

Another Humanist Ideal: The Transhuman Future in *Frankissstein: A Love Story*

Lin Shaojing

Institute of World literature and Comparative Literature, Zhejiang University
Email: lshaojing@163.com

Abstract *Frankissstein: A Love Story*, Winterson's latest novel, shows the author's critical thinking on the transhuman technological issues. From making a study of three characters, this paper will demonstrate how the transhuman dream continually propels the enhancement of human properties with the help of constantly changing technologies, and their ultimate goal is to make human morphological freedom come true. This article will discuss from three aspects. Firstly, it will explore the transhuman theme embodied in Prometheus myth and its different understanding of human nature, which contributes to grasping the essence of Winterson's dual narration. Following this, we will examine the modern Promethean representative character, Victor Frankenstein, who realizes the purpose of creating being by transforming the human nature (its biology) through science and technology, which is the manifestation of Enlightenment Humanist ideal. Thirdly, it will be clarified that Victor Stein's disembodied posthumanist stance in the modern article is in fact a kind of transhumanist thought, and his radical goal is to achieve the ultimate ideal of transhumanism-the freedom of human nature-by completely getting rid of the fragile corporeal body. However, this ideal will lead to the dualist variant of mind and body-the opposition between information and matter.

Key Words Jeanette Winterson; *Frankissstein*; Prometheus; transhumanism; human nature

Author **Lin Shaojing** is a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute of World literature and Comparative Literature, Zhejiang University. Her research interest is English literature.

Winterson published a new novel *Frankissstein: A Love Story* in 2019 (hereinafter referred to as *Frankissstein*), which was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 2019. In this latest masterpiece, the author pushes the thinking of technological issues to

another depth. There are many new words related to current science and technology in the novel, such as cryonics, prosthetics and trans-gender, which are no less popular in the current society than the galvanism used in organisms in the 19th century, and these technologies used to and are now connected to another word, i.e. the transhuman. When it comes to the transhuman, there is another relevant concept, i.e. the posthuman, and these two concepts will be crucial points in this paper, here is therefore a brief overview of the relationship between them. There are mainly two viewpoints in the academic circles: first, the transhuman is a transitional stage between human being and the posthuman, which could be summed up by the name of the important transhuman organization, namely Humanity+; Second, in a broad sense, the transhuman belongs to the category of the posthuman, since both think about the interaction between human and technology. This intersection point also causes the ambiguity of the two concepts, and the concept of “the posthuman” is therefore used in both traditions. And still, there is an essential difference between them, that is, in a sense, the posthumanist posthuman can be analyzed as “a criticism of humanism,” while the transhumanist posthuman can be regarded as “an intensification of humanism” (Robert and Stefan 17). In recent years, the western academic circles have turned to the posthuman study, scholars generally believe that “posthumanism comes out of postmodernism,”¹ while the transhumanist thought can be traced back to a much longer time, it “takes up the long and widely branched history of cultures and ideas” (Rockoff 256), and among numerous mythologies of human enhancement, the myth of Prometheus has far-reaching implication.

In this novel, Winterson follows her consistent non-unitary narrative style, and compared with the previous novels there is a big change that the dual narrative is used throughout the novel, except that the plot of the lunatic asylum is narrated by the third male narrator Wakefield. One of the narrators is Mary Shelley, the narrator of adapted section from *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus* (hereinafter referred to as *Frankenstein*), while the modern one is narrated by Ry (abbreviation for Mary). The dual narrative is independent but integrated to form the complete structure of the novel. As the first science fiction in literary history and perhaps “the first literary work that explicated genuine transhumanist thinking” (Rockoff

1 In the historical and philosophical frame of postmodernism, the theories such as feminism and postcolonialism question the humanist concepts and values and the deep-rooted dualism existing in western traditional culture. Posthumanism also challenges these dominant concepts and values, but as the intervention of technology endangers the whole human race, it does not make a voice for some people, but rethinks the concept of the human for the whole human race. See Francesca Ferrando. “The Body.” Ranisch Robert; Lorenz Sorgner Stefan (eds.). *Post- and Transhumanism: An Introduction*[M]. Frankfurt Am Main: Peter LANG GMBH, 2014, p. 221.

