity as purely biological entities. This shift emerges with the advent of beings that possess qualities traditionally attributed exclusively to humans, such as life and consciousness.

Similarly, in the setting of Bedlam, it is seen that Victor Frankenstein and Mary Shelley have a fictional encounter creating a complex narrative layer by blurring the lines between creator and creation similar to the distinction between human and machine.

> You have appeared in the pages of a novel, she said. You and the monster you created. I am the monster you created, said Victor Frankenstein. I am the thing that cannot die – and I cannot die because I have never lived. My dear sir! (At this I had to intervene.) If I were to shoot you now, with this pistol (I took the pistol from my pocket), your life would be at an end. Yes, sir! A dead end. (145)

This narrative technique not only reflects posthumanist concepts which challenge the traditional understanding of human identity that are related to technological advancements but also echoes transhumanist aspirations which aim to transcend human limitations with the use of technology, as it is in the examples of Victor Stein and his inventions such as AI and robots and Ron Lord's sex bots. These entities exist, nevertheless, they create an "identity-morphing" (Nayar 12) by failing to fit into the traditional notion of human existence, prompting serious inquiries about identity, awareness, and consciousness in a world where the lines between organic and synthetic, real and artificial, become increasingly indistinct. Maybe for this reason, monstrosity is predominantly associated with weird morphological abnormalities or deviations from the norm. Any organic life form which somehow loses its current corporeal or morphological integrity and/or liveliness/animated state -either via death, injuries, or technologically induced inanimation, can, thus, be seen as monstrous. Cryonics is one of these inanimate, or lifeless, states of being.

Furthermore, as the blurring in the distinction between human and robot and distortion of the human identity through the examples of creations of Victor Stein and Victor Frankenstein continues, the introduction of a visit to the Alcor facility (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 150) where the concept of cryonics and mind-uploading, the digital transfer of consciousness into an external storage, and the futuristic technologies of Ron Lord indicates a representation of the continuation and expansion of these central themes that can alter the human experience and the understanding of the notion of human. As already mentioned, Alcor facility's pursuit of preserving human bodies for potential revival introduces a new understanding that constitutes our understanding of things and ourselves and "redraws the boundaries between life and death" (3) which is not only defined through Ry Shelley's explanation as "death is not an event; death is a process"

(Winterson, *Frankissstein* 152) but also acknowledged by Victor Stein. This perspective of life and death promotes the possibility of control over life and death with technological advancements challenging "the mind-body duality of Enlightenment thinking" (Banerji 739) of human.

> […] the transhumanist view of humans is that they are currently in a form which limits them, predominantly due to ageing, frailty and death. This said, transhumanism is not philosophical thinking that celebrates humanity but one that identifies its flaws and attempts to 'correct' them via technology. (Pentaris 24)

According to Panagiotis Pentaris, transhumanism does not celebrate human but instead sees the biological state as constrained by ageing, frailty, and death which are not mere natural courses of life but as limitations that can be overcome in a future where the proper technological accomplishments are achieved. This statement can be interpreted in parallel with the ideas of Ry Shelley as the following:

> The theory, Ron, I said, is that smart medicine will be able to renew and reverse the aged body. On the other hand, by preserving the brain only, we may be able to grow, or to manufacture, a brand-new body. Or, if you listen to Victor, you won't need a body at all. I don't fancy being a disembodied body, said Ron.(Winterson, *Frankissstein* 152)

As suggested through Ry Shelley's words, such technological inventions may have the potential to enable consciousness and identity to exist without the biological limitations of human body. Treating cryonics as a possible technological advancement which is capable of making human life last longer or transcend beyond its physical limitations, Ole Martin Moen proposes in his article titled "The Case for Cryonics" that while burial and cremation are seen as the traditional end of biological life, cryonics is often regarded with scepticism. However, since 1967, around 250 individuals have already had their bodies or just their heads preserved, while an additional 1500 individuals have made the necessary preparations for cryopreservation upon their death (Bjork 89). Interestingly, Alcor facilities in Winterson's novel *Frankissstein: A Love Story* resonate as one of the places mentioned by Moen. As of December 31, 2023, Alcor facilities have 225 cryopreserved patients who are waiting for revival, and the first person who was accepted in 1967 as a patient is Dr. James H. Bedford. The emergence of such technology which enables people to be revived after their demise, as speculated through the case of cryonics that has been illustrated by Alcor facilities, and from its reflection in the novel, provides the predicament in the understanding of life and death in several ways distorting the traditional understandings.

