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From Androgynous to Hybrid Cybernetic Bodies: Salvation or More Subjugation?

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Abstract: Throughout the world, the predominant understanding of gender is based on the claim that there is a causal relationship between sex, gender, and body. The assumption is that first there is a sex, which is conveyed through a socially constructed gender, and then bodily desires and sexuality are shaped in accordance with that constructed gender. However, Virginia Woolf, one of the prominent literary figures of the twentieth century, persistently tries to challenge this assumption that all people fall into one of the two distinct gender categories, masculine or feminine, established on biological sex traits. For her, de(con)structing the gender distinctions and liberating the imprisoned body from the phallocentric determinism is possible through a dynamic and fluctuating quality of identity accompanied by a non-exclusive form of androgyny. In keeping with Woolf's idea of androgyny, Jeanette Winterson, a contemporary British writer and critic, also stresses the importance of breaking free from the constraints imposed by heteronormativity through multifarious identities and gender fluidity. Nevertheless, Winterson takes this androgynous exploration of Woolf to a new level in her *The Stone Gods* (2007) by delving deeper into the concept of hybrid cybernetic bodies constructed through the implementations of twenty-first-century technology. Thus, considering the above discussions of Woolf and Winterson and basing its argument on gender and body politics of posthumanism, this paper explores whether this d/evolution from androgynous bodies to hybrid cybernetic bodies heralds salvation from phallocentric restrictions or poses more risks of subjugation for nonhu(*man*)s[1] through the implementations of heteronormative technology.

Keywords:

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Androjenden Hibrit Sibernetik Bedenlere: Kurtuluş ya da Kabulleniş?

Öz: Dünya genelindeki hâkim anlayış cins, cinsiyet ve beden arasında nedensel bir ilişki olduğu iddiasına dayanır. Varsayıma göre önce biyolojik bir cinsiyet vardır, bu cinsiyet toplum tarafından inşa edilen bir toplumsal cinsiyet aracılığıyla aktarılır ve ardından bedensel arzular ile cinsellik bu inşa edilen cinsiyete uygun olarak ortaya çıkar. Ancak, yirminci yüzyılın önde gelen edebi figürlerinden Virginia Woolf, tüm insanların biyolojik özellikleri üzerinden eril

Anahtar Sözcükler:

Androjen,
Hibrit,
Sibernetik bedenler,

[1] "(Non)human" or "non/human" are widely accepted terms in posthuman and ecocritical studies to reveal the dichotomies between humans and what are considered "others" in the context of animals and nature. Nevertheless, in this study, nonhu(*man*) and hu(*man*) are used to emphasise that the core reason for the prevalent dualities and conflicts within the society is the "man" and man-made ideologies.

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ve/ya dişil olarak oluşturulan iki farklı toplumsal cinsiyet kategorisinden birine ait olduğu varsayımına ısrarla karşı çıkmıştır. Ona göre, ataerkil normlar ve fallosantrik determinizm çerçevesinde tanımlanan cinsiyet ve beden kavramlarının yeniden tanımlanması ve özgürleştirilmesi gerekmektedir; bu da, değişken, dinamik ve kapsayıcı nitelikleri olan androjenlikle mümkündür. Woolf'un androjenlik fikrine uygun olarak, çağdaş İngiliz yazar ve eleştirmen Jeanette Winterson da çoklu kimlikler ve cinsiyet akışkanlığı yoluyla heteronormativitenin dayattığı kısıtlamalardan ve yaptırımlardan kurtulabilmenin önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bununla birlikte Winterson, 2007 tarihli *Taş Tanrılar* eserinde Woolf'un androjenlik arayışını derinleştirir ve yirmi birinci yüzyıl teknolojisinin uygulamalarıyla inşa edilen hibrit sibernetik bedenler kavramına yoğunlaşır. Bütün bu bilgiler ışığı altında, Woolf'un ve Winterson'ın kaygılarını göz önünde bulunduran ve argümanını posthümanizmin toplumsal cinsiyet ve beden politikalarına dayandıran bu çalışmada, androjen bedenlerden hibrit sibernetik bedenlere d/evrilişin '(eril)insan olmayanlar' için fallosantrik sınırlamalardan bir kurtuluş mu, yoksa heteronormatif teknolojiler aracılığıyla daha fazla tahakküm riskine maruz kalma anlamına mı geldiği incelenmiştir.

