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*Araştırma Makalesi*

## **‘A REPEATING WORLD’: A NIETZSCHEAN READING OF JEANETTE WINTERSON’S *THE STONE GODS***

Mahinur AKŞEHİR\*

### **Abstract**

*The cyclical nature of the human experience has been widely discussed through the cynical mind-set of the postmodern era. Jeanette Winterson’s 2007 novel, *The Stone Gods*, stands out as one of the texts that revolve around this pessimistic discussion concerning the cyclical and repetitive nature of the human condition and history. Besides the implication of this never-ending cycle of the human experience as part of the action of the narrative, the repeating appearance of the certain parts of an old book throughout the narrative also resonates the fact that history as a narrative keeps repeating itself. In this respect, the circular or rather spiral nature of historical progress is highlighted through a fictional intertextuality. Winterson’s novel also epitomizes the Deleuzean control society and various forms of violence as the central concept around which the repeating pattern of human behaviour revolves. In this context, the article aims to discuss how control and violence as the central concepts of the novel are represented in a variety of ways, ranging from the anthropocentric violence that is directed towards nature, to systemic violence that the individuals are subjected to by institutional structures in the light of Nietzsche’s argument on the immanent violence of human nature and his concepts of will to power and the overman, which is exceptionally represented as the artificial intelligence.*

**Keywords:** Jeanette Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, Violence, Nietzsche, Will to Power, Overman.

## **‘KENDİNİ TEKRAR EDEN BİR DÜNYA’: WINTERSON’UN TAŞ TANRILAR ADLI ROMANININ NIETZSCHECİ BİR OKUMASI**

### **Öz**

*İnsan deneyiminin döngüsel doğası postmodernizmin şüpheli bakış açısı çerçevesinde son zamanlarda yaygın bir biçimde tartışılan bir konu olmuştur. Jeanette Winterson’un 2007 yılında yayınlanan *Taş Tanrılar* adlı romanı da insan deneyiminin ve insanlık tarihinin döngüsel ve kendini tekrar eden bu niteliğine yönelik pessimist bir tartışmaya yer verir. İnsan deneyiminin bu sonu hiç gelmeyen döngüselliklerinin metnin olay*

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\* Dr. Öğr. Üyesi, Manisa Celal Bayar Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, ORCID: 0000-0002-5284-0365, mahinuraksehir@yahoo.com.

örgüsünün bir parçası olarak vurgulanmasının yanı sıra, anlatı boyunca çok eski bir metnin belli başlı bölümlerinin tekrar tekrar ortaya çıkması da tarihin bir kurgu olarak kendi kendini tekrar etmeye devam ettiğinin altını çizer. Dolayısıyla metin, bu kurgusal metinlerarasılık üzerinden tarihin ilerleyişinin döngüsel ya da daha ziyade spiral doğasını gözler önüne serer. Winterson'un romanı aynı zamanda bu döngüsellik merkezine koyduğu Deleuzecü kontrol toplumu kavramını ve farklı şiddet formlarını tartışmaya açması açısından da dikkat çeker. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma, metnin merkezi kavramlarından biri olan control ve şiddet kavramlarını, insan-merkezli bakış açıları sebebiyle doğaya yöneltilen antroposantrik şiddetten, kurumsal yapıların bireyi maruz bıraktığı sistemik şiddete uzanan çeşitli bağlamlarda nasıl tartışmaya açtığını Nietzsche'nin şiddetin insan doğasına içkin bir nitelik olduğuna yönelik iddiası ve onun güç istenci ve sıradışı bir şekilde yapay zeka olarak temsil edilmiş olan üstinsan kavramları ışığında irdelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Jeanette Winterson, Taş Tanrılar, Şiddet, Nietzsche, Güç İstenci, Üstinsan

## INTRODUCTION

The postmodern discourse frequently refers to the cyclical nature of the human experience from a cynical perspective. From this point of view human experience and history proceeds in the form of an endless loop and a vicious circle. As an example of the postmodern novel, Jeanette Winterson's, *The Stone Gods* revolves around such discussions. The pessimistic debate concerning the cyclical and repetitive nature of the human condition and the circular or rather spiral nature of historical progress are represented in the novel in appalling ways. On the other hand, Winterson's text also discusses the concept of violence around which the repeating pattern of human behaviour revolves. Violence, as the central concept of the novel, is represented in a variety of ways, ranging from anthropocentric violence to systemic violence that the individuals are subjected to by institutional structures. Winterson's discussion of the concept of violence through its various forms and the relationality between these forms will be discussed in the light of Nietzsche's argument on the immanent violence of the human nature and of his concepts such as will to power and the overman, who is ironically embodied by a non-human entity, a female android named Spike.

