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Rewriting the (Post)Human: From Procreation to Creation in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things*, and Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein*

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İmza

C O N T E N T S

SUMMARY

In *Frankenstein,* (1818), Mary Shelley removes reproduction and birth from their natural arena and the female body by transferring it to the scientist. This novel was the origin of discussions of the notion of being human, and lead to the definition of transhumanism and posthumanism. This transition period, initiated by Shelley in the nineteenth century, was reshaped by Alasdair Gray in *Poor Things* (1992) with a postmodern rewriting of *Frankenstein*. In 2019, with *Frankissstein*, Jeanette Winterson further refines the concept of reproduction into an approach which is not only postmodern, but also posthuman. In this thesis, with a comparative study of these literary works shaped by transhuman and posthuman approaches, the change in the views considering human reproduction, how the concepts of human and reproduction come out of the maternal body, and the mysterious and incomprehensible birth process in nature being recreated by humans, have all been examined. In other words, the main discussion points of this thesis are the intervention of the male human on the female body since the advent of anthropocentric humanism; the neglect of the female body with the exclusion of the pregnant body; the replacement of reproduction by creation, and the abuse of the female body. The conclusion of the study is that advances in science and ideologies have changed how human beings are defined as creators and creatures as well as how they reproduce. To put it another way, the desire to replace human reproduction omits the process of pregnancy in order to achieve creation. As a result of this, the concept of the human and humanity may unavoidably be questioned and revisited. The circumstance could make the woman's precarious situation worse and interfere with the development of the human embryo. Therefore, re-evaluation of the role of the maternal body may be necessary for the context of posthumanism and transhumanism.

Keywords: posthumanism, transhumanism, the maternal body, the female body, *Frankenstein, Poor Things, Frankissstein*

ÖZET

İNSAN(SONRASI)NIN YENİDEN YAZIMI: MARY SHELLEY'NİN *FRANKENSTEIN*, ALASDAIR GRAY'İN *POOR THINGS* VE JEANETTE WINTERSON'IN *FRANKISSSTEIN* ROMANLARINDA ÜREMEDEN YARATIMA GEÇİŞ

Mary Shelley *Frankenstein*'da (1818) üreme ve doğumu doğal alanlarından almış ve kadın bedeninden uzaklaştırmıştır. Bu şekilde, üreme bir bilim insanının gücüne bırakılmış ve bu roman insan kavramının transhüman ve posthüman (insan sonrası) tanımlarına geçmesinin öncüsü olmuştur. Shelley'nin on dokuzuncu yüzyılda başlattığı bu geçiş süreci *Poor Things*'de (1992) *Frankenstein*'ın posthüman bir yeniden yazımıyla Alasdair Gray tarafından tekrar şekillendirilmiştir. 2019 yılında Jeannete Winterson *Frankissstein*'la üreme kavramını yalnızca postmodern değil aynı zamanda insan sonrası bir yaklaşımla dönüştürmektedir. Bu tezde, insan üremesi hakkındaki görüşlerin değişimi, insan ve üreme kavramlarının anne bedeninden nasıl uzaklaştığı ve doğada gizemli ve anlaşılması güç olan doğum sürecinin insan tarafından yeniden yaratılması, transhümanist ve posthümanist yaklaşımlarla şekillenen bu eserler arasında karşılaştırmalı bir çalışma ile incelenmiştir. Diğer bir ifadeyle, bu tezin temel tartışma noktaları insan merkezli hümanizmden beri erkek insanın kadın bedenine müdahale etmesi, gebe bedeninin dışlanmasıyla kadın bedeninin yok sayılması, yaratımın öne sürülmesiyle üremenin ortadan kalkması ve kadın bedeninin kötüye kullanılmasıdır. Bu çalışmanın sonucu, bilimsel ve ideolojik gelişmelerin insan algısında, üremesinde ve hatta insanın bir yaratık ve yaratıcı olarak tanımlanmasında değişiklikler olmasına sebep olduğudur. Başka bir deyişle, yaratılışı gerçekleştirmek için insanı üremeden uzaklaştırma gayesi, doğal hamilelik sürecini ortadan kaldıran bir durumdur. Bunun sonucunda, insan ve insanlık anlayışına kaçınılmaz olarak meydan okunacak ve büyük olasılıkla yeniden formüle edilecektir. Bu durum, kadının zaten problemli olan konumunu zora sokabileceği gibi insan yaşamının doğal başlangıcını da zorlaştırabilir. Bu nedenle posthümanizm ve transhümanizm dahilinde anne bedeninin yerini yeniden gözden geçirmek gerekebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: posthümanizm, transhümanizm, anne bedeni, kadın bedeni, *Frankenstein, Poor Things, Frankissstein*

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines how notions of the woman's body, which has for much of human history been mysteriously capable of birth, have transformed the female body into a genderless and posthuman creative agent. This development in perception has deprived the woman's body from its essential sense of humanity and natural birth. The thesis demonstrates such posthuman evaluation to birth and reproduction in the literary works *Poor Things* (1992) by Alasdair Gray, and *Frankissstein* (2019) by Jeanette Winterson, both of which are revisited and retold versions of the classic novel *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley. The concepts of transhumanism and posthumanism, which are based on human and humanism, will be taken as a basis in the analysis of these novels in terms of portrayals of the posthuman and maternal body. This process means that the framework of human and humanism will be used as the basis of the whole argument, rather than be directly investigated.

Before beginning a critical analysis of the literary works outlined above, it is useful to first provide some definitions of human and humanism. A human being can be classed as a cognitive living creature. According to Pramod K. Nayar's (2014: 15) definition, "a human is traditionally taken to be a subject (one who is conscious of his/her *self*) marked by rational thinking/intelligence, who is able to plot his/her course of action depending on his/her needs, desires and wishes, and, as a result of his/her actions, produces history." In other words, a human is a logical and self-aware being that is able to act in order to achieve their required deeds. Moreover, a human can be described as being "a biosocial animal" and "an autonomous being", as well as "a 'moral animal'" (Radest, 2014: 16). In other words, a human is a social and biological being who has ethical values and can make independent decisions about her/his life.

Humanism is a term with a profound history and innumerable connotations and definitions. The origination of the word is *Humanismus*, which is a German expression that means "the study of ancient Greek and Latin, and of the literature, history and culture of peoples who spoke them" (Davies, 1997: 9-10). Over time, this word used newly developed human civilizations and their attendant culture as a basis in its evolution into a system of thought (Davies, 1997: 10). Due to the enormous scope of humanism, the terms have been widely discussed and many definitions have

been given by philosophers over the years. According to Davies's Jacob Burckhardt (1997: 15), humanism is "a discovery of the world and of man." It can be understood from this quote that the searching for and discovery of knowledge about man and the world is the fundamental goal of humanism.

Due to its enormous scope, it seems impossible to provide a precise definition of the term humanism, which had different meanings for philosophers during various eras. The origin of humanism is based on the great human civilizations. Howard Radest (2014: 8) describes the history of the perspective of humanism in the following quotation:

> From fifth-century Athens to revolutionary Paris, humanism proclaimed a view of the human being as a creative and morally responsible creature. That history went back to the Greek city-state, to the Roman Empire and the Ciceronian ideal of citizenship; to Catholic humanism with its criticisms of scholasticism—for example Dante, Petrarch, Erasmus—of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries. Their successors were the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. With these came novel adventures in the arts and sciences, rebellion in politics and social custom, innovation in religion, and opportunity in personal life.

It can be seen from the above extract that humanism can be viewed as a consideration of the human being as a creature which has imaginative power and ethical concerns, and it is necessary to be human to not only to have knowledge about people and the world, but also to have moral values. In other words, humanism is a search for the ideal ethical state for humankind.

In this search for what is best for humans, humanism may not include all human beings. For instance, the "[e]arlier humanisms spoke of 'persons' in a more narrowed fashion. There were persons and non-persons: 'Greeks and barbarians,' 'the Saved and the Damned,' 'Roman citizens and alien others'. Jefferson's 'all men are created equal' or the French 'Rights of Man' marked our difference from the past" (Radest, 2014: 8). Moreover, as accep5ed by Radest (2014: 8), binary oppositions lie behind this categorization. As a result of this, human beings established civilizations according to these prioritized binaries; more specifically, men comprised the prioritized group whereas women remained in a secondary position. In these dichotomies, the authoritative member is privileged, and in the absence of diversity, humanism ceases to serve all human beings. This absence of diversity can also be seen in the definition of humans. As emphasized by Nayar (2014: 15), a human has been considered as being "male and universal" and it is accepted that he bears "rationality, authority, autonomy and agency." It can be seen that the word human began to mean a male human being, and Nayar's definition refers to the male creator issue which contradicts the

female reproductive agency. Such a distinction disempowers the woman and maternal body, which are the subjects of this thesis, and resistance to this rejection of diversity in humanism is necessary to avoid women and the maternal body becoming of secondary importance. In this respect, humanism can be seen as a system of thought that aims to reach an ideal state for humanity, and which remains the concern of contemporary novelists and writers. In realization of this injustice, "modern humanism is amending its exclusion of women" and other inferiors, and so modern humanism strives to fully recognize diversity (Radest, 2014: 8).

Improvements in industry, technology, and science, particularly the radical developments caused by the Industrial Revolution (Rifkin, 1984: 4), have altered the role and understanding of what is meant by humanism. It could even be said that the most significant element that affects humans and humanism is the progression of scientific knowledge and technological advancement in areas such as computers, motor vehicles, aeroplanes, medications, and vaccinations. These examples are of central importance in modern life, and are some of the tools that human beings utilize for their own benefit.

There is no doubt that advancements in technology have a profound impact on society. Radest expresses (2014: 9) the impact of technological enhancements by describing how: "we can hardly keep up with" how technical and cultural innovations change "[t]he dynamics of our environment." This assertion foreshadows the "radically changed sense of" human and humanism (Radest, 2014: 9). Nearly three centuries have passed since the inauguration of what can be described as modern technology, and as modern technological developments have accelerated, mechanization began to emerge in an increasing number of spheres of human life (Radest, 2014: 5). According to Radest (2014: 5), the prevailing ideas of today will become outdated over time as "[t]he rich textures of eighteenth-century Enlightenment, nineteenth-century idealism and transcendentalism, and early twentieth-century humanism ask for their successor. Yet, the size and speed of things these days make replies to that plea a mystery." In this sense, the approach to human and human nature is subjected to this alteration as a result of rapid changes.

Modern science and technology have been extremely successful in overcoming the bodily limitations and challenges of humankind (Rifkin, 1984: 11). In other words, scientific advances have enabled humans to be healthier and thus prolong their life span. This goal of living a long and healthy life through scientific advances has increased the importance of the human body.

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have witnessed new approaches to humanism such as transhumanism and posthumanism. Transhumanism is the system of thought that supports and defends the technological development of humankind. On an overt level, the development of human and human-related concepts has led to the emergence of a concept called the posthuman. As clarified by Nayar (2014: 18), posthumanism has two significant phases. The first of these is transhumanism, which Nayar defines as being "techno-deterministic, and techno-utopian." In other words, humans can reach this ideal through the use of technology. The second phase is "critical posthumanism", which revisits the illustration of human and human life by rejecting the exclusion of different genders, societies, races, and animals. (Nayar, 2014: 19) In contrast to transhumanism, critical posthumanism does not advocate the reinforcing of human embodiment to reach a physically elevated embodiment.

Recent technological and medical developments also include the subject of reproduction, and clearly the new generation is an essential part of humanity. This thesis will consider modifications in reproduction to analyse how the maternal or female body in transhumanism and posthumanism are treated. It is suggested that the replacement of human reproduction through natural reproduction by creation may culminate in both the annihilation of the maternal body and the reproductive role and power of women. As seen in *Frankenstein*, *Poor Things*, and *Frankissstein*, the process of the creation of humans may mutilate the power of women in human reproduction. In such a scenario, this reproduction process is likely to no longer be called procreation, but will instead, as it is concerned with the delivery of product rather than a human being, be merely considered creation or reproduction. In the novels considered in this study, natural reproduction has been abandoned, and natural development has been purposefully assumed by humans. A result of this process is the appearance of anthropomorphic inventions that go beyond the human understanding of humanism.

This study will begin with an in-depth analysis of the changing condition of humans. There is no doubt that advancement of machines has completely changed human life, and it is for this reason that the definition and symbolization of what is means to be human has also started to be questioned. As a result of this questioning, some critics have started to prefer to use such terms as transhuman, posthuman or even cyborg, in order to refer to a human as well as the human body. The reason for this shift is their belief that the current definition of human, and the abilities of the

human body, is gradually appearing to be limited, unequal and insufficient. Human reproduction transforms the female body into the maternal body.

Chapter One, while examining posthumanism and transhumanism, explores the transformation of the female body into the maternal body, and what stands for the void that comes out of the silence of the maternal or pregnant body. Chapter Two explores, in the literary sense, Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992) by examining the position of the pregnant body in the process of recreation. Chapter Three evaluates Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein* (2019) by considering the materialization of the female and the maternal body. Throughout the study, there will be comparisons and references to the original work, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in the two chapters that cover the novels.

In Shelley's *Frankenstein,* the ambitious scientist, Doctor Victor Frankenstein, aims to build a creature that can think, speak, and live like a human, from several cadavers without any external help. Based on this classic narrative, Alasdair Gray's novel *Poor Things* (1992) rewrites the same story as a postmodern admixture. In this novel, a pregnant body is found in a lake, and then a scientist revivifies the lifeless body with an unfamiliar scientific technique. Unlike Shelley's novel, in *Poor Things*, Gray changes the gender of the creature; a woman has a lifeless foetus in her womb and while describing the process of creating a new human, fictional scientific methods that have not been seen before are used on the woman's drowned pregnant body. Two decades later in 2019, Jeanette Winterson enters the extraordinary world of man-made creatures with her novel *Frankissstein*, which includes modern scientific developments, contemporary celebrities, sex dolls for men and Doctor Victor in a relationship with a transgender doctor Ry, to take this story to somewhere where maternal bodies or reproductive potentials for men and women are not apparent.

The overall purpose of this study is to demonstrate how the procreation of humans is altered to creation in all these three narratives, although each of them uses a different method to achieve this alteration. As a result of this creation, pregnancy, placenta, giving birth to a baby and the maternal body lose their role in this process. The changes in the role can be observed in Shelley's *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus,* Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* and Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein*. The thesis concludes by stating that there have been changes over time, as a result of scientific and ideological improvements, in the perception of humans, the reproduction of humans, and even in the meaning of humans as a creature and a creator. It is not entirely obvious if these adjustments will result in meaningful developments in terms of the maternal body, the

transformation of the theme of procreation to the theme of creation, or whether a clear and convenient solution will be found to the disparity that has been experienced by women in terms of the female body.

CHAPTER ONE
NEW BOTTLES AND NEW WINE[1]

This chapter will focus on two preliminary points discussed throughout the study, namely transhumanism and posthumanism. These are the fundamental theories that can be used to appreciate the literary works studied in this thesis. In addition, the notion of the maternal body will also be examined in terms of the female body being the agent responsible for the birth and creation of human life. This chapter is therefore divided into two subsections with each being elaborated upon separately.

In the first subsection, two of the stands of humanism's new biotechnological and philosophical journey will be thoroughly explored in terms of transhumanism and posthumanism, and it is for that reason the chapter does not include a discussion of humanism. Although they may seem to be a continuation of human and humanism, posthuman and posthumanism have evolved into multifaceted, expanding notions of their own. In this section, the theoretical foundations, along with the supporting and opposing ideas, of transhumanism and posthumanism will be examined. Both theories have been positively examined by scholars such as N. Katherine Hayles, Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, and Neil Badmington, and objected to by such critics as Jürgen Habermas and Francis Fukuyama.

The second subsection addresses the controversial position of the maternal body, which is a condition or a phase of the female body, in posthuman studies under the over-scaled title posthumanism. Discussion of issues such as the materialization of the female body, elimination of pregnancy, and abuse of scientific development, will suggest that the maternal body, which has been the hallmark of birth and reproduction, has been removed from the equation.

Below are brief descriptions of the theories and concepts that will be extensively employed in the subsequent discussion of *Frankenstein*, *Poor Things*, and *Frankissstein*.

1.1. Theoretical Framework of Transhumanism and Posthumanism

"Will we know when to stop?"

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[1] The title refers to Julian Huxley's book named *New Bottles for New Wine* (1957).

It is possible to analyse humanism, transhumanism, and posthumanism from various medical, technological, and legal aspects; however, the discussion in this study is limited to an examination of posthuman creation. Human reproduction, the creation of human embodiment, and the creator are the central concerns of this thesis. Ihab Hassan initially coined the term posthumanism in 1977 in order to create a new and concise way of defining the interaction between humanity, technology, and science.

Posthumanism is not seen as an opposition to humanism; but is instead used to refer to what lies beyond or after humanism. The basic reason for revisiting the term is the belief that the current definition of humans is inadequate for a full consideration of humankind. In other words, the term human is unable to cover the concept of all human beings and their various abilities.

Numerous scholars, including Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, and Francesca Ferrando, have contributed to the discussion on posthumanism. The theories of these authors will be used in the analysis of the novels, and Patricia MacCormack's and Cecilia Åsberg's discussions about posthumanist gender studies, Clare Hanson's definitions of the maternal/pregnant body, and Rodante van der Waal's comments on pregnant posthuman will also be utilized in exploring how the woman body is ignored in the process of human creation. In order to contrast these opinions, Haraway's and Braidotti's ideas will be compared to Fukuyama's and Habermas's claims, Hanson's definition of the maternal body, and van der Waal's term: the pregnant posthuman.