257), *Frankenstein* tells the story of man-made being, and its intertextual allusion to the Prometheus myth indicates correlation between them, which, as one of the main narrative lines, highlights the key intention of Winterson's novel, and its intermingled narrative with the other modern text also implies that they share some common ground. This article attempts to explain what this commonality is and what is the truth behind these men's crazy thoughts from the perspective of the two narrators. This article will discuss from three aspects. Firstly, it will analyze the transhuman theme embodied in Prometheus myth and its different understanding of human nature, which contributes to grasping the essence of Winterson's dual narration. Following this, we will examine the modern Promethean representative character, Victor Frankenstein, who realizes the purpose of creating life by transforming the human nature (its biology) through science and technology, which is the manifestation of Enlightenment Humanist ideal. Thirdly, it will be clarified that Victor Stein's disembodied posthumanist stance in the modern article is in fact a kind of transhumanist thought, and his radical goal is to achieve the ultimate ideal of transhumanism-the freedom of human nature - by completely getting rid of the fragile corporeal body. However, this ideal will lead to the dualist variant of mind and body-the opposition between the information and the matter.

Ariadne's Thread-Prometheus

The mythological story of Prometheus is a recurring motif in Winterson's novels. The transhumanists often resort to this story to trace back the origin of transhumanism and justify it. There are different versions of Prometheus's complete story, but they all end up being punished for stealing fire. In another novel, *Weight*, Winterson casts the image of Prometheus as a hero suffering for the well-being of human being, whereas in this new novel Byron connects Prometheus with the snake, giving a hint that Prometheus seduces human beings to improve themselves and manipulates their thoughts like serpent in the Garden of Eden, which echoes Trijsje Franssen's opinion that Prometheus embodies a kind of ambiguity, namely, "on the one hand, he is a hubristic trickster, a thief, on the other hand a hero, a savior. Moreover, by means of his cunning, courage and theft he helped to create the human being, and to transform him into a smarter, better, more civilized being" (Franssen 74). The duality reflected in Prometheus's image and his transcendence of duality have also made Prometheus a recurring theme in the posthuman discourse. However, in the structure of this article, referring to this image is obviously from the transhumanist standpoint, for "The most common reception of this myth highlights human creativity, craftsmanship and technical abilities. Until

today, Prometheus represents the symbol of human self-authorization to shape his environment and ultimately himself” (Rockoff 256), and fire as a metaphor of taboo but advanced knowledge that he does his best to acquire indicates human efforts to seek evolution by exercising his individual will to power. For the transhumanists, Prometheus’s progress is a symbol of human being overcoming his own weaknesses and limitations by means of technology, and stands for “the will to evolve” and “the innate human drive to increase knowledge and abilities, even at the expense of present pains” (Young 39). In a manner of speaking, it aims at human enhancement, which is “ultimate liberation and emancipation from human nature — i.e. the biological boundaries — that obstruct human freedom, which for this position is the very essence of human being and therefore his true ‘nature’” (Weiss 196). It is precisely based on this understanding that the transhumanists think it desirable for human beings to achieve the purpose of enhancement in scientific and technological way because human beings will not only eliminate diseases and aging, but control the future of our human species evolution in an enhanced manner. Furthermore, through the enhancement of our biological nature, we will achieve the ultimate nature of human freedom. When people view genetic technology to enhance human beings as a scourge, biophysicist Gregory Stock illustrates in his book *Redesign Human*, “Some imagine we will see the perils, come to our senses, and turn away from such possibilities. But when we imagine Prometheus stealing fire from the gods, we are not incredulous or shocked by his act. It is too characteristically human. To forgo the powerful technologies that genomics and molecular biology are bringing would be as out of character for humanity...” (Stock 2). He uses Prometheus’s example to plead innocence for the transhumanist future on the grounds that “Prometheus is clearly being introduced here as the paradigmatic human, as an embodiment of the human essence. What is being said, on one level, is that biotechnological progress cannot be stopped, for being human we will always “steal fire from the Gods,” that is, continue to find and take possession of new means to increase our power and control” (Hauskeller 12), until we reach the final stage of evolution, the moment when true freedom of our human nature comes true.