Nietzsche argues that violence is an inherent aspect of the human nature and of the nature of existence. As also pointed out by Pawel Pieniazek he is "close to a historiosophical understanding of violence as the anthropogenic principle of human history" (2019, p. 14). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche argues that although humanity has evolved in centuries, they have never lost the violent instincts that resides in them but that they have learned to mask or transform these instincts into different forms (1966a, p. 13). Nietzsche refers to violence as one of the most central or essential aspects of human experience which he explains through the concept of 'will to power'. The concept of will to power is simply defined as one's tendency to overpower another, may it be another human being or another form of existence, for various reasons. As Nietzsche puts it, "This world is the will to power—and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides!" (qtd.

in Cooper, 2010, p. 61). Obviously, Nietzsche argues that the will to power is central to the nature of being. It is an immanent driving force that exists in all organic beings but although it is characterized by infliction of violence it can also be transformed into an elevating force for the human development according to Nietzsche. Angel Cooper in "Domination, Individuality and Moral Chaos: Nietzsche's Will to Power" highlights the fact that the Nietzschean concept of will to power can also be "directed towards individual inner growth, and not as a form of domination" (2010, p. 60). Angel Cooper further argues that through a Nietzschean point of view the destructive and domineering effects of the will to power are most obvious when the perpetrator is weak. The will to power of the weak is more prone to turn into oppressive violence because the overpowering of the others become functional in their compensation of their weakness and in their assertion of superiority. As Cooper explains it:

*The act of hurting is not the expression of the will to power for the weak. It's the superiority they feel in hurting others and a feeling of strength from this superiority is how they self-overcome (191). They become stronger and more assertive individuals by overpowering others. They grow inwardly by harming outwardly. (2010, p. 63)*

However, in Nietzsche's frame of mind the highest point of one's being is the state of self-sufficiency and freedom, rather than an authoritative position imposed on everybody else. In Cooper's words, "the highest man, the freest man, is the one who is neither a tyrant dominating weaker beings nor a servant who cannot rule himself" (2010, p. 64). Nietzsche conceptualizes the highest man through the concept of overman, who has no desire to master or to dominate. In this light, Winterson characterizes a more elevated and comprehensive form of being through the portrayal of Spike, a non-human, non-organic being as the Overman, whereas she ironically represents humanity through an intricate set of violent inter-relationships. As ironically implied by Winterson, Spike is the only character who is capable of directing the will to power to a truly enhancing power, evolve above the ordinary human and reach the level of 'Overman.'

#### **ANTHROPOCENTRIC VIOLENCE: NATURE**

Winterson sets *The Stone Gods* in the future, on a planet called Orbus which has become a hostile environment for the human beings and is approaching its end by the hand of the human population, which is labelled as "ecocide" by Emily Arvay (2020, p. 278). As Yazgünoğlu argues, toxicity is the key concept that lies at the centre of the violence that causes the transformation of Orbus to become uninhabitable. "So significant are the toxic, synthetic, and chemical substances that are an inseparable part of posthuman trans-corporeality that Billie/Billy observes pollution on the very streets ... Toxicity engulfs all forms of life in Orbus in a manner that leads to the destruction of the planet" (Yazgünoğlu, 2016, p. 154). Toxicity has become such an inextricable aspect of the human condition in this apocalyptic world that it has become the new normal. Tomasz Dobrogoszcz further indicates that "Winterson employs an apocalyptic scenario to raise the issue of environmental