Jeanette Winterson, *Taş Tanrılar*

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Introduction

Throughout HIStory, the female body has been unceasingly scrutinised, tightly surveilled and objectified by the panoptic male gaze. From the restrictive corsets of the Victorian era designed to achieve the male desired hourglass body to modern-day beauty standards that force women to have slim and toned bodies with flawless skin and Barbie-like facial features, women have had to struggle with the endless desires and demands of hegemonic masculinity. In order not to be defined and imprisoned by that hegemonic masculinity and its dictations, women have tried to subvert the long-established belief that women's bodies exist primarily for sexual satisfaction and/or reproduction, which degrades them into "two-legged wombs" (103), as described by Margaret Atwood (1939–...) in *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). In order to de(con)struct these phallocentric stigmatizations and empower women to reclaim agency over their bodies, feminist scholars, critics, and writers encourage women to redefine female sexuality as an indispensable part of their bodies by breaking free from the male gaze and commodification.

Being aware of the significance of biological sex and the body in determining gender construction, Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) paves the way for women by re-

exploring the concept of androgyny that she praises in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) through the character Orlando, who embraces both "the man-womanly, and . . . woman-manly" features (82). Orlando, living for centuries as 'a man' and ending in 'a woman' "painlessly and completely and in such a way that Orlando herself showed no surprise at it" (Woolf, *Orlando* 125), allows Woolf to subvert the phallocentric sublime and biological essentialism by creating an alternative self that moves fluidly between genders and time periods. That is, her scrutinising of androgyny accompanied by her feminist views not only provides all-encompassing possibilities for those who do not conform to phallocentrically constructed heterosexuality, but it also becomes a source of inspiration for many other women/writers to portray the diversity of experience by going beyond the rigid boundaries of gender dichotomies. Among these writers underlining the importance of subverting gender norms and stereotypes to achieve the most intimate part of the subject's relation to one's gender is Jeanette Winterson (1959–…), who personally challenges the phallocentrically constructed heteronormative norms by publicly speaking about her experiences as a lesbian woman/writer. Thus, considering that both Woolf and Winterson have similar concerns, this paper explores their way(s) of challenging the heteronormative constraints imposed on nonhu(*man*)s through multifarious identities and gender fluidity in *Orlando* (1928) and *The Stone Gods* (2007).

Like Virginia Woolf, Winterson also aims to reveal the constraints enforced by heteronormativity in her works by frequently touching on themes of identity, love, and belonging, all of which are closely associated with her own experiences and perspectives on gender and sexuality. Although both women lived and wrote in different periods, Winterson has been greatly influenced by Woolf, the prominent figure of literature leaving a heritage of crucial importance, as she states in the fourth edition of the "Literary Rendezvous at Rue Cambon: Portrait of Virginia Woolf by Jeanette Winterson," held at Somerset House on September 28th, 2021. In that event, Winterson explains how much Woolf's "Professions for Women"[2], a speech that she delivered before the National Society for Women's Service in 1931, is still relevant today as in the following:

> Did [the speech] sound like something that was written ninety years ago? No, not at all. Not only because those problems are still prescient, are still with us, are still things that all of us, men and women alike, need to grapple with. Her mind was so ahead of itself, it was so fresh. And she saw the world as a whole, as a round. She did not sectionalize things, so when she was talking about the position of women, we understood that she was really talking about the distortion in humanity. Really, as she says in other parts of the piece – why should one sex be prosperous and so secure? And why should the other sex be so poor and so dependent? That is a very good question to ask.