The analogy between the two has its rationality, which seems we should embrace the “technowonderland” (Young 19) advanced technology has created for us as the transhumanists say. Nevertheless, the deep-rooted essence of European humanism lies dormant in Prometheus myth: “the belief in the ongoing progress of the species through reason, science, and technology” (Young 39). It strengthens the dualism of humanism: subject/object, human/nature, science/nature, light (of scientific reason)/ darkness (of nature). Not only that, the transhumanist position is

self-contradictory: just as Prometheus conquers nature through fire, human beings conquer another nature, namely aging and death through technology, “Nature, for the transhumanists, is mostly a question of ignorance, weakness, and mortality... Nature is associated with inevitable decline and failure... ‘life’s natural ebb’ as something we need to counter. Nature is what binds us, what sets limits to our aspirations. In short, nature is clearly the enemy” (Hauskeller 9-10). In Michael Hauskeller’s analysis, it can be argued that the transhumanists show contempt for nature, i.e. nature and the natural decline process of life. For all that, as mentioned earlier, they regard “the evolutionary will to increase knowledge and ability” as the way to actualize “the inherent human nature,” put differently, they presuppose a normative concept of human nature, which is a spiritual understanding of human nature and will drive us to continuously improve biological human nature. From the different understanding of human nature, we also perceive the familiar shadow of binary opposition, that is, the opposition between the spiritual and the material. Hauskeller wryly sums up, “It thus appears that nature, after it has been expelled from the transhumanist paradise with a great show of indignation, is immediately invited back in through the backdoor...” (10-11). It is not difficult to find the transhumanist basic assumption of human nature still follows the humanist concept, which sets the ultimate goal of human evolution in the future, and this presupposition simultaneously lays stress on the root of its free will. Max More makes his points clearly, “‘Trans-humanism’ emphasizes the philosophy’s roots in Enlightenment humanism. From here comes the emphasis on progress ...on reason, technology, scientific method, and human creativity...” (More and Vita-More 4). Grafting the core concept of humanism onto it is exactly what we see in Prometheus mythology, and this grafting is the biggest difference between transhumanism and posthumanism as well. Prometheus myth, as the Ariadne’s thread, is the key to understanding this novel for the reason that as described before, Modern Prometheus is the subtitle of *Frankenstein*, and its adapted version, as one of the plot lines of Winterson’s *Frankissstein*, showing these three texts are intrinsically and closely related, and a clear positioning of this myth will be conducive to comprehension of the following text.

Frankenstein: The Torchbearer of Prometheus in 19th Century

Frankenstein is both a subtext and an integral part of the novel, which is retold by Mary Shelley about the process of writing her novel in Geneva, and Winterson’s version supplements the story of Victor Frankenstein’s return to England after being rescued by Captain Walton and Mary Shelley’s encounter with Byron’s daughter

Ada. In the narrative of Geneva section, we can see they have endless arguments on many issues, and the most prominent one is the debate on ghosts and the Undead. When Mary asks Shelley if he believes in ghosts? He replies, “I do, he said, for how can it be that the body is master of the spirit? Our courage, our heroism, yes, even our hatreds, all that we do that shapes the world—is that the body or the spirit? It is the spirit (Winterson 15). He even wants to cast his mind into a rock, a stream, a cloud or other non-human forms. His praise of the spirit and belittling of the corporeal body and Polidori’s idea of supporting the Undead have ostensibly reproduced the dispute between the mind and the body in the history of western philosophy, whereas both the ghosts and the Undead reflect a more profound issue—the human desire to achieve freedom of eternal life.

Mary also explains this connotation through the story of scientist Victor Frankenstein creating being in the novel. Although Winterson’s novel doesn’t account for Frankenstein’s background, we know about him from Mary Shelley’s novel that Frankenstein studies at University of Ingolstadt, “which was associated with the Illuminati, a group formed in the late eighteenth century who believed in the supernatural. Crucially, they were also, in the main, supporters of the French Revolution, which means that Frankenstein, who attends university just after the Revolution..., is positioned at the centre of political and epistemological radicalism” (Smith 74). He was well educated and nurtured by the strong scientific atmosphere at that time, “as a true son of his time, a rational humanist, Victor trusts that science can play a decisive role in bringing about the perpetual progress of the human species”(Carretero-Gonzalez 54) , and he should therefore take the torch of Prometheus and make efforts for the progress of human beings. Mary describes her thinking process of choosing one name for her protagonist, “I will call my hero (is he a 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, like Polidori, like Doctor Lawrence. He will discern the course of the blood, know the knot of muscle, the density of bone, the delicacy of tissue, how the heart pumps. Airways, liquids, mass, jelly, the cauliflower mystery of the brain (Winterson 67). Readers familiar with Mary Shelley’s original work all know the significance of Dr. Lawrence, namely William Lawrence, to her novel creation. Lawrence was Shelley’s doctor and a well-known scientist at that time. In the preface to the 1818 edition of *Frankenstein*, Marilyn Butler states that Mary Shelley’s novel reproduced the scientific debate at that time, here referring to the much-watched scientific debate that took place from 1814 to 1819 between Lawrence and his teacher John Abernethy. Their views on