devastation [...] The damage suffered by the natural world is clearly immense; many human survivors also suffer long-term noxious effects of heavy radiation, which manifest in atrocious mutations” (2020, p. 14). That is why an investigation concerning a possible new habitat for the humanity is being conducted on another planet, which is named Planet Blue. This new planet is depicted as a new world in which everything is pure and untouched, a paradise regained, which “is concentrating on being green” (Winterson, 2008, p. 3) ready to be contaminated by the touch of humanity. The name of the planet is especially remarkable in the sense that it is a direct reference to the earth. Therefore, it can be argued that Winterson comments both on the past and the future of the earth through this ironic and intentionally anachronistic reference. As the narrative unfolds, she makes a fictional and controversial reference to the first appearance of the human population on earth and at the same time she intends to make a serious warning concerning the approaching catastrophic reactions of the earth that humanity might have to encounter through the present situation of Orbus. So, judging by the fact that “Planet Blue is made up of land and sea areas, with high mountain ranges and what appear to be frozen regions” and that “Insect life, marine life and mammals are evident” along with the dinosaurs, the Blue Planet is, definitely, a depiction of the Earth but as if it were newly discovered in the future (Winterson, 2008, p. 36). Planet Blue as the newfound colony for the human population might ambiguously be a reference to both a future refuge when the earth is totally wasted, and to the story of the first human population of earth itself as the Blue Planet. This spiral relationality alone contributes to the concept of cyclicity as highlighted further by the introduction of the central character of the narrative, Billie Crusoe, echoing the repetitive nature of the human tendency to expand and possess. As Hope Jennings argues, Winterson makes a “critique of our self-destructive impulses ... alongside a poetic elegy for an unrecoverable (pastoral) past” (2010, p. 133). She portrays a world in which the atmosphere is dominated by carbon dioxide and a red dust and water has become a luxury. She argues that Bio-tech, as a human construct, has been creating these problems as it has been trying to solve others. As represented by Winterson, humanity has somehow managed to survive wars, terrorism and famine of which, ironically, they have been the cause (Winterson, 2008, p. 47). History is a record of the survival of humanity repeatedly after continuously destroying where they inhabit.

Obviously, this distant dystopia is also represented as a control society, conceptualized by Gilles Deleuze, and all kinds of manipulation techniques are used to passivize, manipulate, and control the people in this society of control which Deleuze defines as “the new monster” (1992, p. 4). Language and/or discursive manipulation is the foremost technique, and it is used to conceal the reckless destruction of the Planet Orbus which is an obvious allusion to the earth. On the other hand, the Blue Planet, which is investigated as the next habitat for the humanity that tries to find alternative sites, is also an embodiment of the Earth and this echoes the cyclicity of the destructive nature of humanity which imprisons itself into the

vicious circle of violence and destruction, echoing Nietzsche's argument that the human being is the only species that would lead to its own destruction as he explains through the Dionysian urge in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1910). This Dionysian urge to destroy oneself and how this tendency is somehow legitimized through discourse, as also pointed out by Nietzsche, can be observed in a dialogue between Billie and Manfred where Manfred indicates that they have to present a positive depiction of Planet Blue. Manfred restlessly tries to appropriate Billie's use of negative concepts concerning both Orbus and Planet Blue by trying to whitewash the hostile environment created by anthropocentric worldview through discourse (Winterson, 2008, p. 8). Therefore, it can be argued that on the first level, the discussion of the violence revolves around the anthropocentric worldview and reification and consumption of nature. In the investigation carried out by the scientists about the habitability of the new Planet Blue one asks: "Any intelligent life at all?" and the answer is "Depends what you mean by intelligent" (Winterson, 2008, p. 3). The final remark here highlights the fact that there are more than one orders of life and existence which is openly ignored by the anthropocentric worldview. Such a disacknowledgement of other orders of being is also a violent act in the sense that it legitimizes the wasteful destruction of nature, and it functions as one of the tools that contributes to the sustainability of this anthropocentric cycle of violence.