[2] "Professions for Women" is an abbreviated version of the speech Virginia Woolf delivered before a branch of the National Society for Women's Service on January 21, 1931; it was published posthumously in *The Death of the Moth and Other Essays*.

Thus, by repeating the same questions that Woolf asked in 1931, Winterson aims to underline the fact that all *non*-men are still disadvantaged and oppressed throughout the world, even in this day and age. These otherised groups have to fight against the phallocratic structures and gendered norms that perpetuate inequality and injustice upon them. For Winterson, to break this vicious circle that stigmatises marginalised 'others' as inferior and deviant, questioning and dismantling the underlying power structures and socially-constructed norms that uphold heteronormative masculinity have the utmost importance. Only then will it be possible to establish an all-encompassing society valuing diversity and tolerance, regardless of gender and sexual orientation. Having these considerations in her mind and following the steps of Woolf, Winterson promotes fluidity and rejects fixed and rigid norms in her writing and personal life. For instance, in her most famous semi-autobiographical novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985), she encourages her readers to explore and express more about their gender identities without conforming to societal norms by revealing her own fluidity through the story of a young lesbian girl who rejects fixed and constructed identities. Seeing that her writing and sharing her personal experiences encourage people to recognise and embrace the multiplicity of identity, Winterson keeps on creating more complex, ambiguous, and fluid characters to subvert "the narrow, cisgender cosmovision [and] invoke *Orlando*" ("I Believe"). With that aim, she takes the androgynous exploration of Woolf as a starting point and then focuses more on the possible ways of establishing new alternatives for a fluid type of posthuman identity.

According to Shareena Z. Hamzah-Osbourne, both Woolf and Winterson are "writers at the forefront of shifts in thinking about women's writing itself . . . as part of the same literary lifespan between modernism, postmodernism and post-postmodernism" and many things indicated as "feminist concerns by Woolf [are] addressed more directly by Winterson" (111). For instance, by adopting the gender-bending motif employed by Woolf in *Orlando* that focuses on the issues of androgyny, bisexuality, and gender transformation, Winterson takes this exploration to a new level in her *The Stone Gods* by delving deeper into the concept of cybernetic bodies through Spike, a "Robo*sapiens*, who are the future of the world" (56; italics in the original). Being aware of the fact that the hu(*man*) has been usually accepted as the idealised model, in the same way that the male and masculinity have been, Winterson aims to deconstruct this myth by creating new bodies and identities that blur the dichotomies established by the Cartesian rationalism suppressing and marginalising nonhu(*man*)s. In this deconstructive process, Woolf advocates a non-exclusive form of bisexuality as portrayed in *Orlando*: "Orlando as a man with that of Orlando as a woman . . . both are undoubtedly one and the same person" (152). Winterson also praises Woolf's *Orlando* as the first trans triumph in English, which is far ahead of its time in terms of gender politics and gender progress as in the following: "Orlando refuses all constraints: historical, fantastical, metaphysical, and sociological. Ageing is irrelevant. Gender is irrelevant. Time is irrelevant. It is as though we could live as we always wanted to; disappointments, difficulties, sorrow, love, children, lovers,

nothing to be avoided, everything to be claimed. *Not locked. Not limited*" ("Shape Shifter"; italics added). Thus, Winterson picks up where Woolf has left off and goes further to be able to subvert the phallocratic conception of body and gender. Using the ideas of Woolf regarding age, time, and gender, Winterson focuses on a new understanding of the body, which is the 'posthuman cybernetic body' that transgresses the male-assigned boundaries and morphs into an ideal state of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call "becoming" in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (2004). That is, by ignoring the fixed forms of embodiment and merging hu(man)s with nonhu(*man*)s and machines, Winterson establishes new alternatives for a fluid type of posthuman identity, a kind of "amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-information entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (Hayles 3). However, this "amalgam," or cybernetic body, which is "less impressed . . . with the singularity of the human and more interested in similarities and crossovers among people, animals, and machines" (Pickering 393), comes with some ethical issues. For some groups, these bodies would lead to the destruction of the human-centred universe as they pose a threat to the "purity" of species, as Robert Pepperell argues in *The Posthuman Condition* (171). Others believe that the harmonious co-existence and hybridity in these bodies would contribute positively to both hu(*man*) and nonhu(*man*) species through an interconnected view that recognises the interdependence of all life forms. Subverting the phallocentric male logic prioritising the hu(*man*) which "functions to domesticate and hierarchize difference within the human (whether according to race, class, and gender) and to absolutize difference between the human and the nonhuman," these hybrid cybernetic bodies enable the formation of "the posthuman [that] does not reduce difference-from-others to difference-from-self, but rather *emerges in the pattern of resonance and interference between the two*" (Halberstam and Livingston 10; italics added).