where life comes from are quite different: the former holds a materialist view of vitalism, while the latter with a spiritualized vitalist stance. The theory of vitalism was influential then, “which maintained that a life force ran through all living things including plants, animals and people” (Smith 72). For materialists like Lawrence, “life is the ‘assemblage of all the functions’ a living body can perform” (Butler xix), “life was merely the consequence of a healthily functioning organic unity which would cease once a vital organ had become terminally diseased. Life, for Lawrence, was therefore a matter of bodily function”; whereas, “Abernethy’s position suggests the possible presence of a soul that animates the body and which departs it on death” (Smith 73). Winterson specifically quotes Lawrence’s position in her novel: “There is no ‘super-added’ force such as the soul. Human beings are bone, muscle, tissue, blood, etc., and nothing more” (Winterson 56). This naive materialist view emphasizes the corporeality of the body, which is in contrast to Shelley’s radical view of disembodied life. It can be said that Winterson here once again reproduces the debate on the origin of life in the 19th century, which will provide the background for the transhuman future of bio-cybernetics in her novel, since from below we will see the variant of the struggle between the spirit and the body in this future picture, i.e. the mind and the body or the information and the matter. Frankenstein juxtaposes himself with Dr. Lawrence and emphasizes his materialist standpoint of experiments, providing the basis for the structure of his creation. Besides, this detail also proves the feasibility of Victor’s experiment and explains the scientific basis and purpose supporting his experiment. His ambition represents the Enlightenment ideal of scientific rationality at that time, and Lawrence’s victory in that debate seemed to support this view. However, when we go deep into the creation process, the true nature of this ideal will be revealed.

Winterson’s novel directly quotes some details from the original work and specifically mentions diary Wakefield finds in Victor’s luggage. A pencil drawing of Leonardo da Vinci’s “*Vitruvian Man*” is folded inside it, which is the template of his creation. The Vitruvian man as representatives of humanistic ideals, as a “emblem of humanism,” presupposes the perfect concept of the body, “sets standards not only for individuals, but also for their cultures,” and the resulting civilized mode in Western Europe has evolved into a “hegemonic cultural mode,” and this “humanistic universalism” has been spread to uncivilized regions outside the European continent, bringing those so-called uncivilized people a lot of oppression and suffering (Braidotti 13-15). Frankenstein uses this painting as the template to show that the body structure of his creation also follows humanistic ideals. What makes the pores stand on end is that the components of his creation come from

Charnel houses, dissecting room and slaughterhouse, and even so, he still feels he plays the role of God, “A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent creatures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs. Pursuing these reflections I thought that if I could bestow animation upon lifeless matter, I might in process of time renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption” (Winterson 193). Frankenstein covets the power to create life, and science endows him with the same position as God, which is not only the victory of science over religion, but also science over nature (human death). He even believes the light of scientific reason will dispel the darkness in the world, “Life and death appeared to me ideal bounds, which I should first break through, and pour a torrent of light into our dark world” (Shelley 32). As a scientific product, his creation has apparently transgressed the boundaries of human beings, a creature with human properties but an enhanced human being, namely “Humanity+.” Frankenstein “As one of literature’s most notorious Promethean over-reachers, he exemplifies the posthuman in the human, or at least one kind of posthumanity, bent on surpassing himself,” the posthuman mentioned here actually refers to the transhumanist posthuman, since the humanist concept is still playing a role, so to speak, “the human nature ‘born again’ in the figure of Frankenstein’s creature is the product of an arrogant anthropocentrism primed with the sense that no or few obstacles stand in the way of the human will”(Smith 161-163).