While both posthumanism and transhumanism are two distinct philosophies, they are both rooted in humanism. Transhumanism addresses a variety of concerns that stem from the notion of being human, but this is not a complete definition. As explained by Francesco Paolo Adorno (2021: 33), transhumanism is not a straightforward term since the concept "is a movement and a theory centred on a transition, a transformation, a dynamic." Therefore, and as already noted, transhumanism has been steadily evolving and developing as a movement where change and advancement are celebrated, and there is no doubt that technology and science are the most fundamental means of initiating the changes that transhumanism believes in. According to Ranisch and Sorgner (2015: 12), "[t]ranshumanism today is a slogan for a variety of cultural, political, philosophical or digital movements which promote techno-futuristic visions about the

transgression of human biology." In other words, innovative notions relating to alterations in human nature are generally related to transhumanistic aims such as providing a longer life span and enhanced abilities. As a result, the remnants of transhumanism have left their mark on a wide variety of fields such as culture, politics, philosophy, health, education and justice systems, as well as biotechnological enhancement. In this respect, these new movements directly affect the definition of human and the understanding of humanism on which civilizations are built.

Transhumanism is not a millennial term, but rather dates back to the mid-twentieth century, although there are some writers who previously used a word similar to transhumanism. For example, it is known that Dante used the expression "transhumanare" to signify what lies beyond the bounds of being human, whereas T. S. Eliot used the word "transhumanized" to express the concept of "illumination" (More, 2013: 8). However, the modern use of the expression was coined by the biologist, Julian Huxley. In *New Bottles for New Wine*, Huxley (1957: 16) pursues new approaches which focus on obtaining a longer and healthier life for human beings. Huxley (1957: 17-16) claims that human beings must improve their knowledge in such significant systems as education, science, aesthetics, and health. It would seem that transhumanism is akin to humanism in this respect, but the main difference is that transhumanism supports the technological reinforcement of human life. What Huxley (1957: 17) did predict with his claim that a human "will be on the threshold of a new kind of existence", when he or she steps into the transhumanist phase, was the increasing use of technology over time. Therefore, according to Huxley, this process marked the departure of humanist ontology traditional human condition.

Huxley's arguments could be accepted as the initial steps towards the modern understanding of humanism that were continued by other theoreticians. After Huxley, and by the end of the twentieth century, transhumanism began to take on a new form with many futurist thinkers being of the opinion that humankind should be advanced. As an example, Fereidoun M. Esfandiary, who legally changed his name to FM-2030, was one of the earliest transhumanists who established a futuristic circle called UpWingers (Bostrom, 2005: 13). In 1978, FM-2030 argued in his book, *Optimism One*, that "the human condition" would be advanced through scientific developments (Esfandiary, 1978: 74) and technological assistance, to the stage where human would become immortal. Another important landmark in the development of current understanding of what is meant by transhumanism was More's 1990 essay "Transhumanism: Toward a Futurist Philosophy", which provided transhumanism with its current status as a philosophical topic (More,

2013: 8). Both FM-2030's and Bostrom's declarations indicate that transhumanism may foreshadow the possibility of radicalising and advancing humanism.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, transhumanism evolved more rapidly by virtue of technological innovations. In 1998, the "Transhumanist Declaration"[2] was signed by twenty-three transhumanist thinkers. As stated in the 2012 version of this declaration, transhumanists "advocate the well-being of all sentience, including humans, non-human animals, and any future artificial intellects, modified life forms, or other intelligences to which technological and scientific advance may give rise" ("Transhumanist Declaration (2012)", 2013: 54). It can be seen from this declaration that support is being given with the influence of technology on non-humans, as well as human beings. In this sense, it can be argued that transhumanism and posthumanism are intertwined. As defined by More (2013: 4), "[h]umanism tends to rely exclusively on education and cultural refinement to improve human nature, whereas transhumanists want to apply technology to overcome limits imposed by our biological and genetic heritage." To put it another way, the primary goal of humanism is to foster the sociocultural growth of individuals via the provision of education, whereas transhumanism is distinct from humanism since its objective is to defy the constraints that are provided by our biological and genetic inheritance via technology. Similarly, Ferrando (2019: 27) notes that the aim of transhumanist belief is revolutionary, and defines the transhumanist objective as follows:

> Transhumanism opts for a radical transformation of the human condition by existing, emerging, and speculative technologies (as in the case of regenerative medicine, radical life extension, mind uploading, and cryonics); it thus suggests that diversity and multiplicity will replace the notion of existing within a single system, such as a biological body (Ferrando, 2019: 27).

It can be seen from this interpretation that transhumanism presents a significant opportunity for the rethinking and reformulation of the human condition in which the goal of transhumanists is not to make humans less capable, but rather to increase human potential through enhancements. More

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[2] There are many contributors of this declaration. *The Transhumanist Reader* highlights these contributions as follows: "The "Transhumanist Declaration" has beben modified over the years by several organizations and individuals, although there is scant record of tef specific modifications and their respective authors. Nevertheless, the original "Transhumanist Declaration" was crafted in 1998 by, in alphabetical order: Alexander Sasha Chislenko, Anders Sandberg, Arjen Kamphuis, Bernie Staring, Bill Fantegrossi, Darren Reynolds, David Pearce, Den Otter, Doug Bailey, Eugene Leitl, Gustavo Alves, Holger Wagner, Kathryn Aegis, Keith Elis, Lee Daniel Crocker, Max More, Mikhail Sverdlov, Natasha Vita-More, Nick Bostrom, Ralf Fletcher, Shane Spaulding, T.O. Morrow, Thom Quinn" ("Transhumanist Declaration (2012)".

(2013: 15) clearly points out the concerns of humanists by stating that they "seek to improve the human body by making it resistant to ageing, damage, and disease, and by enhancing its senses and sharpening the cognition of our biological brains." Hence, the transhumanization of the human body will also advance the human mind to create a new version of humankind. In the same vein, Adorno (2021: 35) points out that the organic nature of the human body means unstable health and limited longevity, and that transhumanists believe that human beings should utilize scientific modifications and medical enhancements to avoid the inevitable extinction of humans.

Transhumanists believe that biotechnological enhancements will allow humans to fulfil their dreams of a happy and healthy life. For example, James Hughes (2004: xvi) claims in *Citizen Cyborg* that technology will lengthen the lifespan of humans and make them "healthier and happier." Hughes (2004: xvi) continues as follows: "I believe firmly that the decisions we make in this century, whether it is to end war, inequality, poverty, disease and unnecessary death, will determine whether we achieve such long-term goals; the inconceivable destiny of intelligence, or flicker out as a failed experiment." This prediction is a summary of the goal of transhumanism: technological manipulation of the human body to fight the problems such as death, illness and disability that humankind has always been forced to struggle against.

While transhumanism sheds light on the possibilities of futuristic breakthroughs, it also raises some dangers. "Transhumanist Declaration" (2012) emphasizes the potential for uncertainty resulting from the misuse of machinery:

> We recognize that humanity faces serious risks, especially from the misuse of new technologies. There are possible realistic scenarios that lead to the loss of most, or even all, of what we hold valuable. Some of these scenarios are drastic, others are subtle. Although all progress is change, not all change is progress ("Transhumanist Declaration (2012)", 2013: 54).

These statements point out some possible misuses of technology. Furthermore, the declaration highlights several rules and decisions that could be taken to avoid mankind's destruction. It is therefore important to note that transhumanists, such as More, are not blind to the possible risks to the human race that may occur due to technological human enhancement.

More (2013: 1) points out that the term transhumanism is widely confused with posthumanism, or both are regarded as being equivalent. It is therefore worth clarifying what precisely is meant by posthumanism. The origin of the term 'posthumanism' has been debated by different scholars, and there is some controversy about when it first appeared. As indicated by

Manzocco (2019: 33), while there is a transitional period between the human condition and the transhuman condition, this transitional period may result in a "post-human evolutionary state." According to Manzocco (2019: 33), the term 'posthuman' refers to "a possible future being whose physical and mental abilities exceed ours at a level that cannot be classified as 'human' anymore." According to this logic, the hypothetical future of humankind will not meet the current definition of human, and so the term 'posthuman' serves as the foundation of the new condition.

Badmington and Nayar make some useful points for appreciating what is meant by posthumanism. While Badmington (2000: 4) associates the concept with Marx's denial of the essence of being human and Freud's concept of the unconscious, Nayar (2014: 11) identifies more contemporary issues, such as the poststructuralism of Foucault and Western feminism, as the subjective origins of posthumanism. Although there is some discussion as the origin of posthumanism, it is generally acknowledged that the term was introduced to literary criticism by Ihab Hassan in 1977 in one of the first posthumanist critiques, "Prometheus as Performer: Toward a Posthumanist Culture?". Hassan suggests that the word 'human' is inadequate for an accurate definition of human beings and says that "[w]e are the pain or play of the Human, which will not remain human. We are both Earth and Sky, Water and Fire. We are the changing form of Desire. Everything changes, and nothing, not even Death, can tire." In this respect, Hassan asserts that humans cannot remain unchanged. He places postmodernism as proof for his idea that human must gradually experience changes. He indicates that the "growing intrusion of the human mind into nature and history on the dematerialization of life and the conceptualization of existence" route human beings towards "to a posthumanist culture" (Hassan, 1977: 835). According to these remarks, it could be argued that it is now humankind's turn to change and transform, and that "humanism may be coming to an end, as humanism transforms itself into something that we must helplessly call posthumanism" (Hassan, 1977: 846). The logical conclusion of Hassan's ideas is that the boundaries of humanism need to be redrawn or, in other words, humanism requires reformulation.

The reformulation of the limits of humanism has been studied by Braidotti, a prominent contemporary name in posthuman studies who encompasses various opinions, as well. Braidotti (2013: 11) alleges that the function of posthumanism is to claim that it represents "pan-humanity"

in that it tries to "free us from the provincialism of the mind, the sectarianism of ideologies, the dishonesty of grandiose posturing and the grip of fear." Braidotti's remarks assert that posthumanism illuminates the destruction of the border between humans and other living things, and so he believes posthumanism liberates the thoughts which limit humankind.

Moreover, the inclusiveness of the term posthuman is stated by Ferrando. Ferrando (2019: 26) agrees and suggests that a "rich variety of movements" could be put under the term "posthuman." With this description, Ferrando demonstrates that transhumanism could be placed under the umbrella of posthumanism, with the slight difference between both movements being their approaches to the present condition of humans. Transhumanists believe that most humans are not yet posthuman, whereas posthumanists admit that humankind has already moved onto the posthuman condition (Ferrando, 2019: 28). Therefore, it could be indicated that posthumanism and transhumanism approach differently to the definition of posthuman, and it could be seen that transhumanism pays more attention on the physical supremacy.

Further, one of the first names in the field of posthumanism studies, Hayles states that the term posthuman may represent a being that is superior to a physically developed human being. In her book, *How We Became Posthuman*[3], Hayles (1999: 4) questions the validity of the condition of modern humans. Hayles (1999: 4) points out that one does not have to be biologically enhanced to be accepted as being a posthuman. It can therefore be seen that Hayles believes posthumans do not need bodies that are enhanced with biotechnology, or that are immortal, because her notion of posthumanism encompasses human perfection. Hayles does not accept the biological alterations which transhumanism advocates, because her notion of optimal posthumanism accepts those who are fragile and powerless. She illustrates her ideal posthuman universe as follows:

> A version of the posthuman that embraces the possibilities of information technologies without being seduced by fantasies of unlimited power and disembodied immortality, that recognizes and celebrates finitude as a condition of human being, and that understands human life is embedded in a material world of great complexity, one on which we depend for our continued survival (Hayles, 1999: 5).

Hayles not only suggests posthumanism should include weak, undeveloped, inferior, and mortal humans, but she also endorses of the ending of the human condition. In this respect, she locates

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[3] The full title of the book is *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics.*

posthumanism as a repositioning ground of humanism, and draws a slight demarcation between the positions of posthumanism and transhumanism.

In contrast to the positive evaluations of posthumanism and transhumanism that have so far been considered, there are also negative interpretations, such as those of Fukuyama and Habermas. Although most transhumanists and posthumanists regard both scholars' evaluations as being alarmist and exaggerated, it must be said that Habermas and Fukuyama's presumptions are quite plausible. In general, Fukuyama concentrates on potential inequality, and highlights the bias and discrimination that may be caused by transhumanist advancement, as well as how he believes it could exacerbate societal injustices. Fukuyama (2002: 7) claims that scientists and enthusiasts of technology are also aware of the undesired consequences that can result in the misuse of technology. To exemplify his argument, Fukuyama points out that restrictions were imposed on nuclear power when it was first used for military purposes (Fukuyama, 2002: 8). Fukuyama argues that while nuclear power is a tremendous advancement for humanity, it should be kept under strict control. Furthermore, he suggests, biotechnology, human enhancement, and artificial intelligence should also all be tightly regulated (Fukuyama, 2002: 8).

There is no doubt that when a ground-breaking discovery that is able to advance humankind has unfavourable effects and consequences, it necessitates a careful examination and the imposition of suitable regulations. Fukuyama (2002: 8) expresses the fundamental reasons for regulation as follows: "[i]f you are likely to be killed by a machine you've created, you take measures to protect yourself. And so far we've had a reasonable record in keeping our machines under control." *Our Posthuman Future* can be summarised as Fukuyama's investigation of various significant shortcomings of the integration of medical enhancement to the human body. Other than the control of artificial machines, he lists the civic drawbacks of human enhancement as another reason why he does not accept human enhancements, due to its "potential political implications, because they enhance our knowledge of, and hence our ability to manipulate, the source of all human behaviour, the brain" (Fukuyama, 2002: 19). Fukuyama (2002: 19) envisages that "[t]oday, and in the very near future, we face ethical choices about genetic privacy, the proper uses of drugs, researches involving embryos, and human cloning. Soon, however, we are going to face issues about embryo selection and the degree to which all medical technologies can be used for enhancement." Fukuyama's remarks demonstrate that he believes that there might be positive aspects to these developments, as well as dark sides that are yet to be discovered. He therefore objects to the

assertions of some transhumanists and posthumanists that technological enhancements are inevitable.

In terms of Fukuyama's concerns, biotechnology is capable of removing humankind's self-determination as it enables intervention in an individual's personal affairs by third parties. Furthermore, it is difficult to be certain about by whom, and for what purpose, medical technologies may be used, and Fukuyama particularly warns against human enhancement projects, especially for purposes of reproduction:

> To what extent are we willing to create and grow embryos for utilitarian purposes? Supposing some miraculous new cure required cells not from a day-old embryo, but tissue from a month-old foetus? A five-month-old female foetus already has in her ovaries all the eggs she will ever produce as a woman; supposing someone wanted access to them? If we get too used to the idea of cloning embryos for medical purposes, will we know when to stop? (Fukuyama, 2002: 177).

As stated, the uncertainty about where biotechnological developments might lead, and whether they could be used for malicious purposes or become the playthings of someone who may succumb to greed. Fukuyama's predictions of the future of biotechnology are rather disconcerting when compared to the more positive dreams of transhumanists who aspire to transcend the limitations of human nature. Fukuyama (2002: 190) compares such aspirations to positive speculation regarding nuclear development that may overlook the extreme inherent dangers of nuclear weapons. However, while studies on biotechnology are not normally treated with the same level of scepticism as those on nuclear technologies, Fukuyama (2002: 190) argues that nuclear power and nuclear weapon development may actually be more reliable than work done on biotechnology because of the tight supervision over nuclear power development:

> Nuclear weapons are easier to control than biotechnology for two reasons. First, nuclear weapons development is very expensive and requires large, visible institutions, making their private development very unlikely. Second, the technology is so obviously dangerous that there was a rapid worldwide consensus on the need to control it. Biotechnology, by contrast, can be carried out in smaller, less lavishly funded labs, and there is no similar consensus on its downside risks.

Fukuyama recommends that biotechnology should be controlled under the same strict regulations as nuclear activities since there is such potential for abuse and threat to human life with biotechnological development.

Habermas also expresses his concerns about biotechnology in his book, *The Future of Human Nature*. While Fukuyama suggests that the distortion of human nature would cause

unavoidable social and biological problems, Habermas (2003: 30) feels that "interference with the human body harms human dignity as a result of the instrumentalization of humans.", and warns against biomedical practices which have the potential of transforming the human body into a mere object. Further, as "human dignity" which "is not a property like intelligence or blue eyes, that one might 'possess' by nature; it rather indicates the kind of 'inviolability' which come to have a significance only in interpersonal relations of mutual respect, in the egalitarian dealings among persons" (Habermas, 2003: 31). According to this view, a person whose bodily immunity is violated has no say over her/his life, since s/he becomes merely an instrument.

Habermas also believes that technological modifications may culminate in a malevolent technocracy due to "new technological developments creating new regulatory needs" (Habermas, 2003: 24). Habermas expresses his concerns that artificially altering human nature may lead to ethical problems, inequality and, most importantly, an oppressive system based on technological power. The first of these, namely the transgression of ethical principles may, according to Habermas, result from making significant alterations to human nature (Habermas, 2003: 28) and the forceable control of humans in this new order for the sake of becoming biologically advanced (Habermas, 2003: 28). Thus, while the supposed aim of such developments is for increased happiness and health, the actual result may be the loss of human autonomy.