In keeping with Judith [Jack] Halberstam and Ira Livingston's ideas of posthumanism, Winterson also delves into the concept of the body in the posthuman age, in which "a human being is not what a human being was even a hundred years ago" (*Stone Gods* 55). In this age, the new posthuman bodies are enhanced or replaced through radical developments in technology and biomedicine involving practices varying from anti-ageing procedures to cosmetic surgery. In an interview with Victor Recort regarding biomedical and technological developments, Winterson admits she is optimistic by nature, thereby believing in human beings and technology to create a better future ("I Believe"). However, she also reminds us the fact that all these tools are used and controlled by hu(*man*)s who "have done some terrible things . . . and will probably do it again . . . and every invention of ours ends up being used in the worst possible way" ("I Believe"). Realising this reality, Winterson makes a critique of the d/evolution of technology and highlights the dark sides of these tools in *The Stone Gods* by revealing the entangled relationship between the body and technology. For her, the body, especially the female body, is not just a form of existence but an ideological entity shaped by cultural

meanings and discourses, thereby systematically objectified and sexually abused by heteronormative technology prioritising male desires.

In line with Winterson, Sadie Plant, a British philosopher and author writing in the fields of technology and cultural studies, compares women and machines to depict how they both share a subjugated history, as in the following: "Women, nature and machines have existed for the benefit of man, organisms and devices intended for the service of a history to which they are merely the footnotes. The text itself is patriarchy, the system within which women occupy a world of objects, owned by men and exchanged between them" (503). This oppression has not slowed down, but even increased in the twenty-first century because of the drastically changed practices and understandings regarding the body. It has become the centre of attraction for hegemonic masculinity to be shaped and transformed through emerging technologies. According to Rachel Alpha Johnston Hurst, an American author and scholar writing in the fields of feminist theory and gender/cultural studies, this obsessive and irrational interest of hu(*man*)s in the body emanates from "normative narcissism" (91), which has emerged during the late-stage capitalism in response to the market-driven biotechnologies aiming to embellish the body.

These issues arise in Winterson's *The Stone Gods.* On the planet Orbus, which is extremely polluted and exhausted of natural sources, the Central Power and then MORE-Corporation produce and advertise "routine cosmetic surgery and genetic Fixing" (51) for both sexes to be able to take them under control. In contrast to men usually fixed in their late forties, all mature women look like young girls with "implants, buttocks, thighs and breasts [giving them] the pneumatic look" (63), which mirrors the gender injustice. Orbus women and their bodies are subjugated and objectified through technological reshaping and manipulation, to the point where "the female body has nowhere to go" (Braidotti 233). Thus, in the light of these discussions, this paper aims to reveal that as long as the heteronormative masculinity and its desires exist within society, nonhu(*man*)s will continue to be objectified and commodified, no matter whether they have organic or cybernetic bodies.