The ironic absurdity of the anthropocentric view of the universe with humanity right on the centre is constantly elaborated throughout the narrative, especially through depictions of Planet Blue as the New-Found Land or the Paradise Regained. As discussed in the novel, humanity has made some mistakes with Orbus but it is at their disposal to create a new order in which the resources can be redistributed to create a more habitable environment and a better quality of life for everyone in this new planet. However, even when the scientists in the novel celebrate the possibility of a new, habitable environment, they keep foreshadowing the inevitably catastrophic consequences of their anthropocentric attitude that is based on a binary understanding and categorization of the universe in which the human is attributed with a higher position against the non-human. The irony is highlighted as their plans for the new-found planet is revealed: "Monsters will be humanely destroyed" (Winterson, 2008, p. 6). The connotation of the word humanely is slightly diverted out of its usual meaning in this statement and the human touch on the environment is equated to a touch of aggression and violence. In Handsome's words, by appropriating the Blue Planet, destroying the dinosaurs and making an asteroid collide with the Planet, they are "going back to a fairy tale" in which they will "defeat the dragon and be offered the kingdom" (Winterson, 2008, p. 57). At this point, Winterson refers to the possessive tendency of the anthropocentric attitude and how it is concealed behind epic tales.

Such a discursive manipulation about the Blue Planet can also be observed in several cases throughout the narrative especially during Billie's interview with Spike. During the interview Manfred continuously directs Billie to ask the 'right' questions and whitewash the true nature of the human intervention that is being

planned on the Blue Planet (Winterson, 2008, p. 36). Whereas Spike states that “[t]he only waste in the Cosmos comes from human beings” (Winterson, 2008, p. 37), Manfred as the voice of the authority keeps refusing to acknowledge their part in the destruction of Orbus, always finding someone else to blame. However, he cannot prevent Spike from pointing out the naked truth concerning how the global responsibility is violated by humanity and how they “made [them]selves rich polluting the rest of the world, and now the rest of the world is polluting [them]” (Winterson, 2008, p. 37). So, this dystopic world is a futuristic Potempkin village, in the sense that it is defined simultaneously as “real and imaginary. Actual and about to be” (Winterson, 2008, p. 47). Despite its seeming glamour and grandeur, it is rotten on the inside and this corruption is concealed through discourse. The existing world order is depicted like a huge reality show in which the corruption is physical as well as mental and it is impossible to walk around without pollution filters in both senses. The main reason behind this never-ending violent circle is the anthropocentric worldview as Spike remarks: ““There are many kinds of life,” said Spike, mildly. “Humans always assumed that theirs was the only kind that mattered. That’s how you destroyed your planet”” (Winterson, 2008, p. 79). In this respect, Planet Blue is a paradise regained which by its beauty and its treasures “intoxicated everyone. [...] This was unbelievable luck. It felt like forgiveness. It felt like mercy. [They] had spoiled and ruined what [they] had been given, and now it had been given again” (Winterson, 2008, p. 89). However, the designated asteroid collision goes wrong and creates a premature ice-age destroying the unmatched beauty of the natural habitat of the Blue Planet. The collision creates panic and chaos on the planet with all the animals rushing in terror and rendering the human beings “puny and foolish, the smallest, stupidest things on the planet” (Winterson, 2008, p. 91). Therefore, the characters are stuck in a stone age in the future. In terms of temporality, the overlapping of the past and the future resembles a worm hole bending over itself, putting emphasis, one more time, on the cyclicity of the violent texture of the human condition.

### **SYSTEMIC VIOLENCE**

On another level, a subtle form of violence can also be observed to be imposed on the community. This form of violence operates through the subconscious conditioning of the members of the community into acting within specific patterns of behaviour which indeed is a violence of the self to the self. This systemic violence that triggers a self-destructive pattern of behaviour is legitimized and internalized by the imposition of a certain discourse, a promotion of the consumer culture and a culture of hedonism that entails it. The male members of the community are represented as sexual anomalies and even hedonistic paedophiles, whereas women are forced to feel a necessity to look like children to serve this crooked male sexual fantasy. Therefore, the novel also highlights a self-inflicted violence that the individuals subconsciously subject themselves to for the sake of public acceptance.