First, in the traditional sense, death is seen as a final and irreversible state. Nevertheless, the emergence of cryonics challenges this sense as it could be reversible in future with the technological advancements. As it is in cryonics, preserving bodies or only heads in the case of Jack Good (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 139) at extremely low temperatures will make it possible to revive the patients back to their consciousness in future. This instance raises a question embodying a state of existence that defies traditional categorization: Are those cryopreserved truly dead or alive?

Secondly, in the case of Dr James H Bedford, he exists in a unique temporal state where a person from the past has been cryopreserved in the hope of future revival. His condition creates a unique predicament where the link between past and future as well as life and death become blurred. He is not participating in life, yet he is not entirely removed from the present either; This situation not only distorts the lines between life and death but also challenges the traditional course of human existence, which often follows a linear trajectory from birth to death. However, Dr Bedford's current condition positions him as a potential mediator connecting his condition with a future era, provoking concerns regarding identity, continuity, and the nature of human society.

Thirdly, as proposed by Panagiotis Pentaris, "[d]rawing on transhumanism and discourses about posthumanity, [...] it states that the bio-medical dimensions of our understanding of death and dying have predominated not only the discourses about death in society and the care of the dying but their policy and practice as well" (i). This perspective aligns with the notion that "[c]ryonics is a technology that challenges and redefines life and death" (Kyslan 77). In this context, the concept of cryopreservation is poised to exert a significant influence on societal conventions and personal experiences. It could dramatically change how individuals experience the processes of grief and closure, challenging traditional rituals and mourning practices. Consequently, this shift may need a comprehensive reconsideration and redefining of legal and social frameworks, such as those about marital status and regulations as well. For example, legal definitions of death, currently based on the termination of biological functions, would need to be expanded to accommodate the potential revival of cryopreserved individuals. This would raise complex questions about the rights and responsibilities of these individuals, their legal status, and the implications for their families and estates.

Regarding the predicament in the understanding of life and death which is created by the emergence of the transhumanist ideals, Peter Kyslan states in her article "Transhumanism and the issue of death" the following:

> The struggle between anthropocentrists and biofundamentalists on the one hand and transhumanists on the other will be wild. Any proposal for extending human capabilities beyond our "natural" and "God-given" predestination will have ethical, political, and legal consequences. It is nothing new, history and the history of thought often show the political legitimacy of human life norms – norms like nature, humanity, civilization, culture, morality –which become norms that are political and discursive. So, given the growing secularization of human life, the tangible benefits of new technologies and the intrinsic logic of Enlightenment values, transhumanism is developing a new bioethics that relativizes old bases and platforms. From a religious point of view, this issue is probably the most difficult. (77)

Kyslan highlights the importance of the multifaceted conflict that occurs when posthumanism and traditional understandings interact with each other. The statement emphasizes how advancements in technology, driven by secularization and Enlightenment values, challenge established ethical, political and legal norms and points out that these challenges are not new but rather represent a contemporary reincarnation of "the continuation of the humanistic endeavour" (Ferrando, "Leveling the Posthuman Playing Field" 3) to comprehend and define the notion of human and its boundaries. In this framework, Transhumanism, which advocates augmenting human capabilities beyond natural or divine predestination, proposes a reassessment of our moral frameworks. However, Kyslan also underscores that this revaluation is exceptionally complicated from a religious perspective since it challenges fundamental beliefs like the sanctity of life and divine intent as "religious views may tend to consider transhumanism to compete with their faith" (Kyslan 77).