From Androgynous to Hybrid Cybernetic Bodies

In the TED Talk given in 2022, Jeanette Winterson laid out a vision of the future where human and machine intelligence could meld and form a place without any binaries through "alternative intelligence," a term she prefers to use instead of artificial intelligence. For her, it is not intelligence but "humans who are obsessed with false binaries," thereby leading to "utopia or dystopia" ("Is Humanity Smart"). Thus, she states that if humans can use that tool in a non-binary way, a better being that is not defined as hu(*man*) or nonhu(*man*) and a welcoming space where gender and sexuality are no longer labelled in the same way can emerge. Winterson outspeaks that possibility in *The Stone Gods* through Spike:

> "Gender is a human concept . . . and not interesting." . . .
> "In any case, . . . is human life biology or consciousness? If I were to lop off your arms, your legs, your ears, your nose, put out your eyes, roll up your tongue, would you still be you? You locate yourself in consciousness, and I, too, am a conscious being." (55)

Along these lines are uttered by Spike, a hybrid cybernetic being, Winterson tries to make her readers understand that the gender divide is phallocentrically constructed and is as artificial as the very notion of the hu(*man*). This has been actually voiced out by Virginia Woolf through Orlando, the androgynous self. Nearly a century later, Winterson underlines the necessity of establishing fluid, permeable, and multiple identities to be able to subvert the essentialist structure of the patriarchal order. She believes that the transition into cybernetic bodies can pave the way for creating post-gender societies, in which nonhu(*man*)s, machines and multiple identities purified from binaries live without any fear of subjugation. The "inappropriate/d other," in the words of Donna Haraway (*Haraway* 67), can put a strain on phallocentric dictations and liberate the self from any supposed determinism of the body through the dynamic and fluctuating quality of identity.

However, Winterson is also aware of the adverse effects of unchecked advancements in technology and biomedicine, forewarning her reader(s) about toxic masculinity and its dominance in heteronormative technology. For her, hegemonic masculinity, once more, has found a new way to objectify and commodify "women's bodies in a masculinist orgy of war" (Haraway, *Simians* 295) so as not to lose its power and control on "inappropriate/d others." This new way, according to Winterson, is the high level of gendered control and disempowerment of bodies through the implementation of technologies and biomedicines, as she has displayed in *The Stone Gods.* Focusing on the plausible outcomes of recent developments in biotechnology and medicine through this novel, she tries to offer thought-provoking perspectives for her readers about the unsettling tendencies of hu(*man*)s regarding gender and female/body politics.

According to Ursula K. Le Guin (1929–2018), Winterson's complex and critical science-fiction novel is "a keen lament for our irremediably incautious species" ("Head"). In line with Le Guin, Winterson explains that this 'incautious species', "*mankind*, . . . wherever found, Civilized or Savage, cannot keep to any purpose for much length of time, except the purpose of destroying himself" (*The Stone Gods* 91; italics added). Mankind's destroying himself and then searching for a second chance is actually the repeated theme in the four sections of *The Stone Gods*. Each part has duplicated main characters, 'Billie/Billy Crusoe and Spike/Spikkers', and remarkably similar plots. However, despite these overlaps, each plot depicts a different aspect of dystopia. Winterson experiments with the components of the plots and creates a story that is more powerful than the entire sum of its constituent parts; nevertheless, the reader may be confused while reading the

story as the plots are not chronologically organised. That is why, Winterson provides the following overview of *The Stone Gods* on her website:

> *The Stone Gods* is written in four parts; the first part begins on Orbus, a world very like earth, and like earth running out of resources and suffering from the severe effects of climate change. This is a world where everyone is bio-enhanced and bored to death. It is a world that has run out of possibilities. Then, a new planet is discovered, perfect for human life. This planet, Planet Blue, has only one drawback—the dinosaurs. A mission leaves Orbus to get rid of the dinosaurs. Our guide through the novel is Billie Crusoe, a disillusioned scientist in Parts 1, 3, 4, and a young sailor, (Billy), in Part 2, which is set on Easter Island in the eighteenth century. Billie is part of the mission to Planet Blue, and so is Spike, a perfect robo-sapiens. What happens between them explores the boundaries between carbon and silicon life forms—in other words, what is a human being, how do we define what is human, and how do we define what is love and what is possible when love is present? ("On *The Stone Gods*")