Genetic fixing is an important portion of this discussion as highlighted in the novel. This procedure is the most controversial form of self-inflicted violence that is triggered by a systemic imposition of the dominant ideology. Basically, genetic fixing, “oscillating between a technological dream and nightmare” as Podgajna (2018, p.89) contends, is the genetic interruption of aging so that the individuals can remain young and beautiful until they die. This process becomes such a ‘natural’ part of the existence that there are no longer birthday parties but rather g parties when one celebrates the day when they are genetically fixed.

Indeed, genetic fixing functions as one of the tools for the operation of the Deleuzian control society as referred to earlier in this article as ‘the new monster’. In the novel, the society of control works through the imposition of certain beauty standards and paralyzes the individuals by making them obsessed with their appearances. The extremity of the situation is highlighted through the experience of the celebrities who are under extreme pressure of these imposed beauty standards. Everybody is young and beautiful now due to the macro-surgery procedures, therefore celebrities feel obliged to go one step further, even to the level of grotesque, with their bio-enhanced bodies and colour-changing hair (Winterson, 2008, p. 19). The imposed beauty standards have become so crooked that the degeneration of the relationships has become inevitable. “Now that everyone is young and beautiful, a lot of men are chasing girls who are just kids. They want something different when everything has become the same” (Winterson, 2008, p. 21). What is more, this degenerate approach is justified through discourse, specifically through the concept of democracy and basic human rights which functions as a Swiftian sarcasm within the narrative. The Eastern Caliphate and SinoMosco Pact are labelled as undemocratic for banning and limiting Genetic Fixing unlike The Central Power where everybody is manipulated to look the same which sarcastically is “what you expect in a democracy” (Winterson, 2008, p. 23).

Besides the extreme point in which the genetic fixing takes the self-inflicted violence, in this Deleuzian control society, dissident voices or lifestyles are marginalized, judged and punished. For the alternative life-style Billie chooses, because she campaigns against genetic reversal and because of the fact that she is in a way a rebel, she is constantly being investigated by the Enchantment services and constantly harassed by the police force although what she chooses to is not exactly illegal but just different. Michaela Weiss also interprets this subtle oppression and control through a reference to Horkheimer and Adorno:

*The ruling elite thus imposes the image of the bright future on the masses. By making the new world publicly attractive, the government creates a utopian vision for the masses ... The image of future paradise has to be perfect so that no opposition towards the mission could arise. As the Central Power regulates and controls the seemingly democratic and ecological distribution of resources, its chief interest is to keep the majority satisfied and reassured of the common good it would produce, preventing any*

*suggestions concerning the saving of the current planet. According to Horkheimer and Adorno, such government prevents independent thinking. (2013, p. 180)*

Therefore, as Billie refuses to conform the utopian illusion created by the Central Power and insists on sustaining an alternative life-style, she is followed everywhere by the Enforcement Services and keeps getting parking tickets for no obvious reason. In this respect, as a dissident voice that prefers to embrace a different kind of existence other than the one offered by the control society, Billie is constantly harassed by the control society that is defined as a “a clever system” in which “you have to accept guilt before you can drive away and protest your innocence” (Winterson, 2008, p. 12). Within this control society Billie is systematically pestered and any kind of complaint or correction mechanism is somehow prevented by the system. So, it is exactly a hi-tech panopticon in a Foucauldian sense. The system manipulates its subjects into submission by working on them as such. Because she has been unjustly receiving these parking tickets repeatedly for a whole year despite that fact that she is a state officer and that she has a parking permit, she has tried to reach someone in the Enforcement services to make it right and to cancel the three-million dollar fine. However, she cannot reach anyone but an automatic response from a computer. Later in the novel it is revealed that this is a manipulation used by the control society to be able to sue her and take away the farm where she lives and to force her to live in accordance with the imposed standards. Obviously, the system corners people in different ways to make them conform and does not allow dissident voices and alternative lifestyles. Billie has no way out; she is expected to conform or otherwise she perishes as indicated by Manfred: “You’re more trouble than you’re worth. You bucked the system. That’s not allowed. Either we get you this time — or you go. For reasons of the moment, we’d prefer you to go” (Winterson, 2008, p. 53-4). As obviously indicated through the dialogue between Billie and Manfred, the real reason why Billie gets all these tickets is that she does not conform and therefore Billie rightfully defines this control society as “repressive, corrosive and anti-democratic” (Winterson, 2008, p. 54).