Aligning with Kyslan's perspective, the hostess Claire who later turns out to be Max More's assistant (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 155) and the lover of Ron Lord (177), serves as a religious character with the ethical and spiritual challenges that have been subjected to the question by transhumanist advancements. As deeply rooted in her faith, Claire confronts challenges brought forth by transhumanist technologies like cryonics, mind-uploading, and sexbots each of which somehow conflicts and challenges her conventional religious understanding since they attempt to blur the prevailing distinctions between life and death, human and machine. Her profound religious conviction pushes her to investigate and challenge the consequences of modern technologies, specifically regarding the destiny of the soul and the sanctity of life (158-162). Her presence

epitomizes the challenges emphasized by Kyslan —that is the struggle to reconcile traditional beliefs with the rapid advancements and secularization of modern society. Moreover, Kyslan's statement that the advancement in technology undermines traditional grounds corresponds with Claire's conundrum. She embodies the challenge that religious perspectives confront in this futuristic setting, where advancements in technology and the principles of the Enlightenment are challenging the notion of human and redefining human existence and capabilities. Thus, Claire's character serves as a microcosm of a broader debate described by Kyslan, highlighting the intricate personal and spiritual challenges of navigating a society on the verge of a transhumanist challenge.

In exploring the intricate intersections of posthumanist aspirations that challenge traditional understandings by blurring the distinctions between binary oppositions, technological advancements and the understanding of human simultaneously evoke a sense of otherness which conveys a departure from what is traditionally understood as human or normal. These posthumanist developments as a new form of monstrosity propose revaluations of the definition of life, identity, and humanity. In this respect, these implications step into a realm where the lines between the human and the machine, the natural and the artificial are irreversibly blurred. So, in this respect, it can be inferred that the monster has “an ideal and intimate relationship with the concept of the posthuman” (Mittman and Dendle 402). This symbiosis highlights the evolving nature of human existence in an age when the barriers between the technological and the biological are becoming increasingly intertwined. This prompts a re-examination of the human condition through the lens of posthumanist ideology, challenging the established notions of normalcy and identity.

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

Donna Haraway's depiction of the late twentieth century illustrates a blurring distinction between the binary oppositions such as the natural/artificial, organic/inorganic, alive/dead and mind and body with the emergence of technological advancements. It is understood that machines that have been the product of such advancements have become so advanced and integrated into our lives that they appear as lifelike. Her observation challenges the traditional understanding that has defined the relationship between machines and humans

as well as witnesses the world where the distinction between organic and synthetic, autonomous and designed, are not just blurred but are being actively redefined, leading to a new understanding of both technology and the notion of human. Thus, her claim underscores a paradigm shift which challenges the understanding of humans in an age where technological integration and advancement are ubiquitous.

In the light of Haraway's depiction, Winterson's narrative resonates with the emergence of the same notion — a new form of beings— which is monstrous or a transition to the posthuman state. This new state signals a deep interconnectedness with sex, gender and sexuality with different types of biological and informational technology. "We're still biology but we're better biology," says Stein (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 82) pinpointing what the future brings with the new forms of augmentations and alterations to the human body such as smart implants and the uploading of consciousness to computing systems. Correspondingly, placing transgender therapies, AI, and sexbots in a historical context that traces back to the monstrous cosmos of *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, Winterson identifies how "[the] new forms of technologies mean that all subjectivity has become monstrous itself" (McAvan 2). So, regarding the ontological journey of the human, "posthuman body of the monster" (Kundu and Sarkar 165) proposes an important aspect to investigate and explore.