As highlighted by Habermas and Fukuyama, there are clear and present risks with biotechnological interventions. Both scholars are not only concerned about the potential for misuse of the technology, but also about the resulting possible social injustices. Fukuyama (2002: 158) distrusts the power of biotechnology and suggests that there could be threats to political equality and democracy where while some may be able to become healthier, stronger and happier with technological support, those who are not able to be technologically enhanced may become an underclass. Moreover, the economic status of individuals may be determined by the accessibility to technology and power. As asserted by Fukuyama (2002: 218), "[w]e do not have to regard ourselves as slaves to inevitable technological progress when that progress does not serve human ends", i.e. no individual should be obliged to accept scientific modification or enhancement. Therefore, people should not disregard the risks associated with biotechnological advancements since they may result in injustices that the human race has not previously faced. To put it another way, the view of sceptics such as Habermas and Fukuyama is that the human body should not be a guinea pig for biomedical advancements.

In short, while Fukuyama and Habermas do admit that transhumanism may bring futuristic breakthroughs; they emphasise that it should be stated that there are possible dangers. The initiators of the "Transhumanist Declaration" also accept the potential for uncertainty, and possible dangers, that may result from the maltreatment of science and machinery:

> We recognize that humanity faces serious risks, especially from the misuse of new technologies. There are possible realistic scenarios that lead to the loss of most, or even all, of what we hold valuable. Some of these scenarios are drastic, others are subtle. Although all progress is change, not all change is progress ("Transhumanist Declaration (2012)", 2013: 54)

These statements make clear that technology can also be misused. Furthermore, the "Declaration" indicates that decisions must be made, and clear rules should be imposed to avoid the destruction of comfort and maintain a contended state of humankind. In fact, transhumanists, despite their support of transhumanist explorations, are aware of the possible unacceptable and undesirable consequences of technological human enhancement.

Summing up, there are many different views and studies on posthumanism and transhumanism. In the following chapters, two significant literary works written in different centuries will be analysed regarding the controversial statements made about posthumanism and transhumanism. An investigation will also be conducted into the role of posthumanism in terms of the maternal body and female posthuman.

1.2. The Maternal Body

"If the future is now, where is the present?"
Frankissstein, Jeanette Winterson

The anthropocentric notion of the human condition has become posthuman, rather than transhumanism, and this new status is biologically and philosophically different from the traditional human condition. A major strand of this thesis is the elimination of the maternal body in terms of the creator and of the creative process, and the displacement of the reproductive capability of the women's body in posthuman studies will also be discussed. In these discussions, it is necessary for any debate concerning the maternal body to be multifaceted in terms of the maternal reproductive system and body in the posthuman condition, as well as connections being made to posthuman gender studies.

There is no doubt that the posthuman condition is biologically and philosophically different from the traditional human condition. This is due to biotechnology having direct effects on the human body, and so the human embodiment is the fundamental cause of the difference. As mentioned in the previous subsection, the posthuman condition has unique and divergent effects upon human beings. Hence, biotechnological improvements, such as in vitro fertilization, womb transplants, surrogate mothering, and any other/future possibilities, will alter the reproductive nature of humans. In this subsection, displacements of the reproductive capability of humans will be investigated to shed light on the reproductive power of female human beings, the condition of the maternal reproductive system and of the body, as well as how the status of the posthuman fits within posthuman gender studies.

The female body becomes a maternal body during the gestation period, and this maternal body is distinguished from a normal human body because the woman is considered to be naturally different. The maternal body, which is the subject of this thesis, has been discussed in detail by Clare Hanson. In her article "The Maternal Body," Hanson (2015: 87) states that the maternal body "has the property of divisibility, beginning as one and becoming two, and it is for this reason that it calls into question the idea of the indivisible subject which underpins the Western philosophical tradition." That is to say, in contrast to the human body, the maternal body embodies two separate beings: the mother and the child, and it is this that distinguishes the maternal body from others. It is clear from the statement above that Hanson focuses on the corporeal connection, which leads to doubleness within an individual and between the mother and child/foetus. In this context, by means of the maternal body, mother and child share an inseparable and irreplaceable biological bond.

However, it is widely claimed that this unique condition forces painful and laborious responsibilities upon the woman. This tiresome duty is depicted by Mary O'Brien as being a form of entrapment. As pointed out by O'Brien, women are traditionally seen to be entrapped by their reproductive responsibilities because "they cannot participate in social life on equal terms with men" (O'Brien, 2007: 49). As a result, it is widely assumed that women being released from this captivity is essential for their emancipation. In the same vein, Donna Haraway's cyborg theory, which relates to transhumanism and posthumanism, also relates to the objective of liberating women from their reproductive obligations.

Haraway's cyborg theory in *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1991), which describes a neuter posthuman, is posited as a solution to save women from forced and laborious obligations.

Haraway's posthuman is a "cyborg" that is "a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women's experience in the late twentieth century" (Haraway, 1991: 149). Focusing on the alteration of the traditional role of Western human males, she aims to break down the inequality and discrimination that arise from gender differences. Haraway (1991: 181) describes the alterations required by humankind as follows: "a regeneration, not rebirth, and the possibilities for our reconstitution, which include the utopian dream of hope for a monstrous world without gender." Proposing a gender-neutral solution overturns humanity's traditional boundaries because the cyborg is not born but made (Haraway, 1991: 181). In this sense, humanity will be freed from the binaries through the "building and destroying of machines, identities, categories, relationships, and space stories" (Haraway, 1991: 182). These statements demonstrate that breaking binary oppositions, such as male/female, nature/culture, machine/organism, human/machine or human/animal, moves humankind into a utopic environment, which could be called the posthuman condition. It is through this process that, it is claimed, the posthuman condition may bring an end to the dualities that lead to disarray.

While Haraway shows how women have been unfairly placed in binary categories, she also argues in her article, "A Cyborg Manifesto", that this categorisation is an "effort to contribute to socialist-feminist culture and theory in a postmodernist, non-naturalist mode and in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end" (Haraway, 1991: 151). In this light, Haraway envisions an infinite atmosphere, that includes childbirth and the maternal body, but has no starting point. In essence, Haraway's yearning to terminate the battle that women face in the field of reproduction is what derives her demand for the cyborg. For Haraway, the cyborg is a symbol of a new being as it offers a crossbreed or amalgam, as well as abrogating traditional maternal responsibility. Haraway (1991: 149-150) describes her notion of the cyborg as follows:

> A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. […]. In the traditions of 'Western' science and politics – the tradition of racist, male-dominant capitalism; the tradition of progress; the tradition of the appropriation of nature as resource for the productions of culture; the tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other – the relation between organism and machine has been a border war. The stakes in the border war have been the territories of production, reproduction, and imagination.

That is to say, the cyborg theory resolves the persistent contest between "production, reproduction, and imagination", as the cyborg eliminates the need for three separate notions. This is because the

cyborg can be considered as being a form of posthuman which does not exist within anthropocentric boundaries, and therefore can be used to describe both humans and non-humans. Moreover, these statements suggest that as the cyborg manipulates the borders between machines and organisms, it does not exist within the boundaries of genders since it presents "a creature in a post-gender world" (Haraway, 1991 150). Haraway therefore rejects patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism. In a sense, as she claims, "[g]ender, race or class consciousness is an achievement forced us by terrible historical experiences of the contradictory social realities" that have been created by the three consciousnesses (Haraway, 1991: 155). Cyborg theory therefore can be seen as a way of humankind overcoming the problems caused by contrast and discrimination.

The contrast that Haraway is concerned with is a gender-based contrast, and the boundaries between genders have been widely debated. A definition of gender is provided below:

> Gender divides humans into two categories: male and female. It is a system which organises virtually every realm of our lives; whether we are sleeping, eating, watching TV, shopping or reading, gender is at work. Yet because it is everywhere, it is sometimes difficult to see it in operation. Imagine trying to escape the division of gender in our daily lives – without the birth certificate which records our gender, we could not get a passport, or driver's licence. […]. Every human body in modern societies is assigned a place in a binary structure of gender (Cranny-Francis, Waring, Stavrapoulos, Kirkby, 2003: 1).

From this definition, the scope of gender is so prevalent that it influences every facet of life, and so Haraway's ideal of nullifying something so fundamental to a human's position in society could be seen as nothing short of revolutionary. Haraway's vision is that with the emergence of the cyborg, women would be liberated from the pressure of reproductive and sexual performance since traditional and biological reproduction would not be required.

Luce Irigaray, one of the pioneers of Western feminism, argues the position of women in *Speculum of the Other Woman*. In her objections to male dominancy, she claims that woman is an unacknowledged wonder of science. In the following argument, Irigaray (1985: 18) describes how she believes male dominancy removes women from the field of reproduction:

> The point being that man is *the* procreator, that sexual *production-reproduction* is referable to his "activity" alone, to his "project" alone. Woman is nothing but the receptacle that passively receives his *product,* even if sometimes, by the display of her passively aimed instincts, she has pleaded, facilitated, even demanded that it be placed within her. Matrix-womb, earth, factory, bank – to which the seed capital is entrusted so that it may germinate, produce, grow fruitful, without woman being able to lay claim to either capital or interest since she has only submitted "passively" to reproduction.

As can be seen from the above, Irigaray challenges the domination and superiority of men in human reproduction. She claims that due to this superiority, the woman stands as a mere receptor, while the man is regarded as being the originator of propagation. This argument suggests that the female body is subordinated to remain in the background of human procreation, yet the maternal/pregnant condition is clearly a central role of the female body which should not be male-dominated.

A new theory in relation to the pregnant body is also included in the thesis of this study. Rodante van der Waal, a midwife and a theoretician (2018: 368), coins "a new philosophical subject" that describes both the posthuman condition and the pregnant condition as "the pregnant posthuman." Van der Waal (2018: 368) describes it as "the daughter of Donna Haraway's cyborg and Rosi Braidotti's posthuman." At this point, it would be useful to briefly visit van de Waal Braidotti's notion of the posthuman, which is a new human condition that reverses the "normative convention" of being human (Braidotti, 2013: 26). As claimed in *The Posthuman*, such normative conventions may embody certain inequities regarding gender and race (Braidotti, 2013: 26), and so posthuman is used as a rejection of the finiteness of human as a description. According to van der Waal's claim, the pregnant body is already in the posthuman condition as it lies beyond the basic definition of 'human'.

Van der Waal implies that the pregnant body could be considered a posthuman because the woman does not meet the standard notions of a traditional human body. As van der Waal points outs, the pregnant body "is in a plural state and in an intimate experience with the new, the relational, plurality. She is the first philosophical subject capable of carrying or giving birth. With the presentation of this new subject, there is a change in focus" (van der Waal, 2018: 368). In other words, the pregnant body becomes posthuman owing to her doubleness and reproductive potential within one anatomy. Van der Waal's argument implies the need for a change in posthuman perspectives; namely that the maternal body acts as the centre of posthuman because it does not need to produce anything to become human or posthuman, and so its current state and in-betweenness are enough to be accepted as being posthuman (van der Waal, 2018: 369). Furthermore, van der Waal indicates that the pregnant body is in a "not-yet" condition. The narrator of van der Waal's article, the pregnant body, makes the following declaration:

> I expect, believe and affirm in a manner in which the classical subject of humanism is not able to – there is something that expects itself through me. […]. I am the subject who is related to everything that is uncanny in humanism. I am the abject humanism, in my bloody materiality as well as in philosophical thought where

> I am only a fleshy origin and shadow. I will never be One or a whole, but always more, always too much, always fragmented. It is not my aim to be the centre of the world. Because of my pregnant state this seems not merely an illusion but a fundamental impossibility (van der Waal: 2018: 370).

As quoted above, van der Waal takes pregnancy and the maternal body beyond the scope of humanism by pointing out that the maternal body has parallels with posthumanism. By considering the pregnant body as a posthuman body, van der Waal aims to highlight her uniqueness. However, it is not required for the pregnant body to be defined as posthuman for her exceptionality to be accepted.

The pregnant body is already a unique aspect of the human condition. If the importance of the pregnant body is to be suitably emphasized, it may be appropriate to first make an auger into the human condition. Furthermore, if it is claimed that the pregnant body or female body is as essential as other concepts already considered to be superior, such as the male human, it should be considered as being an integral part of the human condition. The posthuman condition, which is a revisiting of the human condition, may not ameliorate the pregnant female body. Before moving into the posthuman condition, the state of being silent and falling into the second situation that a woman encounters in the human condition should first be improved. In this sense, Cecilia Åsberg recognises the problematic place of women in the posthuman condition. According to Åsberg (2013: 8), Haraway's cyborg opposes the feminine self, and Åsberg (2013: 9) denounces post humanist ideals as follows:

> [T]rans-humanist conceptualizations of the post-human translate into the desire to realize the disembodied human self of the Enlightenment, purified and enhanced by science, medicine, and technology in order to transcend disease, ageing, and eventually death. It appears as a dream of perfection and infinitude that harbours a disregard for vulnerability, *thus incompatible with feminist posthuman ethics*.

As suggested, the reason that the cyborg lies at the heart of this discordance is its genderless nature. Åsberg (2013: 9) therefore ascribes to feminist posthuman ethics by claiming that posthumanism sometimes "fails to consider the recalcitrant nature of bodies and materiality at large." In this respect, Åsberg accepts that the term 'posthuman' is insufficient to fully encapsulate the complete notion of being a woman. As a result of the dominant male atmosphere of posthuman and transhuman philosophy, Patricia MacCormack doubts the female condition by claiming the representation of the female is an unsatisfactory representation of posthumanism within the human condition.

MacCormack (2018: 34) claims that while posthuman and transhuman studies may cause feminism to re-engage with the struggle it has been fighting for many decades, she feels that the position of woman has not been clearly established:

> While feminism has grappled with the disassembling of the majoritarian phallogocentric subject, posthuman and transhuman theory have shown a problematic acceleration of certain tropes associated with historically dominant subjects, rather than offer material and ethical alternatives, using fetishization and assimilation of alterity to further their phantasies of immortality, rather than authentically challenge configurations of life.

It is clear from the above statement that MacCormack questions the current existence of women, and is concerned about their future. By pointing out that as women have not been able to fully establish their position in the current human condition, they are unable to claim existence within posthumanism. Such remarks suggest that male dominancy predominates within the current posthuman condition.

Considering the lack of clarity of the condition of women, Åsberg proposes an alternative: posthumanist gender studies, which she feels "may open up feminist analysis to the shifting relationship between the human and the non-human (animal, machine, environment), natures and cultures, the popular and the scientific." Åsberg feels a renewed feminist approach may enrich posthuman studies by helping to find a way of preserving female existence. This is because such an approach can act as a bridge in order to comprehend the alterations and renewals of such novel approaches to humankind.

Åsberg and Braidotti both comment on the woman's place in changing conditions and they admit that posthumanism may need to be updated into a feminist posthumanism which would represent "a qualitative shift of attention" with a "both critical and creative framework for performative and generative accounts of technoscientific or other nature cultural practices across disciplines and categories" (Åsberg and Braidotti, 2018: 17-18). Such a feminist posthumanism would allow "a re-thinking of human nature, and consequently the practice of humanities" (Åsberg and Braidotti, 2018: 18). In other words, a thorough consideration of human nature and the humanities would require a revisiting of posthumanism and transhumanism.

In short, the aim of transhumanism is to improve the nature of human beings so they can reach perfection, and it is widely suggested in the field that this would involve the woman's body and the pregnant body either undergoing a change or being redefined. In this respect, it could be said that transhumanist studies would eliminate the pregnant body. The initial objective of

transhumanism is the enhancement of human beings, and one prominent assertions of transhumanism is the use of biotechnology for improvements. However, it is also pointed out by some transhumanists that the problems that biotechnology may cause could lead to a radical change in the basic principles of human values such as autonomy and justice. Additionally, transhumanism may make women's position unappealing in terms of posthumanism.

The novels that involve characters which can be categorized as being posthuman have been examined, in terms of the condition of females and mothers, by such critics as Moers, Mellor and Homans. One of the most well-known of such works is Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in which the male creator "usurps the maternal role in procreation", and therefore prevails over the maternal body and the woman's monopoly on procreation (Bode, 2010: 661). In the following chapters, the revised posthuman and transhuman perspectives of the condition of the maternal body in the novels *Poor Things* and *Frankissstein* will be discussed by comparing such perspectives to those in *Frankenstein.*

The theories that have been discussed in this chapter will be used to analyse *Poor Things* and *Frankissstein* by comparing the two novels with Shelley's *Frankenstein*. All three novels have posthuman characters. First, in *Frankenstein*, Doctor Victor produces a human without a woman, and so could represent the maternal body since he creates a human being without a female. Secondly, in *Poor Things*, a drowning woman who is brought back from the dead, and is then reanimated by a scientist, loses her maternal body. Thirdly, Frankissstein presents an alternative future where robots with artificial intelligence are mentioned, and a revisited history in which reproduction is depicted as a hopeless wait. It is therefore suggested that these novels present an appropriate framework for research on the absence and silence of the maternal body in posthumanism and transhumanism.

To conclude, aside from the presence of posthuman characters in the three novels mentioned, there are also attempts to procreate and revitalize notions of humanity through transhumanist ideals and studies. The basis of this study is that theories concerning transhumanism, posthumanism and the maternal body may be helpful in an analysis of the role and significance of the maternal body in the creation of posthumanism.