Blurring the boundaries between organic life (carbon-based) and artificial life (silicon-based) is one of the major tenets of posthumanism due to the increased interactions "between human, viral, animal, and technological bodies," as Jane Bennett states (108). This connection makes hu(*man*) realise that they no longer exist in an exclusive epistemological realm, but expeditiously become 'hybrids' based on the environmental relations "characterized by networks of complex crossings and interchanges with other beings and material forces" (Oppermann 27). These hybrid creatures, for Winterson, are the signifiers of a promising post-gender society in which nonhu(*man*)s can destabilise the phallocratically dictated dichotomies and eradicate the gender-biased categories. However, she is also fully conscious of the fact that the developments in this hybridised world are not outside the panoptic gaze and the control of hegemonic masculinity. Although the boundaries between 'carbon and silicon life forms' are modified and displaced by technological and biomedicine innovations, "the gendered boundary between male and female . . . remains heavily guarded" (Balsamo 217), because the systematic patriarchal tendencies of technology and medicine still exacerbate the marginalization of women and their bodies by ab/using the pre-existing inequalities and injustices. This is what Winterson explores and criticises in *The Stone Gods* through Spike, a genderless but female-formed Robo*sapiens*, who "looks amazing [with] clear skin, green eyes, dark hair" (109). According to the President of MORE-*Futures*, a corporate infrastructure governing and controlling the people of the Central Power, Spike has been "developed to take the planet-sized decisions that human beings are so bad at" (109). Nevertheless, as its name signifies, the company represents the hu(*man*) hubris and greediness that adopts the "MORE IS MORE" motto (110). Behind this motto and technological achievements lies the misogynistic phallocracy "reduc[ing] women to framed pictures/holograms/robots," as Mary Daly premonished nearly a half-century ago (56). That is, contrary to the President's claim that Spike is a technologically designed tool to help and save hu(man)ity in the space expedition to Planet Blue, her "incredibly sexy"

(6) appearance reveals the never-ending desire of hegemonic masculinity. This first Robo*sapiens* is not only a highly qualified worker, but a sexual fantasy and a fetishised object for the male gaze as well, or more precisely, "the perfect Eve for the male astronauts' solace during their long space travels, an object of consumption," as Sonia Villegas-López defines (32). Thus, Spike is a practical 'tool' for men both sexually and technologically, which mirrors women's subjugation throughout HIStory. In other words, even in the highly technological and post-gender age, gender labelling is still prevalent and forceful, and continues to categorise both 'carbon-based organic bodies' and 'silicon-based electronic bodies'.

The starting point of these gendered bodies is the oppression and violence imposed on nonhu(*man*)s, which Peter Singer defines as a "prejudice or attitude of bias in favor of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species" (6). This speciesism and master-slave relationship is co-produced in human-robot interactions as formulated by Sadie Plant in *Zeros and Ones*: *Digital Women and The New Technoculture:* "Women have been trapped by economic dependence on men as surely as robots are controlled by the implicit threat that their *masters* can always cut the power supply, turn the on-switch off, leave or *put them back on the shelf*" (105; italics added). Along these lines comparing women and robots, Winterson creates some female*bots* on Planet Blue*:* "There is Kitchenhand for the chores, Flying Feet to run errands or Lend-a-Hand too, for the temporarily unpartnered. . . . [or there are] LoBots, who have no feet because they spend all their time on their knees cleaning up" (13). Thus, by assigning qualities and features that align with patriarchally constructed femininity, Winterson indicates how strong hegemonic masculinity is, and how patriarchal expectations and desires recreate new 'docile bodies' for the male gaze and ab/use. For her, the 'angels' of the past are biotechnologically reconstructed, and then, given to the service of hu(man)s to perform gendered duties. That is, Winterson underlines that the hegemonic masculinity still keeps on commodifying women and robots.