In the dialogue between Mary and Shelley, they also talk about another sensational scientific phenomenon of vitalism: scientist Erasmus Darwin has animated a piece of vermicelli, which also proves the omnipotence of human will, and alludes to another implication in the meantime, that is, the ontological inequality between human and other species. When vermicelli is associated with life, there is “unexpected attribution across boundaries” ... for the reason that “The hierarchical relation of humans to the natural world, which is often an element of scientific, technological thinking, transfers easily to social relations, whether they involve race, gender, class, or other differentiating factors,” when that kind of transference occurs, “the ‘vermicelli’ turn out, in a surprising reversal and transvaluation, to be the scientists and also people,” as in Frankenstein’s case, when he calls his creation the wretch or the monster, he ascribes the creature to the hierarchical order of social relations, and even those experimental objects that acquires life are merely “expendable subhuman creatures” (Goss and Riquelme 447-448). It can be seen that the boundary between man and his creation re-presents the hierarchical order of humanism and strengthens this concept as well.

Victor Stein: Humanist Performer or Reformer?

Although many theorists try to distinguish between the transhumanism and the posthumanism their different philosophical origins as well as their completely different foothold, their ambiguity also leads to the fact that the transhumanism as a mode of thinking is always entangled with the posthumanism in reality like a ghost, or even functions under the cover of the posthumanism. This transhumanist mode of thinking is permeating its destructive power in the posthuman turn, as Winterson suggests through the image of one scientist she created, i.e. Victor Stein, the Promethean character in her novel, who has the same first name as Victor Frankenstein. He is a scientist specializing in robot research and human enhancement, his scientific experiments combine P. B. Shelley's immortal dream without corporeal body with Frankenstein's technology to create life, which insinuates that Stein is clearly a combination of Shelley and Frankenstein. Stein's first appearance in the novel is to deliver a public speech, in which he describes three types of life forms: evolution-based, partially self-designing and fully self-designing, "Behind him on the screen tonight is Leonardo's drawing of *The Vitruvian Man*. As the audience sit in silence, Leonardo's image animates itself, takes an appearing trilby from an appearing peg and, placing it on the back of its head, turns and walks into an appearing sea. The sound of the waves can be heard clearly. The image of the man walks without pausing until the waters reach his head. All that is left behind is the hat floating calmly on the indifferent sea" (Winterson 73-74). Against this background, he calls his lecture "*The Future of Humans in a Post-Human World*" (Winterson 74). Stein portrays himself as an image of a humanist reformer, and Leonardo, the chief designer of the ideal humanist image, drowning himself stands for the death of humanist human image. This drowning image hints obliquely at the fact that Shelley drowned likewise, and the fragile corporeal body is one of the starting points that prompts him to thoroughly transform human nature. As previously mentioned, the Vitruvian man is the signified of European hegemonic culture, and many theorists have parodied this classic image, for example, Rosi Braidotti brings together a variety of images in her works, such as New Vitruvian Woman, Leonardo da Vinci's dog, Vitruvian cat and Robot in the style of Leonardo's Vitruvian Man. For these theorists, these revised versions are served as argument or refutation or just for ironic effect, Stein here shows his decision to break away from the western humanist thought that causes all kinds of disasters. When the audience asks him "whose side are you on? He'd say there are no sides—that binaries belong to our carbon-based past. The future is not biology—

it's AI. (Winterson 72) Later, in the dialogue between Ry and him, he makes his point clear, "Race, faith, gender, sexuality, those things make me impatient, said Victor. We need to move forward, and faster. I want an end to it all, don't you see? An end to the human, I said. An end to human stupidity" (Winterson 199). He appears to be an anti-humanist reformer, but we will have a new knowledge of Stein's image if we link his Promethean rhetoric with the interpretation of a fully self-designing life form and the scene of Leonardo's death.