CHAPTER TWO

THE UNCLAIMED MATERNAL BODY IN *POOR THINGS*: REVISITING *FRANKENSTEIN*

"*Bella Baxter's most striking abnormality is her lack of it.*"

Poor Things, Alasdair Gray

Alasdair James Gray was born on December 28, 1934, in Glasgow, Scotland (Böhnke, 2004: 2). In *Alasdair Gray: The Fiction of Communion,* Gavin Miller (2009: 5), a scholar from the University of Glasgow, presents a comprehensive biography of Gray in which he argues that the most important aspect of Alasdair Gray's early life is how stressed and anxious he was at school. It is also clear that his psychological troubles increased after he lost his mother at the age of eighteen. However, Gray was a successful writer, publishing his first literary work, *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (Böhnke, 2004: 2) in 1981, and his literary prominence gained him a position as Writer in Residence at Glasgow University from 1977 to 1979 (Miller, 2005: 10). The publishing of his first novel in 1981 was met with a great deal of critical acclaim (Miller, 2005: 10), with Stephen Bernstein (2007: 167) suggesting in "Alasdair Gray and Post-millenial Writing" that the work had a tremendous influence on Scottish literature, and that Gray had become a substantial name in the Scottish canon. Despite this success, Gray eventually became more interested professionally as an artist and painter, which gradually replaced his literary pursuits.

Following the publication of his first novel, Gray released two collections of short stories: the well-received *Unlikely Stories*, *Mostly* (1983) and the less substantial *Lean Tales* (1985), co-authored with James Kelman and Agnes Owens (1985). In 1984, he wrote another influential novel, *1982, Janine* (Bernstein, 2007: 167-168); in 1990, *Something Leather*, a combination of short stories in a form of a novel, and his third significant work, *Poor Things* was published in 1992. In the following years, Gray published a selection of short stories *Ten Tales Tall & True* (1993) and *History Maker* (1994) (Miller, 2005: 11). In addition to his literary work, Alasdair Gray also wrote political pieces about Scotland, such as a bulletin entitled *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland* (Bernstein, 2007: 168). His other non-fictional work is *The Book of Prefaces* (2000), and his last work was a novel named *Old Men In Love* (2007). He passed away in December 2019 at the age of eighty-five. As announced by his publishing house, *Canongate* ("Happy Happy Gray Day! A

Celebration of Alasdair Gray", 2021), the anniversary of the release date of *Lanark* was to be celebrated as Gray Day. He won numerous prizes throughout his literary years, such as the Scottish Arts Council Book Award (1981) and the Saltire Society Scottish Book of the Year Award (1981). In 1992, he added the Whitbread Novel Award and *The Guardian* Fiction Prize to his awards for his fourth novel, *Poor Things* (Böhnke, 2004: 13). The novel, of which the full name is *Poor Things: Episodes from the Early Life of Archibald McCandless M.D.*, revisits Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and combines the story of the monstrous procreation with his Scottish heritage and political views.

Gray begins the first page of *Poor Things* by presenting the novel as a postmodern memoir of a Scottish Health Officer, and describes himself as being the editor of the book. *Poor Things* is therefore widely regarded as being a novel that bridges the gap between history and fiction. That said, it is also a literary work that can be viewed from a variety of viewpoints. As stated by Böhnke (2004: 54-64), Gray was a unique writer whose literary works should not be regarded from a single point of view, and there is no doubt that *Poor Things* is one of the greatest examples of his postmodern novels, especially in terms of rewriting, intertextuality, and metafiction. Kaczvinsky (2001: 776) notes that as a Scottish writer, Gray made use of the conflicts between Scotland and England in this novel, creating a postmodern search for the identity of the Scottish nation. However, in this study, this novel is taken as a posthuman rewriting.

As already mentioned, *Poor Things* can be viewed as a rewriting of Shelley's *Frankenstein.* One point of note is that the names of the two main protagonists make references to Shelley's personal life. More specifically, Godwin Baxter, the scientist who is the creator of Bella, and Bella herself. Böhnke (2004: 155) comments on these similarities:

> His [Godwin's] name can be read as an allusion to Mary Shelley's father William Godwin […] as well as— since his full name is given as Godwin *Bysshe* Baxter—to her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley. Bella/Victoria herself, on the other hand, constitutes the link to Mary Shelley's mother Mary Wollstonecraft, if not in name but in her development in the course of the novel into a socialist and feminist doctor.

Böhnke's remarks demonstrate that Gray makes use of some excerpts from Shelley's personal life. Therefore, *Poor Things* can be studied giving references to *Frankenstein* and Shelley.

In this study, the disarray of the maternal body and her place in the novel is scrutinized in light of posthumanist theory. In the novel, Gray presents a significant modification of the maternal

body, and it could be said that Gray's postmodern rewriting of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* has significant issues in terms of the employment and the omission of the maternal body. However, before this idea is explored any further, it would be pertinent to first outline the book and the plot.

Despite the postmodern structure and historical references, *Poor Things* could be analysed within the framework of the theories related to posthumanism and transhumanism. In the novel, Doctor Godwin Baxter signs the death report of an unclaimed pregnant and unexpectedly beautiful, drowned woman, named Bella Baxter, and then he secretly reanimates her body. The resurrection involves changing the brains of the foetus and the mother, and thus the doctor can be seen to be assuming control over the normal relationship between mother and child. In the process, he also creates a new human being without procreation, but through creation. It is interesting to note that in *Frankenstein*, Shelley does not employ the maternal body since Victor reanimates a dead male body, while Baxter reanimates a maternal body that was found dead, and this maternal body has a central role in *Poor Things*.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* becomes the representative of a recreated being, and the creature has been generally considered to be the first posthuman. In *Frankenstein,* Shelley revisits the ideas of creation and human reproduction, as well as considering the question of what it means to be human. *Poor Things*, in turn, revisits *Frankenstein* and replaces human reproduction with recreation. In the words of Böhnke (2004:153), the "novel constantly alludes to, plays with, parodies and re-writes Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.*" In other words, *Poor Things*, as a rewriting of *Frankenstein*, further develops notions of the first posthuman.

In the first novel, Shelley removes the reproductive female body from the stage of procreation by replacing the maternal body with a male doctor's operating room. The primary aim of the main character, Victor Frankenstein, is to create a living body without any external interference. As a result of this creation, the natural order of procreation is altered through Victor exercising his creative power. According to Mellor (2012: 776), Victor Frankenstein makes a woman "passive and possessable, the willing receptacle of male desire." This process can be seen in his destruction of female power in human reproduction through the exercising of the power of creation without natural procreation to create a female companion for his initial creation. That said, Victor does not find the process of creating a human easy, and described his struggles as follows: "After days and nights of incredible labour and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of

generation and life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter" (Shelley, 1831: 52). When Victor finally accomplishes the creation of a human, after a tiresome recreation process which could be seen as approximating a pregnant woman's labour pains, he becomes the creator and the only progenitor of a living humanoid being without any female companion. In this process, Victor Frankenstein replaces the female and maternal body with a doctor's operating room. As argued by Mellor (2012: 777) "[b]y stealing the female's control over reproduction, Frankenstein has eliminated the female's primary biological function and source of cultural power." *Frankenstein*, and its rewriting *Poor* Things, show similar approaches to the maternal body; namely, in the "bestowing animation upon lifeless matter", *Frankenstein* and *Poor Things* reshape human reproduction by excluding the maternal body.

Like Victor Frankenstein, Godwin Baxter recreates without a spouse. However, Baxter does not create a new being, but instead changes a dead pregnant body. Before Baxter succeeds in recreating a new form/being on his own, and thus believing he has made great strides in utilising the human body, he had announced that his aim was to master his father's methods. His father was Sir Colin, a well-known surgeon who, just like Shelley's Victor Frankenstein, researched unusual scientific techniques, such as combining bodily organs and the reanimation of lifeless bodies. Baxter states "he [Sir Colin] discovered how to arrest a body's life without ending it so that no messages passed along the nerves, the respiration, circulation and digestion were completely suspended, the cellular vitality was not impaired." (Gray, 1992: 20). As can be seen from the quotation, Sir Colin follows, not exactly the same, but a similar, route to revive humans. In *Poor Things*, a male scientist tries to become a recreator; therefore, the female procreator's function is silenced. The above comparison can be summarised as Gray addressing Victor Frankenstein's issue of converting reproduction into creation by, as has been done so often by men, removing the function of the female and maternal body from the equation. Through this process, the dominance and sovereignty of the male creator prevails.

There are similarities between the aims of Sir Colin and the desires of transhumanists: namely the quest for a longer, healthier, and happier life. Nayar (2014: 16) defines transhumanism "belie[f] in the perfectibility of the human, seeing the limitations of the human body (biology) as something that might be transcended through technology so that faster, more intelligent, less disease-prone, long-living human bodies might one day exist on Earth." As both transhumanists

and Sir Colin advocate the elevation of the human body, it could be claimed that Sir Colin is a transhumanist.

However, Sir Colin is not the only transhumanist in *Poor Things*, as his son Godwin also follows in his footsteps. Before he reanimates the dead pregnant body, Godwin has also conducted surveys on animals. At one point in the novel, McCandless sees two rabbits with surprisingly bizarre shapes in his study. This episode delineates Fukuyama's rejection of any modifications, who points out, "we will never be able to anticipate the ultimate outcome" (Fukuyama, 2004: 43). In other words, to further a transhumanist cause, the rabbits' natural bodies were artificially altered, but the state of the bodies raises certain issues: namely, despite the significant effort that Godwin Baxter has put into the modified rabbits, he does not believe them to be a successful project, and in fact is neither satisfied nor proud of the result.

> I have done nothing wonderful. […]. Mopsy and Flopsy were two ordinary, happy little rabbits before I put them to sleep one day, and they woke up like this. They are no longer interested in procreation, an activity they once greatly enjoyed. But tomorrow I will put them back together in exactly the way they were before (Gray, 1992: 23).

As observed in the novel, Godwin regrets destroying the natural state and biological systems of the rabbits in his experiment. According to Godwin's interpretation, it could be claimed that the rabbits' refusal to reproduce may be the indicator of how essential the natural aspect of procreation is. Unfortunately, Godwin's experiment is never successful, and it could therefore be argued that the rabbits are denied their natural bodies for no reason.

The above is an example of how on the one hand, Godwin continues his father's studies, while, on the other hand, he contradicts himself. Several further instances of conflict can be found in the novel. At one point, Baxter mentions he has a new successful experiment, unlike the incident of Mopsy and Flopsy. He confesses that he found a pregnant body, but realised that the foetus was still alive. Since he has learnt the special techniques of Sir Colin, he replaces the brain of the young woman with that of the foetus, although he is not proud of his previous experiment. This results in him resuscitating the unborn baby in Victoria Blessington's body. By regenerating her lifeless pregnant body, Godwin generates an unprecedented form of a human being resisting death, and preventing death is the primary objective of transhumanists. After Victoria's dead brain is replaced with the foetus's brain, she has to learn to talk, read, and write just like an infant. Clearly, this is a

serious problem for her adult body because the lack of cognitive development in an adult female body leaves Victoria open to manipulations and abuse. Consequently, it could be stated that Godwin's transhumanist ideas, which initially might seem impressive, result in the forcing of a woman to live with the immature brain of her baby.

It may be helpful at this point to describe some of the objections against biotechnology. As previously stated, one notable critic is Jürgen Habermas, and Godwin's new experiment or operation may be seen as a reflection of the predicaments of Habermas (2003: 11-12):

> The advance of the biological sciences and development of biotechnologies at the threshold of the new century do not just expand familiar possibilities of action, they enable a new type of intervention. What hitherto was "given" as organic nature, and could at most be "bred," now shifts to the realm of artifacts and their production.

Seen through the above lens, Victoria becomes Godwin's product. This occurrence can be seen as a reflection of Habermas's suspicions:

> My particular concern is the biotechnological dedifferentiation of the habitual distinction between the "grown" and the "made", the subjective and the objective, may change our ethical self-understanding as members of the species and affect the self-understanding of a genetically programmed person (Habermas, 2003: 23).

As described above, Habermas notes that the application of human biotechnological processes may make it impossible to detect the difference between the real and the manipulated. To put it another way, this would mean that a modified human would no longer able to perceive her or his existence. As seen in the novel, Godwin's product, Victoria does, in fact, loses her real identity, and he changes her name to Bella Baxter. Furthermore, as she is not able to refute this change because her knowledge and past have been erased by her re-creator, and so she loses her own self. Hence, Bella/Victoria becomes "blindly dependent on the nonrevisable decision of another person" (Habermas, 2003: 14). In other words, she is now doomed to follow the path her new creator has set her upon. Following the inappropriateness of Bella's status, Godwin believes his interventions are nothing but scientific ambition and indulgence.

Godwin's experiments are extremely controversial, and have uncertain, and even lethal, consequence for their subjects. In the following conversation from the novel, the creation process is debated by Godwin and McCandless:

> By recasting its brain in the mother's body I shortened her life as deliberately as if I stabbed her to death at the age of forty or fifty, but I took the years off the start, not the ending of her life—a much more vicious thing to do. And I did it for the reason that elderly lechers purchase children from bawds. Selfish greed and impatience drove me and THAT!" he shouted, smiting the table so hard with his fist that the heaviest things on it leapt at least an inch in the air, "THAT is why our arts and sciences cannot improve the world, despite what liberal philanthropists say. Our vast new scientific skills are first used by the damnably greedy selfish impatient parts of our nature and nation, the careful kindly social part always comes second (Gray, 1992: 67-68).

As can be seen by Godwin admitting that Victoria has undergone an irreparable alteration due to his overwhelming desire for more, the selfishness of the scientist can affect a person's entire life. According to Fukuyama (2002: 94), the permanent nature of genetic modification may be extremely problematic for the recipient: "it is more like giving your child a tattoo that she can never subsequently remove and will have to hand down, not just to her own children, but to all subsequent descendants." There is no doubt that Godwin has a profound impact on the lives of Victoria and her unborn child, and it becomes clearly apparent that Godwin's sole motivation was not to save Victoria's life, body and existence, but to achieve scientific glory.

As Godwin admits in Chapter 6, "Baxter's Dream," this experiment allows him to not only achieve his aim, but also to gain the female companion that he has been yearning for:

> Sir Colin, his nurses and dogs gave me more attention than most newcomers to this globe are given, but I wanted more than that. I dreamed of a fascinating stranger—woman I had not yet met so could only imagine—a friend who would need and admire me as much as I needed and admired her. No doubt a mother supplies this want in most young creatures, though rich families often employ a servant to take the mother's place […]. But I cannot remember a day when I did not feel inside me a woman-shaped emptiness that ached to be filled by someone stranger and bonnier than I ever met at home (Gray, 1992: 38-39).

Certainly, Godwin Baxter seeks the love and affection that he desperately craved when he was young. One of his childhood memories was how obsessed he was by the picture of Shakespeare's Ophelia of *Lamb's Tales*. "Ophelia could look at me with loving wonder because she saw the inner man I would become—the kindest, the greatest, doctor in the world who would save her life and the lives of millions" (Gray, 1992: 39). This memory helps to explain Godwin's selfish act of taking home the Ophelia-like body floating in the water that he encounters. Interestingly, he justifies this as: "[T]he patients never see me so that was no way to win the admiring smile of an Ophelia, but I have nothing to complain about now, Bella's smile is happier than Ophelia's was, and makes me

happy too" (Gray, 1992: 41). In other words, since Godwin is so preoccupied by his own happiness, he forces Bella to live in a situation where cannot maturely think, decide, or make judgements.

Böhnke (2004: 202) also pursues a similar line in his analysis by describing the issue of male dominancy: "Apart from the currently debated questions of genetical engineering implied here, this can also be seen as emphasising the male-dominated society […], in which the image of women is tailored to the needs of men." It is clear from this statement that male authority changes the women; that is to say, under the name of a scientific investigation, patriarchal supremacy exerts its influence over the female body in order to prioritize its own requirements and the higher priority of his goals.

It would be appropriate at this point to mention Fukuyama's interrogation of the transhuman condition and its future. In his analysis, Fukuyama (2002: 10) emphasizes the need for regulations in biomedical technologies and their operational activities by suggesting that some regulations "can discriminate between good and bad uses of biotechnology" because, as it is not possible to know what a scientist's aim might be, biotechnological enhancements and alteration of human nature might bring some ethical problems (Fukuyama, 2002: 186). Fukuyama predicts that biotechnological enhancements, namely transhumanist activities or studies, may lead to abuse due to scientists succumbing to temptation or enthusiasm. It can be seen in *Poor Things* that Baxter is guilty of this by using biotechnological enhancements according to his personal aspirations, namely, to use Victoria to fill his lonely inner "woman-shaped emptiness". Placing Victoria and her maternal body in a position which is open to exploitation is in harmony with the tenet of transhumanism for progress through biotechnological developments.

Following the experiment, Victoria becomes subordinated to Baxter in many ways. First of all, she is forced to abandon her former identity and name when Baxter names her 'Bella'. Victoria Blessington therefore dies, and Bella Baxter is born. Given that Bella "will be wholly at [Baxter's] mercy with no public opinion to protect her," she is entirely in Baxter's, an unfamiliar man's, hands (Gray, 1992: 36). Once Bella is in his home, she is only allowed to interact with himself and other trustable people, such as McCandless and the housekeeper, Mrs Dinwiddie, and so Bella is unable to step out of the social framework that has been drawn for her by Baxter. When McCandless learns the truth, he is appalled to learn of what he sees as Baxter unethically using, both through reanimation and changing her identity, Victoria's dead maternal body for his own purposes.