> Monsters are not confined to the realm of fiction and fantasy; there are also real technological "monsters", and they play a role in how we deal with the new and with others in our culture. Moreover, as frightening, fascinating, and confusing others, monsters are not only a threat and a problem but have a far more constructive role than usually assumed: they help us to explore and cross borders, probe the darkness of the unknown, and both confirm and subvert the normal and establish ontological and political structures. In the drama of sameness and difference, monsters play on both sides and thus contribute to the ongoing making and breaking of cultures, making and questioning the lines that define it. (Coeckelbergh 353)

The traditional role of a monster is to be an embodiment of a living obstacle, typically one that symbolizes dominant fears in its culture of origin, however, as highlighted by Mark Coeckelbergh, the role of the monster also extends beyond the traditional and cultural representations and reflect the understanding of 'the new' in the society. In the technological context of *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, monsters are not just fictional creations but also reflections of the other such as AI, Robots and Cyborgs that challenge our conventional understanding of human in culture. These technological monsters, as contemporary monsters of the past, play a crucial role in the cultural environment by

challenging the limits of what is known, accepted and traditional, contributing to the ongoing advancement of humans. By distorting the distinction between human and machine, organic and inorganic or natural and artefact, technological monsters convey an understanding of the culture of the other in their corresponding technological era. These monsters are perceived as both threatening and problematic, however, they serve as a constructive than it is anticipated and penetrate into the boundaries of our understanding to encourage an exploration of the unknown.

> [T]he human form - including human desire and all its external representations - may be changing radically, and thus must be revisioned. We need to understand that five hundred years of humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call posthumanism. (Hassan 843)

On the other hand, Ihab Hassan's ideas emphasize a profound alignment between the evolving role of monsters in culture and the evolving notion of humanism to posthumanism. As in the aforementioned analysis of Coeckelbergh, the monsters are not constrained by their traditional roles as embodiment of fear and obstacles, yet they have expanded into technological entities such as AI, Robots and cyborgs. These technological monsters embody the shift in the cultural understanding of what lies under the other and the abnormal. So, Hassan's claim proposes that human form and desires are experiencing a radical transformation that needs a new vision. The traditional humanist perspective which is explained in the introduction part that centres on human values and experiences, necessitates a way to a posthuman understanding that these technological monsters challenge and expand the notion of identity, consciousness and existence in the twenty-first century. Thus, similar to Coeckelbergh's ideas, Hassan's perspective provides a basis for comprehending the cultural and philosophical consequences of these transformations. It can be inferred that the 'monsters' of our time such as AI, and cyborgs, are not only fictional constructs but rather essential components to redefine the human from Enlightenment humanism.

Although it does not perfectly align with the concept of the technological monster, the condition of Ry Shelley as a transgender person disrupts the traditional understandings of gender, similar to Mary Shelley's monster that violates the principal nature of the traditional understanding of the human in its time, the technological innovations created by Ron Lord as well as Victor Stein's aspiration to create consciousness without a corporeal body, cryofreezing and mind uploading.

> You're a woman, then? says Ron.
> No, Ron. I am a hybrid. My name is Ry.
> You're a bloke, then? says Ron.
> I'm trans.
> Like, transhuman?
> Transgender.
> You look like a bloke, says Ron. Not a serious bloke, but a bloke. I wouldn't have given you that interview at the Sexpo if you was a girl.
> I'm trans, I say again. (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 63)

As a "part of a small group of transgender medical professionals," (76) Ry Shelley defines himself as a "hybrid," that is "in-betweenness of genders" (Nordmarken 38). However, Ry's encounter with Ron Lord illustrates the common misunderstanding and prejudices faced by transgender individuals, such as the one toward the acceptance of the technological monsters as mentioned. So, Ry Shelley's condition exemplifies Ron Lord's difficulty in understanding and categorizing Ry Shelley's hybrid identity in traditional gender terms. This conflict in categorizing Ry Shelley with the traditional gender norms also appears in the scene where Ry Shelley encounters a man in the restroom (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 164) where Ry Shelley is about to face a physical assault.