Therefore, as expected, in this panoptic control society, Billie continuously feels a “justifiable paranoia. [She] looks around for the cameras, not that you can ever see them. [She is] being watched, but that isn’t strange. That’s life. [They]’re all used to it. What is strange is that [she] feel[s] [she is] being watched. Staked out. Observed. But there’s no one there” (Winterson, 2008, p. 30). The control mechanism works in such an invasive way that if one insists on living outside it, the system discredits that individual and s/he is wiped out as an “Unknown”. It gives one no chance of existence outside the system. When one becomes an Unknown, their papers are destroyed, assets and accounts are frozen, they cannot travel or even buy anything. So it is as if one has never existed. “You see them sometimes, cleaning the streets, their taggers flashing at fifteen-minute intervals, checked and recorded by the satellite system that watches us more closely than God ever did” (Winterson, 2008, p. 31). It is impossible to avoid such a control mechanism, also because every



single detail about an individual is stored in a chip that is implanted in the wrist of each person so that all the information concerning that person or the necessary information concerning his/her present location can be accessed at any time if the authorities feel necessary to.

Another consequence of this panoptic control society is the existential crises into which the individuals are dragged. Especially, Billie in "The Easter Island" as a left-behind colonizer discovering an island is ironically represented as a desperate soul questioning the meaning of his own existence: "For what reason or purpose I had been left behind, I do not know, and it may be that there was no reason or purpose, for mankind must always be finding reasons where there are none, and comfort in a purpose that hardly exists" (Winterson, 2008, p. 119). Through this questioning Winterson also comments on the pointlessness of this endless struggle to control and dominate, reminding her readers of the meaningfulness of reducing oneself to the simplest sense possible of oneself: "Here I am, stopped and fallen, this little round of life called a man. Here I am, little Billy, and nothing round me but the sea" (Winterson, 2008, p. 121). What is more remarkable at this point is that Billie starts questioning his own existence and values when he encounters an alien culture and questions the legitimacy of his own cultural system of truths (Winterson, 2008, p. 121). Winterson also inflicts a similar kind of questioning into the reader through Billie's experience here. As specifically indicated in the post-apocalyptic portrayal of the Post World War 3, the political control is given to a corporate institution named MORE and this new world is founded on complete control alluding to the present reality.

#### **AI AS THE NIETZSCHEAN OVERMAN**

Winterson's critical outlook towards the world of anthropocentric and systemic violence is also highlighted by how the artificial intelligence is utilized to serve the human ends both in mental and corporeal terms exposing the artificial hierarchy between the human and the non-human, and the human privilege over the other forms of existence. Spike embodies such artificial intelligence because she is a prototypical Robo-Sapiens who is utilized both as a pioneer in the investigation of the new planet and as a sexual toy for the human members of the crew. Spike is designed to carry human characteristics and a consciousness that can change and evolve. She is an incredibly sexy super-computer who is to be dismantled after fulfilling her function. She is employed for the space mission to explore the Planet Blue and she is "the most sophisticated machine ever built [that] look[s] like a movie star" which was also used for "sexual services" (Winterson, 2008, p. 33). She is not a human being but as a Robo Sapiens she "may become a nearer relative than the ape" (Winterson, 2008, p. 34). Through the characterization of Spike, Winterson tests the undecidability of the boundaries between human and machine. She puts forth an ethical question which Jin and Weiwei explain through Donna Haraway's concept of the cyborg:

*As the notion of cyborg, human not only includes organic matter, but also inorganic matter. This notion of cyborg proves that human is already a composition of inorganic and organic body. What is more, nowadays these cyborgs are growing more and more sophisticated, such as the new kind like robo-sapiens in the novel. They look like human and are capable of evolution by themselves. In other words, the robot, or cyborg exactly, with artificial intelligence could be called human as well. In this way, Winterson consistently collapses dualistic and binaries thinking particularly related to the human and non-human. (2020, p. 36)*