McCandless' reaction is comparable with Habermas's comments on the social dependence which may be created as a result of biotechnological interference.

According to Habermas (2003: 65), biotechnological alterations may cause a "kind of social dependence, which is irreversible because it was established by ascription, is foreign to the reciprocal and symmetrical relations of mutual recognition proper to a moral and legal community of free and equal persons." or, to put it another way, that biotechnological alterations can contravene the basic human rights of personal liberty and justice. There is no doubt that Victoria/Bella's deterioration, with Baxter's medical intervention, jeopardizes her freedom and such rights. A lack of cognitive freedom means that a person is obliged to believe what he/she is told and showed. In this respect, as Baxter stands for Victoria/Bella's governor, Bella is bound to lose her identity, rights, and liberty. As quoted, Habermas sheds light on the bondage and limitation of human rights and, as described, Victoria/Bella is an adult woman who is fully dominated by Baxter.

It can also be seen that Bella corresponds to the definition of posthuman in posthuman theory. As stated by Hayles (1999: 2), an altered and enhanced body may not be accepted as being human after becoming a posthuman, which is merely "an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (Hayles, 1999: 3). According to Hayles's description (1999: 3), Baxter's "amalgam" is no longer human. As Braidotti articulates posthuman as a "new knowing subject [which] is a complex assemblage of human and non-human, planetary and cosmic, given and manufactured"; it "requires major re-adjustments in our ways of thinking" (Braidotti, 2013: 159). Therefore, Bella suits both Hayles's and Braidotti's explanations as the cognition of the being in the novel needing to be refigured because it becomes something that has been created.

Comparing the creations of Victor Frankenstein and Godwin Baxter illuminates the process of changing human nature and creating a monster. For example, Bella's lover, Duncan Wedderburn, writes a letter to Baxter from Paris during the couple's European tour. He despairs at Bella's unstoppable carnal desires and pleads for help (Gray, 1992: 122). In this letter, Bella's erratic and licentious condition leads him to describe Bella as "gorgeous monster". Bella's uncontrollable passion, and her childish responses to and open flirtation with other men she meets while travelling, are too much even for Wedderburn, who himself had spent time in an asylum for his lecherous character. Kaczvinsky (2001: 784) points out that "[i]nstead of Wedderburn ruining

Bella, Bella drives Wedderburn mad with her libidinous energy." Unfortunately, Bella's insatiable demands do not only make Wedderburn feel emasculated, but also eventually ruin her own life. When Wedderburn finally leaves her, she ends up working in a brothel, and this is inevitably traumatic for her young brain, which even further demonstrates how Baxter's interference harms Bella's maternal body. As for her licentiousness, this can be explained by Bella's immature cognition, which is basically at the level of a foetus, having none of the adult's control on her passions that she would have normally developed. As already noted, Godwin Baxter's experiment does not end well, just like Victor Frankenstein's, so the result is concurrent with Fukuyama's warning that biomedical interference without consent causes a complete change.

Bella faces many other difficult problems while under Godwin's domination, one of which is to fall in love with McCandless; the first male figure that she has seen with her naïve cognition, while she still has the cognition of a toddler. Although this cognition does develop naturally over time, she does not have enough time for her to mentally become an adult with mature comprehension skills that would allow her to control her thoughts, emotions, instincts, and expressions. It is for this reason she makes a series of poor decisions, beginning with falling in love with McCandless. Even so, when she sees Duncan Wedderburn, a young and attractive man who is also known as "the worst man possible", she cannot help eloping with him, just as a toddler spots a new toy and instantly abandons the old one (Gray, 1992: 57).

Böhnke highlights the ethical status of man-made creation in *Poor Things*. "[C]oncerning the problems of transplantation and the special status of the human brain/mind and, by implication, the dangers of genetic manipulation. Such problems involving the role of morality in science are explicitly mentioned several times in the novel" (Böhnke, 2004: 156). Böhnke points out that there may be negative issues if the human nature were modified, and it can be seen that Böhnke's indications correspond to Fukuyama's objections to transhumanism.

As Fukuyama claims, biotechnology may cause the wasting of "some essential quality that has always underpinned our sense of who we are and where we are going […]. Worse yet, we might make this change without recognizing that we had lost something of great value" (Fukuyama, 2002: 101). That is to say, changes in human nature may result in losing human dignity. Fukuyama's human nature is a construct that comprises of multiple values and cannot be regenerated once disturbed. His description of human nature is given below:

Human nature is what gives us a moral sense, provides us with the social skills to live in society, and serves as a ground for more sophisticated philosophical discussions of rights, justice, and morality. What is ultimately at stake with biotechnology is not just some utilitarian cost-benefit calculus concerning future medical technologies, but the very grounding of the human moral sense, which has been a constant ever since there were human beings (Fukuyama, 2002: 101-102).

As seen from these remarks, Fukuyama is concerned that biotechnology might erode the ideals, such as justice, equality, and morality, that give purpose to individuals. As demonstrated in *Poor Things*, it is important to emphasize the fact that Bella is obliged to experience this inequity and injustice without an adult's awareness due to biomedical processes. Generally speaking, Bella's abnormal behaviour appears to be the result of her altered state. McCandless rejects the experiment since it was done deliberately to possess a woman without her consent, and so it can be argued that Fukuyama's rejection of biotechnology corresponds to that of McCandless.

In addition to the moral criticism of McCandless, as stated above, the biotechnological alteration of the human condition can be analysed from multiple perspectives. One point to note is that abandoning of the maternal body occurs in both the original story of *Frankenstein* and also *Poor Things*. Homans (1986: 100-101) comments on the motherless creation process that takes place in *Frankenstein* in "Bearing Demons: *Frankenstein*'s Circumventions of Maternal", and thus sheds light on how Victor bypasses the matrimonial stage. Homans argues that the women's role is invaded by Victor as he denies his creation the necessary social and maternal needs that a mother would normally supply, and so suggests the "the unnecessariness of natural motherhood and, indeed, of women" (Homans, 1986: 105). As indicated, Victor's individual and single creation process could be seen as the manifestation of male dominancy in the reproductive area as normally, in human reproduction, females and males each have their own defined role. Victor's overstepping the posthuman creation removes the maternal body, the keystone of the origin of every human. Thus, the disappearance of the maternal body, which has already not been adequately addressed, renders the woman, whose position has not been enhanced while in the human condition, more silent in a posthuman scenario.

The abjection of the maternal body in *Poor Things*, as in Shelley's *Frankenstein*, is clearly implemented by male characters. For instance, before Victoria's lifeless body is transformed into Bella by Godwin Baxter, she was described as being hysterical and neurotic by the man she was married to. When Bella and McCandless are about to get married, Bella/Victoria's family from her

previous identity arrive to take her back. An agent with a fast London dialect speaks on behalf of her husband, General Sir Aubrey de la Pole Blessington. The spokesman states that Victoria's mental condition is abnormal as she has committed suicide due to, he suggests, her pregnancy. He describes Victoria as "vanished fromerome sudden being disturbed distressed distraught and in the family way—eight months and a fortnight pregnant which often drives the fair sex round the twist poor things" (Gray, 1992: 211). This assessment by the agent suggests that it is commonly thought that pregnant women are prone to unexpected depression and other mental issues. Also, as a woman of Victorian times, Victoria Blessington faces the hardships of living in a society that sees women as "the fair sex". According to the testimonial of her previous or real family, Bella also suffered from erotomania. It is asserted that "[she] was hysteric; so childishly dependent on a husband who found her unbearable that her doctor's visits were the happiest times of her week; so full of self-loathing that she gladly stupefied her mind with sedatives and yearned for her body to be surgically mutilated" (Gray, 1992: 221), which suggests that Victoria wanted to weaken her own body. Later, it becomes clear that General Blessington was not a warm and affectionate husband, and even locked her in her bedroom and then a dark cell because of her affliction (Gray, 1992: 230). In other words, he can be said that he wished to mutilate the pregnant body of his wife.

However, General Blessington was not the only one who dismisses Victoria's maternal body, which is even ostracized by her father. When she wants to escape from the tyranny of her husband and take shelter in her father's household, Mr Hattersley does not accept her for the reason that he is disgusted by pregnant women, and tells Victoria that: "I should have kept you with me, sent for Sir Aubrey and thrashed out a better deal with him—a deal which would have benefited you as well as me." Yet, by subsequently advising her daughter to stay with her husband and rebuild her marriage, he suggests a course that would harm, rather than benefit, his daughter. He doesn't consider her well-being, but his attitude is rather that it is his daughter's responsibility to save her marriage: "Instead, I explained that a wife who abandons her husband is a truant in the eyes of man and God. I said you must fight the marital war on your own hearthstone, or you would never win it.". He later admits that the reason for wanting to get rid of her is his abhorrence of pregnant women:

> I said it because I wanted you out of the house, out of my sight as soon as possible. I was afraid you would go into labour, and I HATE women near me when they are whelping, hate the blood, screams and stinking mess they make, ugh, the thought of it makes me want to retch. So I took you back fast to the station and

bought you a ticket for London. […] As soon as my back was turned you must have changed my first-class ticket to London for a third-class ticket to Glasgow. So here you are! (Gray, 1992: 231).

It can be seen from Mr Hattersley's confession that his fear of the pregnant body leads him to ignore his daughter's suffering.

The male aversion to the pregnant body has been studied by the psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva. In *The Powers of Horror*, Kristeva (1980: 77) considers possible reasons for fear of the maternal body in a chapter named "Fear of Women-Fear of Procreation":

> Fear of the archaic mother turns out to be essentially fear of her generative power. It is this power, a dreaded one, that patrilineal filiation has the burden of subduing. It is thus not surprising to see pollution rituals proliferating in societies where patrilineal power is poorly secured, as if the latter sought, by means of purification, a support against excessive matrilineality.

Kristeva declares that the procreative power of the mother leads paternal figures to seek the cleanliness that they feel they cannot find while under the dominance of the maternal body. It could be interpreted that the purpose of the cleaning customs of the patriarchal tradition is due to a fear of maternal procreative power, and are evidence of patriarchy trying to abject the capability and authority of the maternal body. In this context, the statements of Mr Hattersley can be seen as an example of a male figure who detests the natural processes of the maternal or pregnant body.

On the other hand, with the arrival of General Blessington and his companions, it is seen that Victoria is not the only pregnant woman in the novel. Blessington's sixteen-year-old mistress Dolly Perkins is pregnant, and is also being tortured by Blessington. Here then is another woman whose activated reproductive capacity is being harassed by male power. The attitudes of General Blessington and Mr Hattersley to the maternal body are that it is something unwanted, unsettled, and even precarious, that must in some sense be muted or weakened.

The negative attitudes of General Blessington and Mr Hattersley concerning pregnancy can be related to Kristeva's claims about the reproductive power of women, namely that the masculine/male power they assert is an attempt to erode the position of the pregnant woman. This assertion has also been made regarding Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in which Victor eradicates the female reproductive capacity to create life without pregnant women. This can also be read as a transhumanist recreation which abolishes the maternal body and motherhood. As indicated by Moers, Victor's performance is a transhumanist victory as well as a protestation of male supremacy

on the maternal body. According to Moers (1976: 96) "[Victor] Frankenstein's exploration of the forbidden boundaries of human science does not cause the prolongation and extension of his own life, but the creation of a new one. He defies mortality not by living forever, but by giving birth." Hence, as a result of this male birth, the maternal body becomes of secondary importance. Although he states his purpose is to put an end to human mortality, he rejects the natural and initial existence of being human. However, and unlike *Frankenstein*, *Poor Things* bypasses the maternal body by not only replacing, but also reconstructing it.

Aside from the reconstruction of Bella Baxter, there is another indication of transhuman creation: Godwin's himself. Unlike Victor Frankenstein's creature, Bella's beauty is emphasised, while it is her creator which is often described as being ugly. In the novel, there are many references to Godwin's hideously disproportionate appearance and the possibility of his being a creature of Sir Colin:

> [H]is big face, stout body and thick limbs gave him a dwarfish look. Sometimes he ran out to raid the tank of disinfectant where brains were heaped like cauliflowers, and as he passed the outer people you saw he was a whole head taller than most, but he kept as far from others as possible, being desperately shy. Despite the ogrish body, he had the wide hopeful eyes, snub nose and mournful mouth of an anxious infant, with a brow corrugated by three deep permanent wrinkles (Gray, 1992: 12).

In the novel, the creator of Bella is represented as being disfigured, while Bella's charm is emphasized. McCandless compares the physical appearances of Baxter and Bella as follows: "is she seemed a glorious dream Baxter loomed beside her like a nightmare" (Gray, 1992: 44). It could therefore be said that by changing who has a monstrous appearance, Gray is making a point about creation. There are different interpretations of the meaning of this reversal. Focusing on the issue of ugliness, Kristen Stirling (2008: 93) suggests that "[Bella's] external physical attractiveness makes her different from Frankenstein's monster, whose monstrous appearance is transferred, in *Poor Things*, onto Baxter." Thus, these statements suggest that Gray is pointing out that Godwin Baxter's monstrous appearance may indicate that he is a creature of Sir Colin, a reanimator of corpses.

Böhnke provides a similar analysis by claiming that while the audacious medical procedures performed by Godwin Baxter and Victor Frankenstein are similar, Godwin may actually be both the creator and the creature (Böhnke, 2004: 155):

He is a surgeon with extraordinary abilities, far ahead of any other member of the profession even as a student, not imparting his superior knowledge to anybody but quietly working on his own private experiments, which are truly astonishing (such as 'exchanging' the hindquarters of two rabbits by way of operation). Yet he also has a very odd appearance and strange manners, which puts him close to the category of 'monster' (certainly so in the eyes of his fellow students). In addition, the circumstances of his own 'creation' by his father, the famous surgeon Sir Colin Baxter (who taught him most of the 'techniques' he is practising and perfecting), are somewhat dubious (Böhnke, 2004: 155-156).

As claimed, Böhnke emphasises the possibility of Godwin being a creation of his father. This idea is strengthened when it is stated that Sir Colin Baxter is "a clean-shaven, sharp-faced, thin-lipped man who looked nothing like his son" (Gray, 1992: 15).

While some details are provided about his father, Godwin's mother, despite being the spouse of a well-known surgeon, remains largely unknown. The existence of his mother is only based upon rumours, such as her being one of the maids in the Baxter household, or being in a mental institution. Godwin himself has only been told that she was a nurse who worked with Sir Colin, and states that he "worked so closely with her that they managed to produce me, before she died. I have no memory of her. There is nothing she owned in our houses. Sir Colin never spoke of her except once in my teens, when he said she was the cleverest, most teachable woman he knew" (Gray, 1992: 18). Godwin's scant information about his mother provides the sense that he was not borne of a woman, but rather resembles a boy that his father produced and raised on his own, as does Godwin Baxter's confession that he "was big from the start" (Gray, 1992: 18). Godwin himself describes his birth as being a form of production, and does not use the parental titles of his mother and father, saying he never used the word 'father', but rather 'Sir Colin'. He also adds that he does not know what a mother is, or that he has never seen a proper family since he was home-schooled and had no friends. All of this ambiguity casts further doubt on whether Godwin was born in the usual way, or was in fact the result of a laboratory experiment. If it is accepted that he was created, rather than born, he resembles Victor Frankenstein's monster in that he is forced to experience an unhappy and lonely life and aims to find a female companion for himself. However, unlike Victor's monster, he tries to obtain this companion himself using his father's techniques. As a result, both Godwin and Sir Colin try to usurp human reproduction by instigating their own form of creation and as can be observed, in both cases the results are catastrophic.

Apart from oppressing the pregnant body, another consequence of becoming the sole power in human reproduction is to diminish the maternal body. Furthermore, the motherless reproduction

process is questioned in both *Frankenstein* and *Poor Things* in terms of human values and ethics. In *Poor Things*, Godwin is deeply remorseful of his actions and how he has manipulated the life of another person. Böhnke (2004: 156) correlates Godwin's self-criticism with Victor's remorsefulness, and suggests that Gray employs "these issues […] concerning the problems of transplantation and the special status of the human brain/mind and, by implication, the dangers of genetic manipulation." Gray can therefore be seen to be continuing the practice of motherless reproduction in *Poor Things*.

In the original novel, it can be seen that, as is the case with Godwin and Bella, the creature of *Frankenstein* has no mother because Victor usurps female reproductive power. Margaret Homans's (1986: 103) article on Shelley's *Frankenstein* touches on this subject by arguing that "Victor has gone to great lengths to produce a child without Elizabeth's assistance, and in the dream's language, to circumvent her, to make her unnecessary, is to kill her, and to kill mothers altogether." Homans' argument is that the Frankenstein's circumvention of the mother could be equal to the total destruction of mothers, and in doing so, Victor "does not so much appropriate the maternal as bypass it, to demonstrate the unnecessariness of natural motherhood and indeed, of women" (Homans, 1986: 105). As already mentioned, this process results in Victor having absolute authority as a man. It may therefore be concluded that the process of recreation results in the destruction of the maternal body. To put it another way, the elimination of the maternal body depends on motherless recreation; that is to say, one integral of procreation.