> The monster is born only at this metaphoric crossroads, as an embodiment of a certain cultural moment—of a time, a feeling, and a place. The monster's body quite literally incorporates fear, desire, anxiety, and fantasy (ataractic or incendiary), giving them life and an uncanny independence. The monstrous body is pure culture. (Cohen 4)

Monsters appear not only as fantastical creatures but also as representations of the fears, desires and uncertainties of their cultural environment. In this respect, Ry Shelley, as a transgender medical professional, embodies a kind of 'cultural monster' as defined by Cohen. Ry Shelley's confrontation is not because of "any innate difference or inhumanity, but by his inability to belong in a society that reinforces his outsider status" (Jones and Harris 524). After all, the "monstrosity is only a failure of or catalyst to affirm the human" (Mittman and Dendle 402) and in his case, he is only a monster from the perspective of a public that will not accept him, like the monster of Frankenstein, that is feared and rejected not for its actions, but for being perceived as weird, unfamiliar, hence threatening. Both Ry Shelley's personal encounters and technological creations portrayed in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* could potentially be compared to the challenges of acceptance and recognition as an individual with subjective agency, similar to the concept of the monster as a deviation from what is regarded as normal in society. In a similar vein,

Susan Stryker describes in the article "My Words to Victor Frankenstein Above the Village of Chamounix: Performing Transgender Rage":

> The transsexual body is an unnatural body. It is the product of medical science. It is a technological construction. It is flesh torn apart and sewn together again in a shape other than that in which it was born. In these circumstances, I find a deep affinity between myself as a transsexual woman and the monster in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. Like the monster, 1 am too often perceived as less than fully human due to the means of my embodiment; like the monster's as well, my exclusion from human community fuels a deep and abiding rage in me that I, like the monster, direct against the conditions in which I must struggle to exist. (237)

Stryker's embodiment illustrates the conflict between gender identity and physical attributes, emphasizing the intricate and sometimes misunderstood nature of this connection. Ulrica Engdahl also examines the concept of conflict and challenges the characterization of the transgender experience as a state of "being in the wrong body" (267) describing trans experiences as sites of conflict between the identity and the body. The reflections of Susan Stryker and the critical analysis of Ulrica Engdahl provide a profound examination of the complexities of gender fluidity and how they relate to posthumanism. When Ry Shelley describes her transgender body as something made by medicine and technology, she is not only questioning standard gender roles, but she is also delving into the concept of posthumanism.

Through the integration of technological and medicinal progress, her description implies that the human condition can transcend its inherent limitations. This perspective emphasizes the evolving nature of humanity within the context of technological integration and transformation. Posthumanist concerns regarding the ethical and societal consequences of the expanding human condition are reflected in the societal response to such bodies, which are frequently regarded as "monstrous" as it is in Ry Shelley's assault (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 164). Beyond a simplistic dichotomy between identity and body, Ry Shelley's condition highlights the changing nature of the understanding of gender. His condition underscores the dynamic nature of identity within the context of posthumanism, highlighting that the human condition is not fixed but is constantly evolving alongside technological and medical advancements. This evolution points out the recognition of identity as fluid and dynamic in a technologically advanced society. However, her condition also underscores how trans individuals, like "the literary monsters," are often positioned at the societal margins, their differences sparking fear, misunderstanding, or rejection. Cohen further posits his theory as the following:

> We see the damage that the monster wreaks, the material remains (the footprints of the yeti across Tibetan snow, the bones of the giant stranded on a rocky cliff), but the monster itself turns immaterial and vanishes, to reappear someplace else (for who is the yeti if not the medieval wild man? Who is the wild man if not the biblical and classical giant?). No matter how many times King Arthur killed the ogre of Mount Saint Michael, the monster reappeared in another heroic chronicle, bequeathing the Middle Ages an abundance of morte d'Arthurs. Regardless of how many times Sigourney Weaver's beleaguered Ripley utterly destroys the ambiguous Alien that stalks her, its monstrous progeny return, ready to stalk again in another bigger-than-ever sequel. No monster tastes of death but once. The anxiety that condenses like green vapor into the form of the vampire can be dispersed temporarily, but the revenant by definition returns. And so the monster's body is both corporal and incorporeal; its threat is its propensity to shift. (*Monster Theory* 4–5)