This commodification and abuse of 'female' bodies d/evolves in a new direction with the implementation of new technologies in cosmetic surgery and genetic fixing. Winterson portrays that reality in *The Stone Gods* through MORE's ambitious project about creating perfect and ageless bodies that are "cosmetically altered in shape and size" (13). Most of the inhabitants of the Central Power are biogenetically fixed as they desire to be young and beautiful. For those, ageing is a kind of disease, "information failure [through which] the body loses fluency;" therefore, "most men prefer to Fix younger than [late-forties], and there are no women who Fix past thirty" (9). As they do not get older anymore, they have no worries about throwing birthday parties, because for them, "[birthdays] mark the passing of the years, and . . . years don't pass in the way that they once did. G is the day and year [they] genetically fix. It's a great day to celebrate" (14). That is, everything seems perfect for everybody; nevertheless, the phallocentric implications of the objectification of women and their bodies still persist, even in this 'utopian' society, and women keep on being subjugated by heteronormative technology

serving masculine demands and desires. The pressures for youthfulness disproportionately impact women, as unravelled through Mrs. Mary McMurphy, or most often known as "Pink," who desires to receive genetic reversal to be able to get back to her adolescent years. However, she wants that surgery not for herself, but to satisfy her husband who is "mad about Little Señorita, a twelve-year-old pop star who has Fixed herself rather than lose her fame" (14–15). Pink, then, declares that they do not have sex anymore as she is too old for her pedophiliac husband. Thus, to be able to get her husband's attention, she has "[her] vagina reduced [and becomes] tight as a screwtop bottle" (51). Here, with the character Pink, Winterson criticises the patriarchal tendencies prevalent in biomedicine and cosmetic surgeries ranging from breast implants to vaginoplasty, which are overwhelmingly realised in 'dominant male' and 'dominated female' dynamics. For her, the primary purpose of these implementations inflicted on women by male desire is to regulate women's bodies and self-autonomy. Thus, despite not having a negative appraisal of technology but rather the issue of gender exploitation, Winterson underlines the fact that heteronormative technology and biomedical surgeries constantly reproduce the system of binary oppositions privileging hu(*man*)s over nonhu(*man*)s, thereby leaving no place for women to go. It is a patriarchal circle for women that is difficult to get out "insofar as conventional heterosexual male and female sexualities are experienced psychically and represented culturewide as the relationship between *the one who penetrates* and *the one penetrated*, surgical interventions can function as very eroticized versions of the [hetero]sexual act" (Blum 45; italics added). This long-established phallocentric stereotype of 'dominant penetrator' and 'passive penetrated' is criticised by Winterson in her depiction of Spike. Although Spike is built for an exploratory space mission to Planet Blue, and she is "the most advanced member of the crew" on the spaceship, she has to "use up three silicon-lined vaginas" (24–25) to satisfy the sexual desires and fantasies of the men on board.

Briefly, through the portrayal of Pink and Spike, Winterson reminds her readers of the fact that the gendered control and manipulation of women's bodies is still prevalent due to society's use of technology, even in a post-gender world that promises the subversion of normative heterosexuality. Hence, "the future of women is uncertain [as] there will always be men" (20), and this uncertainty hinders Winterson's dream of establishing an all-encompassing world, in which "androgynous bodies, cyborgs, humanoid robots and hybrid beings contribute to a non-differentiation of the sexes" (Carrasco et al. 68). Winterson emphasises that this uncertainty has emanated from heteronormative system and technology that prioritise masculine demands and desires, and it will continue so far as power relations are still based on the supremacy of the male principle.