In his conservative explanation to the public, fully self-designing life is an upcoming world of artificial intelligence, a world where the physical limits of our bodies become irrelevant, "Robots will manage much of what humans manage today. Intelligence—perhaps even consciousness—will no longer be dependent on a body. We will learn to share the planet with non-biological life forms created by us. We will colonise space" (Winterson 73). The truth, however, is that he creates a future picture in which human beings are completely disembodied and reduced to pure data forms stored in computers. "humans can be understood as biological data-processing plants—if you believe the biologists. Computers are non-biological data-processing plants. If data is the input and the rest is processing, then humans aren't so special after all" (Winterson 78). If Hans Moravec is the theorist who proposes mind can be uploaded into a computer for storage, Stein is a practitioner of this theory. Nevertheless, his scientific dream is not to prolong life but to end death forever, the future is not we share the earth with non-biological forms, but we have all become non-biological forms, in other words, human beings will evolve into "things" without corporeal bodies. Leonardo's death therefore suggests that the designers of future life will evolve as well, and the evolution will be manipulated by crazy scientists through cybernetic technology. In the Guardian interview, Winterson makes her comments on this phenomenon, when Johanna Thomas-Corr asks her, "Would you upload your own mind to a computer if the opportunity arose" "Yes. I'd probably regret it! Who would you trust to do it? What would they do with you? We could be trapped in somebody's laptop for hundreds of years waiting to get out: "Let me out!" It keys back into all those wonderful fairy stories about trapped spirits in bottles. We've always dealt with disembodiment, it's right through folklore across the planet" (Thomas-Corr). To take a step back, even if the technology is successful as Stein says, the technology still needs a material carrier. N. Catherine Hayles is aware of this problem, she propounds that "Information, like humanity, cannot exist apart from the embodiment that brings it into being as a material entity in the world; and embodiment is always instantiated, local, and specific. Embodiment can be destroyed, but it cannot be replicated. Once the specific form constituting it is

gone, no amount of massaging data will bring it back. This observation is as true of the planet as it is of an individual life-form. As we rush to explore the new vistas that cyberspace has made available for colonization, let us remember the fragility of a material world that cannot be replaced” (Hayles 49). This can be understood from the breakdown occurring after the pending experiment, “the massive outage in Manchester was simultaneous with a city-wide IT meltdown. Millions of gigabytes of data wiped” (Winterson 338). The cloud storage of the network serves as a data storage terminal, if data is compared to human life, then the loss of data means that many people die forever in this sudden failure. At the same time, Ry questions another consequence of this operation, “Isn’t content also context? I ask him. Your experiences, your circumstances, the time you live in? Consciousness isn’t free-floating; it’s enmeshed” (Winterson 110), she points out that the de-contextualization of mind uploading separates information from its meaning, and information will finally become meaningless floating signifiers. No matter in the part of Mary’s story or the part of Ry’s, Mary and Shelley, Ry and Victor are always accompanied by their sexual behaviors when they talk about the idea of decorporealization, this coincidence is in fact a response to their radical attitude with their physical pleasure. In these detailed descriptions, the narrators also use different sense organs to strengthen their feeling of the flesh-body, such as “The scent of him is what I like,” “he smells of basil and lime,” “I am holding his body in my left hand” (Winterson 153-154) , “I love his body...I rest on his narrow chest, listening to his heart” (Winterson 60).

Although everything behind Stein’s crazy experiment is unknown, he still persists in conducting this ethically challenged experiment secretly in a hidden underground tunnel. Facing Ry’s query, he retorts, “if you were certain that by disrupting everything you take for granted about the mind, about the body, about biology, about death, about life, if you were certain that such a disruption would bring about a personal, social, global utopia, would you risk it?”(Winterson 112) The implication here is that he takes risks for the well-being of all human beings and for their common utopian future as well. This very typical Promethean rhetoric is familiar and indisputable, however the veil of rhetoric discourse is further lifted through the perspective of narrator Ry. Stein is as important to this novel as Frankenstein is in Mary Shelley’s novel, Winterson is not here to follow Mary Shelley’s narrative technique-let the scientist tell his own story in the first person, but being told by Ry, which not only weakens his imposing manner, extremely inflated sense of superiority and control desire, but also makes Victor Stein’s contradictory personal images stand out. Even our readers will unconsciously