In this respect, Victor's aspiration to prevent death results in the elimination of birth and the maternal body in which he creates a being and overcomes the inevitability of death through the use of science and technology. Victor expresses his opinions on death as follows: "I beheld the corruption of death succeed to the blooming cheek of life; I saw how the worm inherited the wonders of the eye and brain" (Shelley, 1831: 51), and, in the following quote, shows his desire to achieve the glory of defeating doom: "[a]fter days and nights of incredible labour and fatigue, I succeeded in discovering the cause of generation and life; nay, more, I became myself capable of bestowing animation upon lifeless matter" (Shelley, 1831: 52). Elaine Graham suggests that as Victor escapes death, he also escapes the maternal body:

> Victor's obsessive quest for a scientific method that can cheat death is ostensibly motivated by an ambition to defy mortality; yet other elements of his behaviour suggest that more powerful than this is his profound

ambivalence towards anything associated with birth. His fascination with mortality is matched by a disgust for all that represents the maternal and the procreative (Graham, 2002: 78).

These statements claim that, according to Victor, the maternal body is the indicator of inevitable death as it brings life, and in his search for an alternative method of reproducing a living being and cheating death, he mutilates the life-giving maternal body and her significance

The significance of the maternal body has been analysed by several critics such as Kristeva, Hanson, MacCormack, and van der Waal. As articulated by Kristeva, the maternal body is a space that no one can truly comprehend:

Cells fuse, split, and proliferate; volumes grow, tissues stretch, and body fluids change rhythm, speeding up or slowing down. Within the body, growing as a graft, indomitable, there is an other. And no one is present within that simultaneously dual and alien space, to signify what is going on. 'It happens, but I'm not there.' 'I cannot realize it, but it goes on' (Kristeva, 2002: 413).

As enunciated by Kristeva, the maternal body means, and naturally has, two distinctive living beings in one embodiment which create a two-folded "alien space". This description demonstrates that the maternal body is a form of corporeality which literally cannot be reached, comprehensively figured out and expressed, and even the mother herself is not able to intervene in the "alien space" within her body (Kristeva, 2002: 413). A further interpretation is provided by van der Waal (2018: 368), who brings together posthuman and pregnancy to coin a new concept: The Pregnant Posthuman. Van der Waal's (2018: 369) description of the pregnant body as "the first philosophical subject capable of carrying and giving birth" highlights the unique condition of the pregnant body:

Birth is the forgotten or unconscious mark of the beginning of a linear individual life, while pregnancy, the upcoming event of birth and the possibility of giving birth, function as the foundation of the new life in the middle of a human life, in the body of a conscious subject. […]. If the human condition is one of natality, the posthuman condition is one of pregnancy (van der Waal, 2018: 369).

Van der Waal states that it is birth that is the start of human life. Pregnancy, on the other hand, is related to posthumanism because it promises and indicates a new existence, as well as uncertainty and ambiguity. Van der Waal therefore confirms that the pregnant body could be an authentic posthuman.

MacCormack (2018: 38-39), however, asserts that the condition of women in the previous human condition is not clearly elucidated: "[f]rom fighting for equality, safety in our bodies and the ability to articulate our own selves, the idea that our bodies are now fashionable theoretically,

and ripe for assimilation by the logic that marginalises us in the first place, is the current trend in posthumanism." MacCormack is concerned that the situation of women and the female body in the human condition has not reached a satisfactory level, and that deconstruction of the human condition may address feminist concerns. In *Poor Things,* as it could be seen in Victoria/Bella's posthuman condition, the revisiting does not help change the male dominancy or sexual abuse that she is exposed to. Although they focus on different aspects, Fukuyama, Habermas and MacCormack all illustrate aspects of the dark side of the posthuman condition. Given that Gray's rewriting of the first posthuman shows that in order to bring the freedom promised by posthumanism, it needs to discard the ambitions of transhumanism and eliminate ethical risks, the novel exhibits an advanced circumvention of the maternal body, reanimation, and recreation. Unlike Victor Frankenstein, Godwin Baxter tangibly represses a pregnant body, and in doing so, its significance.

On the other hand, while trying to exercise his creative power, ambitious Victor in *Frankenstein* omits the process of procreation, abolishes the mother's pregnant figure, and usurps the pregnant body, which indisputably occupies an important place in both humanism and posthumanism. When *Frankenstein* is examined in this light, it can be inferred that the annihilation of the maternal body has devastating consequences. Furthermore, as birth represents life, one cannot be a living human if one is not born. In both literary works, a scientist intervenes in the natural process of birth by omitting the pregnant body. Therefore, in regard to the examples of posthuman reproduction in these novels, it could be argued that when the posthuman condition excludes the maternal body, it suspends the implicit human condition, and when there is no human condition, posthuman cannot revisit humans; and hence, cannot create. Both novels question the moral preparedness of the human condition, and in *Frankenstein*, the woman again is left in the background. It seems that the current state of the posthuman facilitates male dominancy and hardly changes the muted status of women.

In conclusion, Gray's *Poor Things* encapsulates the female body dominated by the child-conscious brain of Bella, the woman brought back to life, who is susceptible to abuse. Moreover, her feminine posthuman body is repeatedly exploited without her will or consent: once when her brain is replaced with her baby in her womb, and furthermore when she is forced to live in the body of a young woman with the consciousness of a child. As a result, and because her cognitive abilities have not fully developed, Bella even has to experience working in a brothel. Although she manages

to become a well-known scientist at the end of the novel, she is not able to prevent the abuse of her body until she has more fully mentally developed. Furthermore, it could be suggested that Baxter's latter ideas portray the necessity of natural reproduction, which is to say, a female figure as the maternal body. While trying to get rid of an unfaithful and tormenting husband, the maternal body of Victoria Blessington jumps into ice-cold water on a cold February day. Interestingly, her maternal but inanimate body is spotted, removed from the water, and given to the odd hands of Godwin Baxter for dissection. In addition to Godwin's abuse of the maternal body of Victoria during the process of recreation, his development of a creative process without the maternal body is another aspect that should be considered. While there are obvious differences between the recreation processes of Victor and Baxter, in *Poor Things*, the severe exclusion of the mother body is of particular note. However, the muted pregnant body of young Victoria Blessington cannot escape from the commanding hands of male power in which Baxter forces her to live with the brain of her unborn offspring. The body of the reanimated maternal body is open to physical and sexual abuse. In this respect, the maternal body of a Victorian woman is compared to an experimental subject of a male scientist who is trying to fulfil his transhumanist intentions. The maternal body could be regarded as one of the representatives of human reproduction, namely, birth. Therefore, Godwin utilizes Victoria's body while administering his father's studies. As a result, the maternal body disappears, the naturality of reproduction inevitably fades, and the natural course of human nature is interfered with by scientific modifications.

CHAPTER THREE

TECHNOPHILIA AND THE CONDITION OF THE FEMALE:

FRANKENSTEIN AND *FRANKISSSTEIN*[4]

> *"Will women be the first casualties of obsolesces in your brave new world?"*
>
> *Frankissstein,* Jeanette Winterson,

Award-winning British author, Jeanette Winterson, was born in 1959 in Manchester (Onega, 2006: 3). According to her biography, she was not raised by her biological parents, and her foster mother and father did not come from an educated family (Onega, 2006: 3). As stated in her biography, "[a]s a northern, low-church working-class girl, she was expected to do militant religious work, to accept compulsory heterosexuality, and to avoid developing her intellectual and artistic capacities" (Onega, 2006: 3). After graduating from Oxford, she began work in a theatre and published her first literary work, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), when she was twenty-five (Onega, 2006: 5). The novel "was a success" (Merja Makinen 2005: 1), and won the Whitbread Prize in 1985. In 1990, she adapted her book into a drama which won the British Academy of Film and Theatre Arts Prize (Makinen, 2005: 1).

Winterson's works are considered to be prominent examples of postmodern narrative. *Boating for Beginners* (1985), *The Passion* (1987) *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), *Written on the Body* (1992), *Art Objects: Essays in Ecstasy and Effrontery* (1995), *The Stone Gods* (2007), *The Lion, The Unicorn and Me: The Donkey's Christmas Story* (2009), *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?* (2011), and *Frankissstein* (2019) are counted among her notable works. As pointed out by Silvia Antosa (2008: 12), Winterson blends "history, fictional stories and fairy tales" in her works, and frequently makes use of "postmodern techniques such as historiographic metafiction, parody, intertextuality, self-reflectivity, pastiche and the rewriting of history" (Antosa, 2008: 12), to produce a diverse array of postmodern works.

In addition to consideration of their postmodern narrative structure, Winterson's novels and other literary works have been analysed from the perspective of gender and her feminist identity.

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[4] The full name of the book is *Frankissstein: A Love Story* but in this chapter, it will be referred as *Frankissstein*.

According to Laura Doan (1994: 154), Winterson's works embody "a feminist political strategy of resistance, forcing and enforcing new mappings of the social and cultural order." As an example, in *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), Winterson deals with gender issues while presenting a double narrative (Makinen, 2005: 82). On the other hand, *Written on the Body* (1992) is a genderless love story, which demonstrates that Winterson's style is diverse, not only in the language and structure of her work, but also in terms of content. Antosa (2008: 12) suggests that Winterson argues different genders and sexual orientations in order to object to "patriarchal and heterosexual discourses", i.e. one of her aims is to deconstruct gender binarism and male dominancy. *Frankisssstein: A Love Story* (2019) follows her postmodern style. In this work, Winterson adapts, in her distinctive postmodern style, Mary Shelley's nineteenth-century story of the first so-called posthuman being for the twenty-first century. In this rewriting, Winterson not only repositions the first posthuman in a postmodern environment, but also challenges socially defined male and/or female gender norms.

Frankisssstein has two plots with separate settings and narrations. The initial plot takes place in the late 1800s and is narrated by a first-person narrator who appears to be Mary Shelley herself. This first plot is a fictional and biographical revisiting of Shelley's inner world and relationship with her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and the couple's close friends, Lord Byron, Doctor Polidori and Claire Clairmont. By including all these characters in the plot structure, Winterson fictionalizes the famous creation process of the original novel, as described by Mary Shelly in *Frankenstein* (2003: 7):

> 'We will each write a ghost story,' said Lord Byron; and his proposition was acceded to. The noble author began a tale, a fragment of which he printed at the end of his poem of *Mazeppa*. Shelley, more apt to employ ideas and of the most melodious verse that adorns our language, than to invent a machinery of a story, commenced one founded on the experiences of his early life. Poor Polidori had some terrible idea about skull-headed lady who was so punished for peeping through a keyhole. […]. I busied myself *to think of a story*, - a story to rival those which had excited us to this task.

Winterson revises the famous creation process of *Frankenstein* by integrating both fact and fiction, and in the process produces a work that may itself be defined as an assumed literary monster. In this rewriting, Winterson makes use of Mary and Percy Shelley's European adventure, Mary's questioning of artificial life with cognition and knowledge, and their sorrow after they lose their children. In the chapters that take place in 1800s, Mary Shelley's thoughts on the eternal dichotomy that exists between nature, life, and death shed a fictional light on her sentimental life and ideational

shift. In this reimagining, Winterson refers both to Mary Shelley's background and private life, as well as to the writing process of her first novel. However, despite these new references and other fictionalisation, the basic argument of the revised work essentially remains the same as the original. While both novels question life and death, they try to escape the sadness of loss and the helplessness and loneliness that death brings. This is done through a discussion of what it means to be human, and the place of humans in, as well as against nature.

Shelley, the protagonist of the first plot of *Frankissstein*, ponders Samuel Taylor Coleridge's well-known poem, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Moers (1976: 94) states that Mary Shelley was deeply affected by Coleridge's work in which the mariner "violates life", symbolising human interference which damages the natural process of life. "But what is life?", wonders Shelley, "The body killed? The mind destroyed? The ruin of Nature? Death is natural. Decay inevitable. There is no new life without death. There can be no death unless there is life" (Winterson, 2019: 18). While Winterson's character Shelley is seen to believe that death and life are two related concepts that complement and are inseparable from each other, her desire to escape death leads her to conclude that beings which never existed cannot die because they were not born. As she further ponders life, death, and the nature of artificial life, the writing process of *Frankenstein* begins. The tone is quite pessimistic in the initial chapters due to Mary Shelley's inner turmoil over the loss of her babies. In this depiction of Shelley by Winterson of her negative expectation of her pregnancies, it could be argued that it represents a total eradication of the maternal body, as well as the reproductive abilities of women, due to her lack of hope of getting pregnant and becoming a mother, and her fixation instead on defeating death.

The latter plot is set in an alternative contemporary world, and Winterson's characters within it are all derived from the individuals, (her husband Percy Shelley (1792-1822), who was one of the major poets of the Romantic Period of English literature, Shelley's close friend, poet Lord Byron, and Polidori, who was Byron's doctor and the author of *The Vampyre* (1819), who influenced Mary Shelley during the famous competition to write the best ghost story (Morrison and Stone, 2003: 345). In *Frankissstein*, Winterson creates a potpourri by including both Shelley's personal life and her novel. The protagonist of the novel, Dr Ry Shelley, is a transsexual medical doctor who represents Mary Shelley. The technology enthusiast, Ron Lord, represents Lord Byron, whereas Polly D stands in for Polidori and Victor Stein personifies the transhumanist doctor of Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Shelley's stepsister Claire Clairmont is the inspiration for the black

receptionist of the technological exhibition where all of the characters meet. The relationship between Lord Byron and Claire Clairmont is also mentioned in Winterson's novel, and so, as with the first plot, the characters of the second plot originate from Mary Shelley's personal and professional circle. Therefore, Winterson is seen to be not only rewriting *Frankenstein*, but also revisiting Mary Shelley's life.

In contradistinction to Shelley, Winterson presents *Frankissstein* as a love story which includes transgender Ry Shelley and Victor Stein's affair, as well as Mary and Percy Shelley's relationship. However, the central concerns of *Frankissstein* are a rewriting of the nineteenth century's posthuman story, the reformatting of gender roles, and a transhumanist inquiry of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. As stated in the "Introduction", *Frankenstein*'s monster is counted as the first posthuman because Victor Frankenstein opens a new path beyond the limits of what is normally humanly possible to enter posthuman. Since *Frankenstein*, it could be asserted that posthuman and posthumanism have been concerned, and many authors before Winterson have visited controversial topics such as the cyborg, human enhancement, and artificial intelligence. Examples of this are Arthur C Clarke's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), Philip Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, and Ian McEwan's *Machines Like Me* (2019). Posthumanism and transhumanism continue to be widely discussed in literary studies.

As stated above, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* introduces a transhumanist scientist and her monstrous man-made creature. With this creature, Shelley emphasizes the rebellious and creative power of an individual. However, Winterson's *Frankissstein* is primarily concerned with the idea of integrating artificial intelligence, human enhancement, and robots into daily life, which results in the creation of a transhumanist atmosphere. Furthermore, due to male-dominancy and the individual creation procedure, the roles of the female body and maternal/pregnant body are pushed out of their normally central roles in human reproduction, while the concepts of birth and pregnancy are associated in the novel with death, rather than life. Considering these points, the aim of this chapter is to analyse *Frankissstein* regarding how it presents the maternal body by comparing the female embodiment in transhuman and posthuman conditions with specific examples taken from the novel.

One important consideration in *Frankissstein* is the issue of pregnancy and birth. While fictionalizing Mary Shelley's life and during the writing process of *Frankenstein*, she also revisits her unfortunate pregnancies. In the plot that establishes the basis of Mary Shelley's life, being

pregnant and expecting a baby does not excite Mary. Winterson ostensibly makes a connection between Mary's unaspiring attitude and her past, which is darkly coloured by the loss of her babies and her mother dying before she was born:

> I never know my mother. She was dead when I was born and loss of her was so complete I did not feel it. It was not a loss outside of me - as it is when we lose someone we know. There are two people then. One is you and one who is not you. But in childbirth there is no me/not me. The loss was inside of me as I had been inside of her. I lost something of myself (Winterson, 2019: 11-12).

As can be observed from the quotation, Mary loss of her mother was a massive trauma for her, right from the point of birth. Both as a mother and as a child, Mary had to deal with difficult challenges in the mother-child relationship. She also emphasises the bond between mother and child while describing the dual nature of childbirth. Sharing the same idea, Didier Anzieu (2016: 275-276) defines the significance of the mother's body for the child as follows:

> As the foetus's anatomical container, the mother's womb provides the rudiments of a physical container. This undifferentiated anatomical physical container is the original container. […]. The mother's body, especially her belly, acts as the protective shield. A field of sensitivity common to the foetus and its mother begins to develop. This explains the nostalgic wish to return to the mother's womb, in which one would not only be held, nourished, kept warm, in state of perpetual well-being, but also be vaguely conscious of this well-being—the condition for being able to enjoy it.

Anzieu's description of the mother's body being the safest environment for a baby emphasises the extent of Mary's loss when her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, dies during childbirth. Never having the opportunity to spend time with her mother means that she is denied the most essential part of herself. Through Mary's frequent connections between birth and death, Winterson continues to explore the traces of this separation. At one point, Mary tells us that her mother tried to commit suicide, but it was Mary's birth, not her attempted suicide, which resulted in her death: "My mother jumping of a bridge in London, her skirts making a parachute for her falling body. She did not die. No, she did not die. That came later. Giving birth to me" (Winterson, 2019: 9). Winterson's Mary's remarks demonstrate how she laments her own existence at the expense of her mother's. It is suggested that her creation of the character, Victor Frankenstein, who aims to overcome death, is an attempt to assuage her guilt.

Winterson's Mary also describes her own pregnancies and the great sadness she felt when she lost her babies:

> Our first child died when he was born. Cold and tiny I held him in my arms. Soon after I dreamed that he was not dead, and that we rubbed him with brandy and set him by the fire and returned to life. […]. I would have given him my own blood to restore his life, he had been of my blood, a feeding vampyre, for nine dark months in his hiding place. The Dead. The Undead. Oh, I am used to death and I hate it (Winterson, 2019: 17).