Cohen argues that the monsters as the symbol of cultural construction are perpetually prone to disappearance, yet their disappearance cannot be strictly interpreted through the binary understanding such as of life and death; in Cohen's perspective, never completely vanish. He notes that even monsters like Yeti leave their physical traces such as footprints in the snow, and posits that despite their elusive character, monsters always manage to escape, and their demise is unknown though their traces can be seen even after their disappearance. The central point of his thesis also implies that the monsters are not single or individual characters in stories, yet they are manifestations of deeper societal concerns which makes them reappear in different forms and alternations corresponding with the contemporary problem of their society as "all cultures have their own monsters" (Weinstock 1). Their reappearance also signifies that as they are constantly evolving and shifting, they are resistant to final categorization or understanding. Similarly, as mentioned before, the characters of Victor Frankenstein and Victor Stein oscillate between intelligence and madness as well as their positions both as a monster and a creator. As the narrative oscillates between a future of technological advancements and the historical context of the nineteenth century, focusing on Mary Shelley's creation of *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*, there is a similar ambiguity about the disappearance of Victor Frankenstein:

> Mr Wakefield, sir!
> I was roused from my sleep by my servant. It was scarcely dawn.
> He held a lantern above him that cast shadows on the panelled walls of my chamber.
> He is gone, sir. Escaped, sir.
> Who is gone? Who is escaped?
> Victor Frankenstein.
> Now I roused myself. My bare feet on the cold floor.
> How is that possible?
> There is no trace of him. No trace of his escape. No trace of his presence. (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 204)

As the text suggests, Victor Frankenstein's vanishing, despite the impenetrable boundaries of his locked chamber, represents the elusive and unpredictable nature of the monster within the framework of Cohen's theory. According to Cohen, the monster is a cultural body, a representation of deep societal and cultural apprehensions. Victor Frankenstein, in his dual position, similar to Victor Stein, as the creator and a part of the monstrous narrative, embodies this elusive element. The fact that he vanished completely, leaving no sign of his existence, reflects the ambiguity and mystery that surrounds the monstrous character in traditional narratives.

> We went down like visitors to an underworld we used to know. There was the pub where we had told our stories. But everything was as it should have been. No overturned tables or flooded floors. The board games and cards were neatly stacked on the shelves. The photo of Winston Churchill had new glass. I know it was new glass. I ran my finger over it. No dust. The giant generators, Jane and Marilyn, were clean and silent. And everything else had gone too. The concrete rooms were empty. No jumping spiders. No lurching hands. No busy bots slicing brains, no heads in jars, no computers. Only the swinging overhead strip lights and the boom boom of the River Irwell. (226)

Similar to Victor Frankenstein, Stein's disappearance takes place in an underground environment that was filled with technological instruments as well as experiments such as jumping spiders, lurching hands, bots slicing brains, heads in jars, and computers, but it is now devoid of its former chaos. This incident underlines the mysterious nature of Stein's disappearance. His vanishing, much like Victor Frankenstein's, represents the unpredictable nature of the monster that is conceptualized in Cohen's theory as “monster always escapes” (Cohen 5). In Cohen's context, this phrase suggests that monsters, as cultural constructs, are never fully vanquished or understood. Although separated by a gap of two centuries, the disappearance of Victor Stein, akin to a more contemporary form of Victor Frankenstein, encompasses a similar theme, that is, the monster does not completely disappear; rather, it undergoes a metamorphosis and re-emerges in a contemporary era. Within the context of monster theory, similar to Victor Frankenstein's, Stein's departure also reflects the notion that the monstrous isn't restricted to physical forms or traditional narratives. Instead, it serves as a constantly evolving representation of societal concerns, anxieties, and aspirations, particularly those related to technology and the evolution of the human condition aligning with similar concerns regarding the posthuman state of the human condition which emphasizes the mutual evolution of the human and the monster. Victor Frankenstein, who was born out of the technological constraints and human conditions of his time, contrasts with Victor Stein, who appears in