Spike, herself, states that she is not just a machine, she has a memory, and she is programmed to evolve. So her abuse as a sexual object during her main mission and her subsequent shutting off is questionable in the ethical sense as implied by Winterson. Winterson challenges the line that is drawn between the human and the non-human and in accordance with this questioning attitude, Billie helps Spike escape from being dismantled upon her request. Winterson undermines the traditional categorizations and hierarchies through Billie's questionings concerning the nature of Spike as a Robo-Sapiens: "I forget all the time that she's a robot, but what's a robot? A moving lump of metal. In this case an intelligent, ultra-sensitive moving lump of metal. What's a human? A moving lump of flesh, in most cases not intelligent or remotely sensitive" (Winterson, 2008, p. 99). This comparison between the human and the machine, and the covert categorization of Spike as a higher form of being, which is mostly human and more, enable the interpretation of her characterization through Nietzsche's concept of 'overman'.

Nietzsche defines the human being as something to be overcome in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (2007, p. 7). According to him,

*All beings far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood, and even go back to the beast rather than overcome man? What is ape to man? A laughingstock or painful embarrassment. And man shall be that to overman: a laughingstock or painful embarrassment. You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm. Once you were apes, and even now, too, man is more ape than any ape ... The overman is the meaning of the earth... man is a rope, tied between beast and overman – a rope over an abyss ... what is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end. (Nietzsche, 2007, p. 7)*

Overman, therefore, is defined as a higher form of existence, a kind of a transcendent version of being who is endowed with ideal qualities such as virtue, valour, and wisdom unlike the ordinary human who is defined by Nietzsche as incomplete, lacking, and violent. Patricio defines the Nietzschean overman as "the creator of new values" and proposes that the overman is a "collective solution for mankind, and without any moral principles" which, in my opinion, is also a perfect definition of Spike as an AI (2017, p. 267). Patricio goes on to argue that the overman becomes the meaning and the direction of the world by "freeing himself from the

local and mythical binding”, by simply transcending and by becoming decentralized (2017, p. 268). Similar to Patricio’s argument, Cooper comments on Nietzsche’s concept of the overman, arguing that Nietzsche

*inspires us to become overmen, who are individuals which have such attributes as strength, bravery, and manners, and who aspire to live in a society in which there may be mercy for others, not domination of them. Nietzsche here is advocating a society that is not chaotic or psychotic, but instead strong, merciful and always overcoming itself so as to advance its laws and its people. Its members will reach beyond revenge and punishment and be able to have healthy conflict with one another. This is Nietzsche’s ideal society. It is formed by overmen, and therefore does not fall into the problem of moral chaos. (2010, p. 65)*

Considering the qualities attributed to the overman, one safely points out that Winterson’s characterization of Spike is a perfect representation of Nietzsche’s concept of the overman. Winterson constructs this ironic analogy in order to put the anthropocentric worldview into questioning by ironically depicting Spike as a more human/humane entity compared to the genetically fixed or technologically enhanced humans in the novel.

## **CONCLUSION**

Winterson puts the Deleuzean control society and different forms of violence such as the anthropocentric violence and systemic violence into discussion in her novel. She envisages a dark, dystopic future, a world of “violence, lies, slander, injustice” as pointed out by Nietzsche in *Will to Power* with reference to his own time (2019, p. 149-150). The human condition in this future world is characterized by the concept of control and different forms of violence as it has always been and as it will ever be. Winterson in this respect highlights the cyclicity and the unavoidable nature of the implicitly violent nature of the human existence. Although this rather pessimistic representation of the androcentric world is quite common, Winterson makes a ground-breaking contribution to this discussion of androcentrism and violence and offers a unique insight by portraying a cyborg as a rather higher form of being, or an overman in Nietzschean terms. In quite an ironic attitude, she characterizes Spike as the overman, as a higher version of existence as proposed by Nietzsche and although Winterson is rather pessimistic in the sense that the human history is a never-ending loop that keeps repeating itself as a projection of postmodern nihilism, she aims to drive the reader to question the anthropocentric worldview by idealizing a non-human entity over the human.

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