The above demonstrates Mary's desire to return her child from death. This incident, as rewritten by Winterson, reoccurs in the Shelley family several times. In her real life, Mary Shelley not only lost her first child, but also witnessed more than one infant's death. Mary and Percy Shelley had four children. In 1815, Mary Shelley gave birth to her first child, a daughter, who only survived for a few weeks. Their second child, William, and their third child, Clara, also died (Carlson, 2007: 162). When Mary Shelley herself died, the only surviving child was Percy Florence. It is safe to assume that such repeated trauma would have made Mary Shelley consider birth and pregnancy as extremely fraught conditions.

As Ellon Moers (1976: 96) points out in the chapter "Female Gothic", it could be understood from Shelley's letters and journals that she had had a recurring dream of her baby coming back to life. When her first baby dies before she is even able to name it, Shelley writes "Find my baby dead. A miserable day" (Moers, 1976: 96). Moers also presents evidence that this traumatic incident damaged Shelley's emotional state through recurring nightmares: "Dream that my little baby came to life again that it had only been cold, and that we rubbed it before the fire, and it lived. Awake and find no baby. I think about the little thing all day. Not in good spirits." It is clear from these notes that Mary Shelley was stricken by the loss of her babies. Moreover, in 1822, when she was pregnant with her fifth child, her gestation period did not progress well, and the baby died in the womb. In relation to these unfortunate incidents, pregnancy, just like birth, left a tremendous impact on Mary Shelley's life and made her "extremely concerned" (Mellor, 2003: 10).

In addition to living with the burden of her mother having died while giving birth to her, the death of the children she gave birth to may have been instrumental in how Shelley considered death and life. In *Frankenstein*, Shelley aims to create a being which is not born in the usual way after a period of gestation in the womb. The goal, as articulated by Victor Frankenstein, is to open a new path beyond the normal limits of humans that will "banish disease from the human frame and render man invulnerable to any but a violent death." Winterson repeatedly revisits this inner world of Mary Shelley, which is full of pregnancy and birth-related preoccupations, to define Shelley's objective to reanimate the dead, that is to say, to make humans undead. As part of

Winterson's revisiting, Percy Shelley describes the three goals of alchemy: "the secret of turning lead into gold, the secret of the Elixir of Eternal Life, and the homunculus" which is "a creature not born of woman […]. A made thing, unholy and malign. A kind of goblin, misshapen and sly, infused with dark powers" (Winterson, 2019: 66). While Percy describes the homunculus as a vicious being, Winterson's Mary considers it a scientific way of achieving eternity:

> I will call my hero […] Victor, for he seeks victory over life and over death. He will strive to penetrate the recesses of Nature, he will not be an alchemist – I want no hocus pocus here – he will be a doctor […]. He will discern the course of the blood, know the knot of muscle, the density of bone, the delicacy of tissue. […]. He will compose a man, larger than life, and make him live (Winterson, 2019: 68).

Victor is therefore seen to be more powerful than life and death. Mary accentuates scientific research and imagines a saviour of humankind from impending demise owing to his expertise in the medical field. Victor's new creation will not be considered a machine, but "will be more than human. But he will not be human" (Winterson, 2019: 68). In other words, this "more than human" will be invincible, while also possessing intelligence and feeling. According to Moers (1976: 93), in *Frankenstein*, Shelley illustrates "revulsion against new-born life, and the drama of guilt, dread, and flight surrounding birth and its consequences. […]. Birth is a hideous thing". The rejection of pregnancy and birth is also stated in *Frankissstein* "I am pregnant again. The next baby will be born in December. I do not know if I can bear this reality. The reality of death. Birth followed by death. […]. Take me away take me away take me away from death" (Winterson, 2019: 249). Seemingly, in Winterson's *Frankissstein*, Mary, as the protagonist of the secondary plot, continues to reject birth and pregnancy to hide from death. This rejection can be seen as similar to transhumanism's rejection of ageing, disease, and death.

In addition to the denial of pregnancy and birth in Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the scientist aims to bypass natural human procreation in order to obtain a biological, but created, human as an individual. In *Frankissstein*, the artificial life offered by Victor Stein needs no reproduction since it has been instigated by industrial and medical methods. Furthermore, Stein suggests a new life, in other words, a new condition of being without bodies. In the setting of modern Britain, Victor Stein gives a lecture named "The Future of Humans in a Post-Human World" (Winterson, 2019: 74). Referring to *Frankenstein*, he believes that human supremacy does not apply to modern human beings who are contended with the advantages of the developing technology. As he indicates, "*Frankenstein* was a vision of how life might be created – the first non-human intelligence"

(Winterson, 2019: 27). Therefore, Victor Stein supports AI-aided living for human beings, while rejecting the current human condition.

Stein divides and categorises the human condition with three subtitles, one being: "*Type 1 Life: Evolution-based.*" In this type, the alteration can be extremely slow, taking hundreds or thousands of years to evolve and advance (Winterson, 2019: 72). The second condition is "*Type 2 Life: Partially self-designing*" (Winterson, 2019: 72), which Victor Stein suggests is the current phase during which humans are learning and developing their brains and bodily capabilities thanks to aids such as "spectacles, eye-lasers, dental implants, hip replacements, organ transplants, and prosthetics" (Winterson, 2019: 73). The last of Stein's conditions is "*Type 3 Life: Fully self-designing*" in which humans are able to enjoy limitless experiences. Highlighting radical advancements in artificial intelligence, Stein supposes that "[r]obots will manage much of what humans can do today. Intelligence – perhaps even consciousness – will no longer be dependent on a body." As quoted, Victor Stein believes that "non-biological life forms", and human beings will conjunctly cohabit with the world. He therefore concludes that the corporeality of human beings will be of no real value in this united habitat. It is clear that Victor's statements are akin to transhumanist claims.

Transhumanism emphasizes the technological advancements that upgrade the current human condition and offer an advanced form of human life. Bostrom, a prominent supporter of transhumanism, claims that "[transhumanism] promotes an interdisciplinary approach to the understanding and evaluation of the opportunities for enhancing the human condition and the human organism opened up by the advancement of technology" (Bostrom, 2003: 3). For this reason, the followers of transhumanism define a posthuman as a being that has "greater capacities than present human beings have" (Bostrom, 2003: 4). As inferred from Bostrom's statements, transhumanists aim to overcome the biological embodiment of the human race to achieve the posthuman state. To do this, death, one of the primary biological conditions that awaits every living human, needs to be overthrown.

According to Adorno (2021: 30) "[i]mmortality is the main goal of transhumanism and the real threshold that needs to be crossed in order to create a posthuman." In other words, in order to upgrade human existence, transhumanism needs to defeat the inevitable end of life. As emphasized by Bostrom (2003: 13), "transhumanism stresses the moral urgency of saving lives, or, more precisely, of preventing involuntary deaths among people whose lives are worth living."

Transhumanism proposes humans can achieve immortality "by means of genetic modification, biological manipulation and pharmacological and physical prosthetics" (Adorno, 2021: 31). While the promise by transhumanism of eternal life may seem very attractive, Winterson portrays transhumanist aims from different perspectives in *Frankissstein*. In addition to Victor Stein, Ron and Ry are also supporters of transhumanism. Examples of this are how Ron gets excited about the prospect of female sex robots, and how Ry admires Max More's cryonics company, Alcor, during his visit. The company saves human brains from dying by uploading the mind to a computer when the body dies (Winterson, 2019: 226).

Mary of the first plot dreams about ending misery in the following manner: "If we were not bound to our bodies, we should not suffer so" (Winterson, 2019: 254). Mary has a vivid dream in which she leaves behind the human body that contains all of her problems and suffering. In other words, she is attempting to escape existence itself for the simple reason that if either half of the binary opposition, death and life, were to vanish, the other half would also lose its significance and likewise disappear. Transhumanism is the path that could be taken in order to accomplish this goal of neutralising death.

While employing transhumanism, Winterson begins an argument about technological enhancements, questioning in the following quotation the future role of artificial intelligence. "Victor Stein works across the boundary of smart medicine and machine learning. He is teaching non human intelligence to diagnose. Machines are better than we are at the algorithms of disease. The doctor of the future will be robots" (Winterson, 2019: 87). To put that in another way, Victor hypothesizes that robots will eventually replace humans as the most knowledgeable beings, even in the essential facets of human existence. This vision also refers to such advances having an undeniably profound impact on a variety of facets of human life, including the status of women. Winterson is well known for her feminist writings, and in *Frankissstein*, she discusses the condition of the female body and gender neutrality within the framework of transhumanist goals, which are designed to lead to significant improvements in every human life.

At the technology expo, which all of the characters attend, the AI-powered human-formed products, all of which promise a better than "real" life, are promoted. Stein declares that his ideal transhuman universe offers independence and justice for humans. He pursues his dream as follows:

> The world I imagine, the world that AI will make possible, will not be 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. The future will not be a version of Blade Runner, where replicants long to be named – like humans – and therefore to be known – like humans (Winterson, 2019: 79-80).

Stein's vision is of complete equality amongst all people on Earth, with the underprivileged finally being able to live well. In this sense, Victor Stein's dream is comparable to the aspirations of the philosophers who follow transhumanist philosophy. This can be seen in the following quote from Adorno (2021: 31), who emphasizes the importance of transhuman advancements as follows:

> The extensive application of technology can only produce positive results as it is a fundamental factor of emancipation from the limitations of the human condition. Furthermore, it is a key tool in the promotion of individual freedom which, despite an evident reluctance to develop its political implications, is regarded as the priority value and is limited only by respect for the freedom of others.

Adorno's positive assessment is very similar to that of Victor Stein in that it focuses on the potential of transhumanism to achieve human equality and independence. It should also be underlined that while the definitions of transhumanism and posthumanism may vary, Winterson places the term transhumanism under posthumanism.

Regarding the issue of the improvement of human beings, Braidotti pursues a similar line in her work, *The Posthuman.* Stein's vision of humanity without borders and differences is similar to Braidotti's description of posthumanism and the advantages it can bring to the human condition:

> I see the posthuman turn as an amazing opportunity to decide together what and who we are capable of becoming, and a unique opportunity for humanity to re-invent itself affirmatively, through creativity and empowering ethical relations, and not only negatively, through vulnerability and fear. It is a chance to identify opportunities for resistance and empowerment on a planetary scale (Braidotti, 2013: 195).

These statements suggest that posthumanism enables every human being to improve their materialistic and intellectual capacities and skills. In terms of the philosophy of posthumanism, it is suggested that humanity should unite without any borders or distinctions in their adoption of new ideas. "[A posthuman] is a complex assemblage of human and non-human, planetary and cosmic, given and manufactured, which requires major re-adjustments in our ways of thinking" since the current condition of humankind is insufficiently moral, virtual, and capacious (Braidotti, 2013: 159). Following this philosophy, the transhumanist characters of the novel attempt to persuade others to follow transhuman ideals for the advancement of human development.

While on the one hand, technological enhancements are praised, on the other hand, the novel is more morally ambivalent on the future use of these enhancements. Winterson (2019: 35) states that "[t]he first non-biological life forms sharing our homes won't be waiters with tomato-recognition issues, or cute little ETs for the kids." As observed in the novel, the first artificial companions are sex bots. Ron, the character who replaces Lord Byron, is the owner and CEO of a company that sells adult-sized female dolls for male customers and is one of the leading supporters of the contributions of artificial intelligence. Ron calls them "girls" and speaks passionately about these artificial ladies being accessible via mail order for any male human. Following delivery, the girl is assembled by her new male owner. Ron describes this process as follows:

> Mail-order doll. All her parts arrived in separate bags like a chainsaw massacre. I put her together with one screwdriver and the instruction video. Really, it's Lego for adults. […]. Here we are! See how they attach the arms? Lovely slim arms. Then the legs. Look at the length! The shape! Slightly longer than they would be if she was human. This is fantasy, not nature, so you can have what you want. Hair goes on last, after the eyelashes. See the eyes? Like Bambi for boys. […]. Lightweight too. Makes a man feel strong (Winterson, 2019: 37).

It is clear from Ron's statement that he emphasises the physical appearance of these bots. They become the plaything of men who can do anything with them. Ostensibly, these bots are artificial female bodies that have been produced for the sole purpose of satisfying their male customers.

> Different models too, blonde and busty, brunette and sporty. Whatever. And what if you're the kind of bloke that only wants a bot when the wife is away? Women aren't home all the time like they used to be. I don't blame them; women are not goldfish. They've evolved. But, like my mum says, emancipation can be a problem for a man (Winterson, 2019: 37).

As indicated, it is thought necessary to satisfy a man's needs on demand through the use of artificial intelligence. It does not make any difference if women are at home or not, an artificial replacement can be used for artificial life. Ron proceeds to go through a list of advantages provided by these female robots. "XX-BOTs make a great travel choice. No nagging about stopping for lunch or needing toilet. No sulking about the Holiday Inn you've booked. She's next to you, long hair, long legs, you choose music, beautiful woman in the passenger seat" (Winterson, 2019: 40). Thanks to these bots, a man can purchase a sexy device that does what he wants, whenever he wants. The robots are utilized for the carnal instincts of male human beings. Ron is proud of his products and how they are suitable for every need: "you can be old, you can be ugly, you can be fat, smelly, you can have an STD, you can be broke. […] There's an XX-BOT for you" (Winterson, 2019: 48). The

XX-BOT girls do not have names, as the idea is that they will be named by their male owners as a replacement for the woman they have lost, or perhaps never had, in the house. It can be clearly observed that Ron's product has turned the female body into a commercially available commodity that can be purchased, resold and rented.

Winterson also explores the situation of women in other ways. One of these is the inclusion of characters who are critical of the application of artificial intelligence to create replacements for the female body. However, it is interesting to note that Victor Stein believes that artificial intelligence is gender neutral as it "is biased towards best possible outcomes", whereas the present and natural condition of the "human race is not a best possible outcome" (Winterson, 2019: 74). It can be seen from these statements that Victor believes that humans should get help from artificial intelligence in their attempt to reach perfection. This opinion coincides with that of Haraway, although it is important to emphasise that Haraway considers the cyborg theory relevant to the condition of women as a way for them to discard gender as, without gender, there would be no gender issues.

Despite the technological advances in *Frankissstein*, the condition of women remains controversial. This is largely debated because the robots produced with artificial intelligence and female-shaped bodies do not contribute to women gaining more rights or a fairer share of social equality. On the contrary, it is claimed that robots have more rights than real women, especially in certain circumstances. An example of this can be seen in a dialogue between a Muslim woman and Victor Stein. "*Professor Stein, as you know, the Hanson robot, Sophia, was awarded citizenship of Saudi Arabia in 2017. She has more rights than any Saudi woman. What does this tell us about artificial intelligence? Will women be the first casualties of your brave new world? What about sexbots?*[5]" (Winterson, 2019: 74). Although Victor Stein presents the gender-neutral condition of artificial intelligence, some women in the audience object as follows:

> Professor Stein, you are the acceptable face of AI, but in fact the race to create what you call true artificial intelligence is a race run by autistic spectrum white boys with poor emotional intelligence and frat-dorm social skills. In what way will *their* brave new world be gender-neutral – or anything neutral? […]. We all know machine learning is completely sexist in outcomes. Amazon had to stop using machines to sift through job application CVs because the machines chose men over women time after time. There is nothing neutral about AI. (Winterson, 2019: 75-76).

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[5] Empahsis is in the original.

According to this objection, the intervention of artificial intelligence in humans must eventually result in prejudiced ideas and, following this logic, transhumanist approaches may actually worsen the condition of women. In the transhuman universe of the novel, one group of non-human beings is sexbots. Ron Lord stresses that the sexbots are not genderless, but female, and so their existence could be interpreted as being degrading to the woman's body. Consequently, it could be implied that the posthuman condition, or cyborgs, does not help women's rights to advance, but actually allows for the continuation of male dominancy.

In social sciences, the condition of women and the female body are philosophically examined from many angles. A similar approach will be taken in this investigation of the condition of the female body in human reproduction in *Frankissstein*'s male-determined and male-dominant biotechnologies.

The maternal body, which enables human reproduction, has been considered by some to be an extremely passive state of the female body. However, the maternal body is the essence of life since it brings a new biological creature into the world. Luce Irigaray (1985: 74) laments this misconception: "the child […] appears merely to be a penis-product and penis substitute. The contribution of woman's germ cells, the part played by her sex organs, her body, in the formation of the child, are […] totally ignored." Irigaray's remarks indicate that human reproduction has been considered as a form of male prowess in which the male contribution is superior to that of the female. According to this perspective, it is the female body which becomes the chamber of the foetus, and is subsequently forced to metamorphose for the continuity of human lineage. E. Ann Kaplan (1992: 204) uses Lennart Nilson's *A Child is Born* as an example of this male-based misconception, asserting that the maternal body is not emphasised during pregnancy and birth since the attention is on the child. She states that "[t]he foetus is presented as already a full-blown subject, a baby, rather than an entity in *process*. The emphasis is all on the baby-to-be read back into the zygote. Further, the fact that this is all taking place in the mother's body." However, the mother's body is neglected because she "is simply not a part of anything" (Kaplan, 1992: 204). Although in human reproduction, the focus is usually on the new being that will come into the world rather than the mother's body, it is clearly impossible to be born without the help of the maternal body. During the gestation period, the maternal body is treated as the protective gear of the foetus; however, the maternal body is the original part of this process. Imogen Tyler (2001: 73) explains that the pregnant body is not an individual; on the contrary, "it is the fleshy in-betweenness." It cannot stay

stable since it has to be changed and transformed (Tyler, 2001: 74). Despite how essential it is, the pregnant body is often sorely neglected.