a more advanced technological environment, representing the next stage of this monster evolution. Both scenarios depict the monster's evolution in parallel with humanity highlighting that the monster is not only a physical entity, but rather an ‘other’ that evolves within human. Despite the progress achieved by humanity, the other endures in various incarnations. Thus, no matter how much humanity progresses, “the other” will always exist and evolve. This scenario exemplifies how posthumanism examines the intricate and dynamic connection between humanity and technology since our perception of human identity is not fixed but continuously reshaped by our continual interaction with technology and the resulting societal transformations. This perspective creates an opportunity to comprehend the complex relationship between humanity and technology and how this interaction has refined the human condition. In this sense, Jeanette Winterson's narrative serves as both a narrative connection between the past and future and a deep examination of posthumanism in modern literature, particularly emphasizing the metaphorical and physical representation of the monster. Winterson’s *Frankissstein: A Love Story* thoroughly explores the implications of biotechnology and artificial intelligence, reshaping our comprehension of monstrosity regarding human identity. It questions the traditional notion of human nature and suggests a flexible, changing definition that is closely connected to human progress. The depiction of monsters in literature reflects the anxieties and moral quandaries of a culture on the verge of transcending beyond physical limitations. By combining themes of biotechnology, artificial intelligence, and the evolving nature of human identity, Winterson challenges traditional boundaries and definitions. In addition to redefining the monster as a dynamic being that changes along with humans as a result of technology progress, her story explores the existential and moral ramifications of these changes. Winterson's novel serves as a bridge between past literary explorations of monstrosity, such as Mary Shelley's monster, and future imaginings of a posthuman world where the boundary between the human and the nonhuman blurs.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has investigated the analysis of the ontological and technological journey of human across different periods from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* to Jeanette Winterson's *Frankisssstein: A Love Story*. By doing so, it aims to illustrate how these works critique and expand the notion of 'human' during its journey from the Enlightenment ideals into posthuman realities, through their embodiments in classical and contemporary interpretations, correspondingly investigating the theme of monstrosity in their respective contexts.

The significance of this thesis lies in its investigation of how the concept of monstrosity has evolved from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* to Jeanette Winterson's *Frankisssstein: A Love Story* with its relevance in the posthuman era. By comparing and contrasting these two novels, this thesis has revealed the persistent and evolving societal fears and anxieties of 'the other' that have been related to technological advancements and their impact on human identity, and the nature of existence. From Mary Shelley to Jeanette Winterson, this examination is still relevant today as humanity navigates through the implications of technological advancements such as biotechnology and artificial intelligence that challenge the traditional understanding of what it means to be human. The notion of monstrosity provides a suitable framework to discuss the posthumanist theories addressing the fluidity and complexity of human identity in the face of technological advancement. This claim is proven through a detailed analysis of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* and Jeanette Winterson's *Frankisssstein: A Love Story* demonstrating how both novels use the figure of a monster to question and critique contemporary understandings of human.

Throughout the analysis of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* and Jeanette Winterson's *Frankisssstein: A Love Story*, it becomes evident that the metaphor of the monster, too, has undergone a significant evolution. In *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, the monster represents the ultimate 'other,' challenging Enlightenment ideals and the definition of humanity by embodying physical and ontological differences. This creation defies the dichotomies of natural versus artificial and living versus dead, revealing inherent contradictions within the 19th-century understanding of humanity. In contrast, *Frankisssstein: A Love Story* presents monstrosity

as an integral component of human evolution, deeply connected to the progress of technology, rather than as a deviation from the norm. Thus, Winterson's narrative blurs the lines between the human and the nonhuman, illustrating the fluidity and complexity of identity in the posthuman era. The technological beings in *Frankissstein: A Love Story* embody the continuous transformation of human nature through biotechnology and artificial intelligence, emphasizing the inadequacy of traditional binary understandings. However, both novels, despite their temporal distance, underscore the necessity of a modern, hybrid interpretation of what it means to be human, reflecting the evolving nature of monstrosity in tandem with societal and technological changes.