associate it with the idea that whether his rebound inflated desire is the self-protective instinct motivated by the ethnic suffering of the Jewish nation or not. In the course of western modernization, the Jewish nation has suffered the most, and he wants to end human stupidity because humanist thoughts are still at work until now and we are still stuck in the mire of “race, faith gender and sexuality.” His crazy experiments are devoted to transforming the biological human nature, for this is both the way to actualize eternal life, and the way to eliminate all kinds of discrimination codes inscribed on the flesh-body in the western humanistic tradition, and the way to make his global utopian vision come true as well. And still, his vision of realizing equality by eliminating the corporeality is apparently based on the total negation of the flesh-body, which instead reinforces a recognition that the flesh-body is the justification of the root of racial discrimination and gender discrimination. However, when he attempts to upload mind into a computer, “thereby obtaining through technological mastery the ultimate privilege of immortality, he is not abandoning the autonomous liberal (humanist) subject but is expanding its prerogatives into the realm of the posthuman” (Hayles 287). His radicalization, moreover, inevitably results in a more primitive binary opposition—the victory of mind over body, rather than a posthumanist stance that subverts binary opposition as he himself says in his speech. Thomas D. Philbeck, in his article, characterizes transhumanist position, “transhumanism does not actually attack or challenge the philosophical problems that emerge from dualist metaphysical foundations that presuppose a mind-body split as an acceptable ontological structure to begin with”; in a nutshell, it embraces this dualism, as in the case of mind uploading into computers, “The idea that the mind is a separable entity from the material brain is a presupposition required to perform such a theoretical operation” (178). In other words, the ontological framework of humanist dualism is reiterated in his transhumanist vision of mind uploading.

Whether Prometheus, Frankenstein or Stein, as transhumanists of different times, they stand for the efforts to seek science and technology to overcome the limitations of human beings. With the continuous conquering of science, human beings have occupied more and more bright territories, which is undoubtedly the well-being the arrogant human beings bring to ourselves. As mentioned earlier, the ultimate transhumanist aim is to realize the essence of human freedom, which is also the embodiment of the free will of the western liberal humanist subject, while “the human animal represents only a transitory stage in the evolutionary history of this species, which has not yet come to an end. The human animal is not yet what it has to be, but must achieve its very essence by enhancing its proper nature

(biology)” (Weiss 196-197). This suggests that human beings like us are only one stage in the evolutionary process, and we can draw from the pronoun “it” that it is a relatively lower stage, far from reaching the ultimate nature of human beings, that is, freedom from the constraints of biological boundaries. It is this desire for the essence of human freedom that is externalized into an evolutionary will, which drives human beings to continually break through their own biological boundaries through technology to actualize this ultimate goal. The will to evolve-the common ground they present-is essentially “a Promethean aspiration to remake nature, including human nature, to serve our purposes and satisfy our desires...” (Sandel 26-27). From the relevant analysis of these three characters, it can be seen that the transhuman dream of human beings is the ongoing process of propelling the enhancement of human properties by means of constantly changing technologies, and their ultimate goal will enable human beings to achieve morphological freedom, which predicts the future of humanity may be a completely disembodied state. We should be on guard against this, for the transhuman future, perhaps humans like us will be abnormal as we have seen in Winterson’s another novel *The Stone Gods*. And still, history has constantly witnessed that any technological invention may bite back at itself, Stein says, “If it does work it will temporarily shut down the UK’s entire Cloud storage system, said Victor. And probably cause a power outage too” (Winterson 278). This is an invasive metaphor for this technology. At the end of the novel, with the loud noise of the underground laboratory, Manchester city is plunged into a large-scale power outage, and the power system has malfunctioned. We don’t know whether the experiment is successful or not, but the ending words “The human dream” (Ibid 344) indicates the author’s attitude towards all this: myriads of Steins will “seize the torch of Prometheus with both hands” (Young 22), and human beings will never rest on the road to their ultimate goal. In spite of this, we need to pay attention to the fact that when human being become post-embodiment state, whether they are genies in the bottles or the various chimeras of fairy tales, these mythic bodies are a “atavistic” phenomenon and a “biological reversion” according to Paul Sheehan, that is, human beings revert back to the mythological world through technological evolution, which will be the inevitable outcome of unchecked technology in the biocybernetics era, and is also the author’s warning, for cybernetic technology “treating information as separable from material forms would lead to the ‘erasure of embodiment’” (Maude and Hillman 251-254), and thus generates a new dualism-the information and the matter (body)-that describes humanity, which is rejected by Winterson’s posthumanist standpoint. At the same time, the dual narration in the novel reflects the way of grafting liberal humanism