As noted, Haraway (1991: 150) aims to end the capitalist male domination of the female body through the removal of female responsibility in human reproduction in the "post-gender world" that she describes in her "Cyborg Manifesto". Her suggested elimination of human reproduction demonstrates her wish to end patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism. (Haraway, 1991: 155). The idea is that if the human race manages to achieve the level of cyborgs, women can be freed from the pressure they are currently under. She describes her manifesto as an "effort to contribute to socialist-feminist culture and theory in a postmodernist, non-naturalist mode and in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end" (Haraway, 1991: 151). In Haraway's desire to subvert dualities such as female and male, or the beginning and conclusion of human life in order to abolish oppositions caused by those dualities, she supports the changing of biological and traditional reproduction. This means that her cyborg represents the symbol of a new being, namely a recreated human (Haraway, 1991: 150). As Haraway (1991: 150) suggests, once the boundaries between machine and human are invalidated, no discrepancies and discriminations can be seen between different genders and races. This would represent a contribution to the equilibrium between humans and non-humans which neither would have a beginning nor an expiration date (Haraway, 1991: 151). This is because cyborgs are not born and therefore have no beginning. While women may be rescued from their reproductive responsibilities, they would lose the natural abilities of the female body.

Haraway (1991: 163) states that the revision of current methods of biological reproduction is a *sin qua non*[6] for the social, corporeal and biological independence of women. She substantiates this as follows "[t]he actual situation of women is their integration/exploitation into a world system of production/reproduction" (Haraway, 1991: 163). In other words, Haraway (1991: 163) believes that current civil and domestic practices are reducing the individuality of women, whereas the cyborg may offer a solution as it "is a kind of dissembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. This is the self [that] feminists must code" (1991: 163). Haraway's belief is that

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[6] A must.

the cyborg allows women to untangle themselves from the societal oppression of pregnancy, and by doing so, allow them to reassess the meaning of their maternal bodies.

Braidotti (2013: 12) also sees benefits in the posthuman condition and, like Haraway, she also argues for the need for new concepts. Focusing on the definition of the current human beings, Braidotti suggests a "posthuman turn" in which the posthuman is the future which can bring freedom and equality for "sexualized, racialized and naturalized others, who are reduced to the less than human status" (2013: 15). According to Braidotti, it seems that the posthuman could be an egalitarian alternative for the human condition.

Both Haraway and Braidotti propose theories that revisit the human condition and endorse its advancement. Similarly, Winterson revivifies and fictionalizes this ideal posthuman shift in *Frankissstein*. However, the result of this shift in the novel does not result as envisioned by Haraway and Braidotti theorized. According to their theory, women need to overthrow their reproductive responsibility; therefore, overthrow the nature of their body. Since pregnancy stands as the reproductive condition of the female body, the cyborg allows the elimination of the pregnant/maternal body. However, as seen in *Frankissstein*, that rejection leads to the materialization of the female body and the corruption of robot employment.

van der Waal (2018: 368) suggests that there is a bridge between the posthuman and the maternal body, and calls that bridge 'the pregnant posthuman'. In this respect, the pregnant body is already posthuman since she represents doubleness and embodies the unknown. Van der Waal (2018: 369) states that the pregnant posthuman "is the first philosophical subject capable of carrying, of giving birth." She explains this productivity as follows: "I am here productively, producing something other than myself, producing my inhuman in myself, carefully, quietly, in a constant state of waiting, making room" (van der Waal, 2018: 369). According to these remarks, and considering her posthuman condition, the pregnant body is generative. In this respect, the idea of Winterson's Mary being pregnant with "another death", is not compatible with the notion of the pregnant body.

It is the powerful male characters of *Frankissstein* who are able to obtain technological advancements. Ron, for example, (Winterson, 2019: 93) underlines that while transhumanism may be unattainable for some people, the men who can reach automation are able to experience the advantages of enhancements. In terms of the effects of such enhancements, Hayles (1999: 286)

claims that "the posthuman does not mean the end of humanity. It signals instead the end of a certain conception of the human", and could, for example, mean the end of the maternal body, which in the human condition not be "a certain conception" that would be able to find a proper space for herself. Moreover, according to Bostrom's (2003: 13) proposal, "the people whose lives are worth living" could enter into the transhuman stage; yet, the definition of such a stage is not certain. However, in transhumanism, "[r]acisim, sexism, speciesism, belligerent nationalism and religious intolerance are unacceptable" (Bostrom, 2003: 12). While he suggests that "[f]or us, life will be unlimited", he admits it may not be accessible for all human beings, specifically women.

Fukuyama further explores this push for unlimited life in terms of the rights of those who inhabit a posthuman environment: "[i]f we start transforming ourselves into something superior, what rights will these enhanced creatures claim, and what rights will they possess when compared those left behind?" (Fukuyama, 2004: 42). Fukuyama is clearly concerned about those already in a disadvantaged condition in society possibly falling even farther behind. Bostrom's following claim strengthens this possibility: "Transhumanism has roots in secular humanist thinking, yet is more radical in that it promotes not only traditional means of improving human nature, such as education and cultural refinement, but also direct application of medicine and technology to overcome some of our basic biological limits" (2003: 4). However, this proposal has been criticized by posthumanist scholars such as Åsberg and Braidotti (2018: 6), "we need to not just move beyond humanist imagination, but that we also need better tools to deal with its lived realities." Therefore, it could be suggested that what is really required is to develop more effective instruments to cope with the world as it currently exists.

The condition of the female and maternal body in Winterson's *Frankisssstein* casts doubt on the effectiveness of posthuman transformation. The conversion of the human body into an unnecessary entity through transhumanist technological augmentation can be seen as a deterioration of the female and maternal body. In the words of Åsberg and Braidotti (2018: 8), "Transhumanisms are therefore somewhat incompatible with "doing" feminist posthumanities and the material-semiotics that support it. Transhumanisms[7] stands as a different species of posthumanism, hinged on human mastery and a thrust away from bodily ecologies and their vulnerability". This view of feminist posthumanities shows that women's place in transhumanism

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[7]The original text is written as seen.

is considered to be ambiguous. Schinzel raises this argument by suggesting that "feminist posthumanities reject a transhumanist vision of human enhancement in the direction of immortality: it is a masculinist desire stemming from enlightenment, driven by envy to the birth-giving woman, to realize the disembodied human by use of science, medicine and technology in order to avoid disease, ageing and eventually death" (Schinzel, 2021: 223). Transhumanism abolishes not only the maternal/pregnant body, but also the female body. When the silence of the pregnant body is added to the abuse of the female body, the maternal body actually becomes invisible. "It has in many ways become increasingly clear that nothing remains evident or given about the "human" of the humanities" (Braidotti, 2013 qtd. in Åsberg and Braidotti, 2018: 8). Concerns about posthumanism and transhumanism are expressed in the novel in terms of the abuse of the female body and the abolition of the maternal body.

While transhumanism enthusiasts want to become posthuman; the posthuman characters of the novels long to be human. Transhumanism enthusiasts are totally committed to becoming uploaded and living eternally as just a mind (Winterson, 2019: 311). Nevertheless, there are severe risks of misuse in taking such a step. Winterson underlines the significance of the maternal body as follows: "The future always carries something from the past. Like humans, I said. Mitochondrial DNA. He nodded. Men don't carry it, do they? I said, Men carry it but can't pass it on. Only the mother passes it on, right back to the mother of us all" (Winterson, 2019: 108). It is indicated that the traces of the maternal body come with every human being, and this quotation can be analysed from two different perspectives. The first is the maternal body, which is so essential that every human carries their mother's mitochondrial cell. The second is the possibility of hostility, misogyny, discrimination, and injustice from the past being brought to the future. While it may be impossible to confirm now that this may occur, the possibility of such an eventuality should be taken into consideration.

It is due to this concern that MacCormack (2018: 35) admits that posthumanism should be revisited in order to better consider the possible implications for the condition of women. MacCormack exemplifies as follows:

> While feminism has grappled with the disassembling of the majoritarian phallologocentric subject, posthuman and transhuman theory have shown a problematic acceleration of certain tropes associated with historically dominant subjects, rather than offer material and ethical alternatives, using fetishisation and assimilation of alterity to further their phantasies of immortality rather than authentically challenge configurations of life.

MacCormack's remark demonstrates that the current condition of posthumanism is insufficient to encompass all conditions of human beings because "the current trend in posthuman theory" revisits the dubious condition of women. Before becoming committed to posthumanism, the debatable and uncertain condition of women, in other words, issues such as "fighting for equality, safety in our bodies and the ability to articulate for our own selves the idea that our bodies are not fashionable theoretically, and ripe for assimilation by the logic that marginalises [women] us in the first place" must be reconsidered.

To sum up, this chapter has revisited the situation of the female and maternal body in posthuman literature. Due to its posthuman nature, the cyborg can be considered under the umbrella of posthuman; and doing so sterilizes it from anthropocentric boundaries. Since the cyborg is genderless, it can be used for female and male human, as well as non-human beings. However, the situation of the female body in *Frankissstein* is not as free as implied by Haraway. Braidotti portrays a splendidly faultless, in other words, out-of-this-world posthuman condition in which as optimum development has been achieved, including all of the freedom that humans can attain with posthumanism. The example seen in *Frankissstein* demonstrates that cyborgs, transhumans or, as an umbrella term, posthumans, cause the female body to disappear or be depreciated. As a result, it can be seen that there is a possibility for women to become materialized as objects used only for sexual satisfaction, i.e. as artificial female bodies being manufactured as a commodity and used for sexual fantasies. The female body is passivated, and her boundaries are penetrated. Apart from the female body, neither the contemporary plot employs the pregnant condition of the female body, nor is it presented as a productive condition in the historical plot. As stated, while the definition of being or becoming a woman remains ambiguous, leaving out the human condition to advance posthuman seems unfair for women. As in the lyrics of the Eagles' song "Take It Easy", which Winterson uses to open the novel: "we may lose, and we may win, though we will never be here again." Apparently, in Winterson's *Frankissstein*, the maternal body, and therefore the woman, has already become "the first casualty" of the posthumanist utopia.

CONCLUSION

> *"But for now we are still human, all too human?"*
> *Frankissstein,* Jeanette Winterson

In this thesis, Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* and Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein* have been studied in relation to their posthumanist and transhumanist ideals. Comparing both rewritings of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, the concepts of human and posthuman, and also the maternal body, have been analysed in order to shed light on the transformation of the theme of procreation into the theme of creation. The aim is to conclude that as a result of scientific research and findings, there have been changes in the perception, the reproduction, and even in the meaning of humans as both a creature and a creator.

Mary Shelley, with her first novel *Frankenstein,* influenced many other writers and philosophers, and the novel still has a great impact in the twenty-first century. The word 'Frankenstein' is commonly used in relation to artificial intelligence or human-made living organisms. In this study, the three novels from three different centuries, Shelly's original, and two rewritings: Gray's *Poor Things* and Winterson's *Frankissstein* have been examined within the framework of relevant arguments regarding transhumanism, posthumanism and the condition of the female body after biotechnological advancements.

In the analysis of the two rewritings, it has been seen that the natural procreation notion has made its mark on different re-creation techniques. Firstly, in *Frankenstein*, which was written in 1818, a male scientist creates a living being which is the unified version of the human parts of a male body. In this respect, the scientist removes the need for a female companion to reproduce. In 1992, Gray revisits *Frankenstein*, but changes the gender of the creation, since *Poor Thing*s offers a recreation of a young female human body whose brain is swapped with the foetus in her womb. In 2019, Winterson's *Frankissstein* represents the most contemporary rewriting of Shelley's masterpiece. *Frankissstein* includes millennial issues such as the changing notions of politics, gender, and race. Moreover, the theoretical frameworks against which the novels have been analysed are transhumanism and posthumanism. While providing an analytic exploration of these novels, the maternal body in posthumanism and transhumanism have been scrutinized as well as various perspectives regarding the condition of women in posthumanism.

It was seen in Chapter One that related theoretical studies demonstrate that the boundary between human and biotechnological enhancements has become slightly obscure (Sharon, 2014: 4). Therefore, it is claimed that it will not be possible for the traditional concept of humans to represent human beings adequately as the position of technology begins to occupy more space in human life (Sharon, 2014: 4). As the human life is occupied by technology, it is claimed that it would not be possible for the traditional concept of human to represent human beings adequately (Huxley, 1957: 17). In this respect, it has been argued that humanism should gain a different dimension and that people who benefit from technology and science cannot be properly understood with old concepts (Hassan, 1977: 836). While Huxley names (1957: 17) the "new existence" reinforced by science and technology as transhumanism, Hassan offers the term "posthuman" to refer to the new human condition. By the end of the twentieth century, the female condition in posthuman was questioned by Haraway. As Haraway (1991: 151) suggests, the "cyborg" would be efficient to find a solution to the gender problem between male and female human beings. Moreover, with the cyborgs, women can be released from reproductive burdens and male dominancy of the previous human condition. However, towards the second decade of the 2000s, some critics proposed that cyborgs are not the solution. As Åsberg and MacCormack put it, current posthumanist philosophies are not fundamentally different from traditional anthropocentric patriarchal notions. In principle, posthumanism offers a genderless space in which gender discrimination and female suppression will end.

However, posthuman gender studies indicate the opposite. Their view is that the disadvantaged status of woman has not changed, although the posthuman condition metamorphoses by challenging the boundaries (MacCormack, 2018: 40). Woman is still in the becoming-woman process because in the human condition she is oppressed by man. Nevertheless, her becoming process is advancing. MacCormack (2018: 40) argues that "[f]rom fighting for quality, safety in our bodies and the ability to articulate our own selves, the idea that our bodies are now fashionable theoretically, and ripe for assimilation by the logic that marginalises us in the first place is the current trend in posthuman theory." Following this argument, it could be stated that woman's struggle to gain an equal place in male-dominated society will continue under a posthuman condition. Therefore, this situation does not solve the situation of the woman, on the contrary, the problematic condition may just continue.

Chapter Two contained an analysis of Gray's *Poor Things*, in which it was suggested that the novel offers a new condition for the maternal body in posthumanism. The transhumanist creator has similar motivations as Shelley's Victor Frankenstein in his eradication of the maternal body and the transplant of a living foetus in the maternal body. This puts the mute pregnant body of young Bella/Victoria firmly in the commanding hands of male power. As a new type of being, Bella becomes a transhuman, but when her mental capability is taken into consideration, she becomes completely vulnerable and loses her independence. This means that the authority of technology usage is questioned because biomedical transformations are not being used for benevolent reasons. As also indicated in the "Transhumanist Declaration", the use of biotechnology should be controlled otherwise it could be manipulated without ethical concerns. Similarly, Gray's *Poor Things* delineates the manipulation of biotechnology. As a consequence, this challenge mostly affects the maternal body. Victoria, who was entirely oppressed by men in her previous existence, is now subjected to another man's abuse as a transhuman. That is to say, the maternal body, which in the human condition does not adequately establish itself, continues to exist in unsatisfactorily mishandled conditions.

Finally, in Chapter Three, Winterson's *Frankissstein* was considered in terms of Haraway's cyborg theory and posthuman gender studies of Åsberg, Braidotti, MacCormack, as well as van der Waal's pregnant posthuman. According to cyborg theory, which proposes a liberated atmosphere for the woman, the female body and the maternal/pregnant body emancipate from oppressive forces such as capitalism and patriarchy. The use of technology remains debatable. As observed in the novel, Winterson presents a transhuman and posthuman universe with man-made creatures such as robots, and sex dolls for men; however, there is no room for any maternal body. In other words, natural procreation is replicated by an industrial creation process, and the results are duplicated woman bodies empowered by artificial intelligence. Moreover, in the secondary plot, pregnancy is used to represent loss, death, pain, illness, or tragedy, while also being a condition with such promising connotations as life, possibility, new opportunities, and the future. In nature, nothing is precisely planned or certain, hence there are ambiguities and obscurities. Similarly, pregnancy may bring accidents, deformities, and physical or mental handicaps. To avoid such misfortunes, humans may attempt to become transhuman by utilizing artificial and scientific methods. Regarding Haraway's theory, *Frankissstein*'s world of creatures cannot help women to escape patriarchy, capitalism or any dominance, because the condition of women is questioned.

Following this questioning, Chapter Three concludes that the maternal body may be the "first casualty" of the transhumanist dream.

In conclusion, the transhumanist creators, doctors or scientists in *Frankenstein*, *Poor Things* and *Frankissstein* deal with the creation of posthumans. Considering the novels that this thesis has embraced, the condition of the maternal body is not represented or contemplated by early transhumanists and posthumanists. Hence, this thesis suggests that when humans attempt to go beyond being human, it may turn them into transhuman or posthuman. Following this, in this alteration, the maternal and pregnant body is eliminated as it has been replaced by artificial reproduction techniques like creation, recreation and reanimation. To put it differently, the ambition to exclude human from procreation to achieve creation is the incident which disqualified the natural process of pregnancy. As a consequence, the understanding of human and humanity will be inevitably challenged and most probably reformulated. This condition may aggravate the woman's already problematic position, as well as the natural beginning of human life. Therefore, posthumanism and transhumanism may require a reassessment of the place of the maternal body.

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