Expanding on this perspective, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* is a critical exploration of the nineteenth century faith in scientific endeavour and the Enlightenment ideals that construct the notion of human. By doing that, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* presents a harbinger of the posthumanist condition in the nineteenth century by questioning the notion of human through the creation of a monster. As illustrated and examined, Victor Frankenstein's monster questions the essence of being human and defies these norms through its very nature: The monster's existence, not born from a natural but as an assemblage of dead bodies, is a product of scientific endeavour and experimentation. Hence, his creation challenges the binary understandings between natural and artificial, living and dead and human and nonhuman. On this basis, the monster introduces a challenge to the notion of human by defying the dichotomies that society uses to understand the world and itself and reflecting the anxieties and fears stemmed from transgressing these boundaries. For this reason, the very nature of the monster reveals the inherent contradictions in the Enlightenment-era definition of what it means to be human.

Similarly, Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* reflects parallel concerns from Shelley's time and elaborates on them with a modern interpretation of being human in the twenty-first century. In Winterson's narrative, these concerns are associated with the appearance of technologies such as artificial intelligence, and animated technologies such as cyborgs and sex bots that blur the lines between human and nonhuman. Moreover, in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus,* the distinctions between human and technology are presented as separate entities, whereas Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* explores similar challenges by merging these two corporeal

realities intricately together in a social context. In this sense, Winterson's technological monsters highlight the transformative effect of the technology on human identity as well as simultaneously revealing the continuous evolution of human nature and its dynamic interactions with 'the technological other.' Therefore, Winterson's novel emerges as a critical reflection of the understanding of the complex interplay between technology and humanity prompting a posthumanist quandary of the potential implications in the age of technology. In this perspective, contrary to the normative understandings in which the notion of human is perceived as fixed and stable, scientific and technological developments in the twenty-first century have created a posthuman situation challenging the notion of human in terms of fluidity and complexity. Hence, Winterson's narrative profoundly investigates the influence of technology on the understanding of human and prompts a reconsideration of the notion in a world where the boundaries between human and nonhuman have become increasingly distorted and hence blurred.

In conclusion, despite being two hundred years apart, both narratives illustrate the technological and ontological journey of human from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* to Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* portraying the significant challenges to the notion of human. In *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus*, the monster emerges as the ultimate other due to its physical and ontological differences that defy the notion of human, while in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, this otherness is not seen as a technological aberration that challenges the binary understandings but rather as an integral aspect of human evolution that is intricately intertwined. In the same vein, both narratives critically investigate the concept of what it means to be a human through the embodiment of monsters highlighting the inadequacies of the traditional understandings of the human. As technology continues as an external and internal factor to affect the notion of human, the binary understandings that traditionally bind the notion together become increasingly distorted and inadequate. So, both novels point to the evolving nature of human identity, emphasizing the necessity for a hybrid and modern understanding of what it means to be human. Therefore, the evolving nature of monstrosity, as in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* and Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* necessitates a re-evaluation of human identity with consideration of the ethical and philosophical implications of technological creations as the reflection on monstrosity and human identity is not merely

an academic exercise but a profoundly relevant discourse as technological advancements shape the future of humanity. By doing that, this thesis also contributes to the field of literary and cultural studies by providing a comparative analysis of the monster metaphor in two seminal works from different centuries. By comparatively examining Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* and Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, this study offers insights into the evolving nature of monstrosity and its role in reflecting societal fears and ethical concerns of their relevant periods. Furthermore, the application of posthuman and transhuman theoretical frameworks enriches the understanding of how literature can critique and expand the boundaries of human identity in an increasingly technologized world. This research not only deepens the academic discourse on monstrosity but also highlights the relevance of these narratives in contemporary discussions about technology, identity, and ethics of what it means to be human in a rapidly evolving technological landscape.

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