Conclusion

Despite living in different times and contexts, both Virginia Woolf and Jeanette Winterson voice out the everlasting struggle of nonhu(*man*)s against hegemonic masculinity and try

to subvert the phallocentric notions of gender and sexuality imposed on them through their works. With that aim, Woolf explores the concept of androgyny in *Orlando* and aims to prove that a harmonious integration of the masculine and feminine within one can transcend heteronormative constraints. Thus, she creates a shape-shifting and gender-fluid hero/ine, "an alternative aesthetic, an alternative model of self" (Lokke 242) that transgresses the boundaries of gender and sexuality of her time. Thus, through this fluid and alternative self, Woolf invites readers to imagine the possibilities of living without being constrained by sex, as "the change of sex, . . . [does] nothing whatever to alter their identity" (*Orlando* 125). In line with Woolf, Winterson also focuses on the ways of creating an all-encompassing future that celebrates the multiplicity and fluidity of identities. In this quest, she encourages readers to reconsider a future where technology can empower individuals to go beyond the limits of heteronormativity and create cybernetic hybrid bodies that blur the lines between biological and artificial entities. Having that concern in *The Stone Gods*, Winterson introduces a genderless but female-formed Robo*sapiens* and describes her as below:

> [She] is made of a meta-material, a polymer tough as metal, but pliable and flexible and capable of heating and cooling, *just like human skin*. . . .
>
> She has no blood.
> She can't give birth.
> Her hair and nails don't grow.
> She doesn't eat or drink.
> She is solar-powered.
> She has *learned how to cry.* (60; italics added)

Portraying both the limitations and possibilities of Spike, a cybernetic being, Winterson aims to subvert the long-established notions that separate hu(*man*)s from nonhu(*man*)s and emphasises the potential for new forms of existence and a more inclusive world without any binaries and labelling with the help of rapidly advancing technology. As she voices out through Spike, "gender is a human concept, and . . . not interesting" (55); therefore, it can be deconstructed to envision a more diverse future.

Briefly, both Woolf and Winterson encourage readers to imagine a world where phallocentric notions of gender and sexuality are replaced by a more fluid and inclusive understanding. Nevertheless, they also underline the fact patriarchy is everywhere and it is still the dominant social system in many fields of the world. For instance, Orlando's changing sex and having an androgynous body did not change her/his identity, but "altered [her/his] future" (*Orlando* 125). Once thoroughly committed to pursuing "Life! A lover!" (181), Orlando is forced to realise, by a vibration on the 'third finger' of her left hand, that she lacks a husband. Thus, Orlando has to accept the dictations of her age, as "wedding rings were everywhere. . . . Gold, or pinchbeck, thin, thick, plain, smooth, they glowed dully on every hand" (180). Like Orlando, Spike has no place to go since her future and body is also highly controlled by MORE: "We're hurt, we're battered. It will change, but by then MORE will control everything and everyone. They'll decide the future, just as they decide the present" (*The Stone Gods* 134). That is, even in this high-tech culture

enabling fluid and multiple experiences through the cybernetic hybrid bodies, it is almost impossible to be outside the dichotomous system of gender and sex since MORE, representing hegemonic power and control, will not allow nonhu(*man*)s to determine their own destinies. That is, the masculine mind and science will keep on segregating the sexes and reinforcing gender exploitation.

Actually, since the early twenty-first century and especially with the growing use of artificial intelligence, hu(*man*)s' destructiveness and greediness have gone beyond the limits as it always happened throughout HIStory, regardless of the level of cultural or societal advancement. Thus, Woolf's and Winterson's works forewarn readers by highlighting the fact that so long as the phallocentric implications insist on objectifying and otherising nonhu(*man*)s, there will be no evolving from androgynous bodies to hybrid cybernetic bodies that can transcend patriarchally constructed boundaries. On the contrary, the sexual objectification and mistreatment of women will increase due to the prevailing ethics of technology utilised to meet men's unlimited sexual desires and ab/uses. Spike, the first Robo*sapiens* built for salvation in *The Stone Gods*, will devolve into the position of XX-BOT, "[a] *pulsing vagina that never say[s] no*" (Winterson 56; italics in the original) in *Frankissstein*: *A Love Story* (2019). Briefly, for Winterson, creating a post-gender world cleared of expectations or restrictions based on one's gender and constructing a posthuman trans-corporeality with hybrid identities will be hindered by phallocentric manifestations that keep and enforce sexist and binary body politics.

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