on transhumanism to varying degrees. On this point, Winterson agrees with posthumanist theorists Braidotti and Hayles who believe that this is really lethal, since this transhumanist posthuman stance will turn into a more horrible anti-human threat, and “Yet the posthuman need not be recuperated back into liberal humanism, nor need it be construed as anti-human... the posthuman does not really mean the end of humanity. It signals instead the end of a certain conception of the human” (Hayles 286-287). It is based on this, for Winterson, the body is not an equipment that can be changed at will, and it is not the life support system of the brain as Stein says. The mind and the body are an inseparable unity, which is the anchor point of the embodied and situational bodies, and this view of bodies is Winterson’s most fundamental philosophical standpoint, which disturbs the attempt to essentialize the body and deconstructs the conspiracy to separate the mind from the bodies. As Mary responds to Shelley’s radical disembodied thought, “How would I love you, ...if you had no body?” (Winterson 15). The body, as a container, as a place, and “as the physical seat of all experience” (Shilling 8), is the material foundation of human being, and it is also the starting point for us to talk about human nature. Otherwise, when we talk about freedom of human nature, we are probably talking about freedom of thingness.

Works Cited

- Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. London: Polity Press, 2013.
- Butler, Marilyn. “An Introduction and Notes.” Mary Shelley. *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* (The 1818 Text) . Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998.
- Carretero-Gonzalez, Margarita. “The Posthuman that Could Have Been: Mary Shelley’s Creature.” *Relations*, vol. 4, no.1, 2016, pp. 53-64.
- Ferrando, Francesca. “The Body.” *Post-and Transhumanism: An Introduction*, edited by Ranisch Robert and Lorenz Sorgner Stefan. Frankfurt Am Main: Peter LANG GMBH, 2014.
- Franssen, Trijsje. “Prometheus.” *Post-and Transhumanism: An Introduction*, edited by Ranisch Robert and Lorenz Sorgner Stefan. Frankfurt Am Main: Peter LANG GMBH, 2014.
- Goss, Theodora and John Paul Riquelme. “From Superhuman to Posthuman: The Gothic Technological Imaginary in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Octavia Butler’s *Xenogenesis*.” *Modern Fiction Studies*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2007, pp. 434-459.
- Hauskeller, Michael. “Prometheus Unbound: Transhumanist Arguments from (Human) Nature.” *Ethical Perspectives*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2009, pp. 3-20.
- Hayles, N Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago: The U of Chicago P, 1999_nf62fb77467fb64151999c502c608d8eaa.
- Maude, Ulrika; David Hillman. *The Cambridge Companion to the Body in Literature*. Cambridge:

- Cambridge UP, 2015.
- More, Max; Natasha Vita-More. *The Transhumanist Reader*. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.
- Philbeck, Thomas D.. "Ontology." *Post- and Transhumanism: An Introduction*, edited by Ranisch Robert and Lorenz Sorgner Stefan. Frankfurt Am Main: Peter LANG GMBH, 2014.
- Robert, Ranisch and Lorenz Sorgner Stefan, eds. *Post-and Transhumanism: An Introduction*. Frankfurt Am Main: Peter LANG GMBH, 2014.
- Rockoff, Marcus. "Literature." *Post- and Transhumanism: An Introduction*, edited by Ranisch Robert and Lorenz Sorgner Stefan. Frankfurt Am Main: Peter LANG GMBH, 2014.
- Sandel, Michael J.. *The Case against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering*. Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2007.
- Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. New York: Dover Publication, 1995.
- Shilling, Chris. *The Body in Culture, Technology and Society*. London: Sage Publications, 2005.
- Smith, Andrew. *The Cambridge Companion to Frankenstein*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2016.
- Stock, Gregory. *Redesigning Human: Our Inevitable Genetic Future*. Boston· New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2002.
- Thomas-Corr, Johanna. Interview Jeanette Winterson: 'I didn't see this coming'. <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/dec/22/jeanette-winterson-frankissstein-interview#maincontent>. Retrieved on Dec 22th, 2019.
- Weiss, Martin G.. "Nature." *Post-and Transhumanism: An Introduction*, edited by Ranisch Robert and Lorenz Sorgner Stefan. Frankfurt Am Main: Peter LANG GMBH, 2014.
- Winterson, Jeanette. *Frankissstein: A Love Story*. London: Jonathan Cape, 2019.
- Young, Simon. *Designer Evolution: A Transhumanist Manifesto*. New York: Prometheus Books, 2006.