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NEGOTIATING SUBJECTIVITY IN A POSTHUMAN WORLD: JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *FRANKISSSTEIN* AND THE NOMADIC THEORY OF IDENTITY

Merve ALTIN[1]

[1]Assist. Prof., Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of English Language and Literature, mervedemirtas@comu.edu.tr, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2129-7347

Abstract

Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein: A Love Story* (2019) reimagines Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) for contemporary readers by addressing twenty-first-century anxieties about gender, identity, and embodiment in a technologically driven world. Blending historical, speculative, and contemporary narratives, the novel offers multiple perspectives that explore the fluidity and transformation of subjectivity in the face of scientific advancement. This study aims to read *Frankissstein* through Rosi Braidotti's theory of nomadic subjectivity to explore how identity is constructed in a posthuman context where traditional boundaries of gender, subjectivity, and the human experience are destabilised. Braidotti's notion of the nomadic subject, which is characterised by hybridity, mobility, and resistance to essentialist categorisations, provides a critical framework for understanding the transitional identities portrayed in the novel. Ultimately, this study foregrounds literature's capacity to theorise posthuman subjectivity and engage with contemporary cultural anxieties related to this condition. In doing so, it aims to foreground the continued relevance of literary texts in navigating and critically reflecting upon the ethical, philosophical, and existential questions arising from rapid technological change.

Keywords: Nomadic subjectivity, Gender, Identity, Embodiment, Frankissstein, Frankenstein.

POSTHÜMAN DÜNYADA ÖZNELLİĞİN MÜZAKERESİ: JEANETTE WINTERSON'IN *FRANKISSSTEIN* ROMANI VE GÖÇEBE KİMLİK KURAMI

Öz

Jeanette Winterson'ın *Frankissstein: Bir Aşk Hikayesi* (2019) adlı romanı, Mary Shelley'nin *Frankenstein* (1818) eserini teknoloji odaklı bir dünyada cinsiyet, kimlik ve bedenleşmeye ilişkin yirmi birinci yüzyıl kaygıları üzerinden çağdaş okurlar için yeniden kurgular. Tarihsel, spekülatif ve çağdaş anlatıları harmanlayan roman, bilimsel ilerlemeler karşısında öznelliğin akışkanlığını ve dönüşümünü çoklu bakış açılarıyla incelemektedir. Bu çalışma, *Frankissstein*'ı Rosi Braidotti'nin göçebe öznellik kuramı üzerinden okuyarak, toplumsal cinsiyet, öznellik ve insan deneyiminin geleneksel sınırlarının yerinden edildiği posthüman bir bağlamda kimliğin nasıl inşa edildiğini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Melezlik, hareketlilik ve özcü kategorilere direniş ile tanımlanan Braidotti'nin göçebe özne kavramı, romanda temsil edilen geçişken kimlikleri anlamak için eleştirel bir çerçeve sunmaktadır. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda edebiyatın posthüman öznelliği kuramsallaştırma ve bu bağlamdaki çağdaş kültürel kaygılarla etkileşim kurma kapasitesini vurgular. Böylece, hızlı teknolojik değişimin doğurduğu etik, felsefi ve varoluşsal sorulara yön vermede ve bu sorular üzerine eleştirel düşünme süreçlerinde edebi metinlerin süreğen önemini vurgulamayı amaçlar.

Anahtar kelimeler: Göçebe öznellik, Cinsiyet, Kimlik, Bedenleşme, Frankissstein, Frankenstein.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein* is a novel that centres on the fluidity of identity, particularly in relation to gender, technology, and the evolving nature of human subjectivity. This study argues that Winterson's exploration of identity, gender, and the sense of self in a technology-mediated world aligns with Rosi Braidotti's concept of nomadic subjectivity, which challenges fixed, essentialist identities and instead embraces transformation, multiplicity, and relationality. As Winterson states, "[b]ecause everything is relational, everything is about our interaction with something else" (Allardice, 2019, n.pag.), a perspective that resonates with the nomadic framework according to which subjectivity is not static but shaped by ongoing encounters and connections. In that sense, at the heart of *Frankissstein* is the question of how human-made creations, whether artificial intelligence or new understandings of the body, affect notions of identity and gender.

Winterson has long been interested in fluid identities in her fiction, featuring "androgynous, time-travelling characters" (Thomas-Corr, 2019, n.pag) who disrupt conventional binaries. Similarly, in *Frankissstein*, this concern is embodied in the character of Ry, a transgender protagonist whose presence in the narrative foregrounds the idea that gender is not limited to the physical body and that human identity is more complex than the labels assigned by society or oneself. While labels can assist in understanding the world, no individual can be entirely defined by a single category, as identity extends beyond such classifications. Winterson further extends the discussion of gender and identity beyond human bodies to the technological realm, suggesting that the emergence of high-tech robots and artificial intelligence marks a radical change in our understanding of life itself. Winterson argues that "[w]e're the first generation who will soon share the planet with a self-created life form. Not made out of the discarded rotting parts of the graveyard, but out of the 0s and 1s of code" (Kellogg, 2019, n.pag.). While Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* engaged with early nineteenth-century anxieties about creation and human limits, Winterson's *Frankissstein* reimagines these concerns in the context of contemporary technological, embodied, and ethical entanglements. Within this framework, subjectivity is an open-ended process of becoming rather than a fixed state. Winterson's own perspective reflects this posthuman, nomadic state. She says, "I don't really think of myself as female or male, I just think of myself as me. I'm not even sure I see myself as human" (Allardice, 2019, n.pag.). Likewise, *Frankissstein* challenges not only gendered subjectivity but the very boundaries of what it means to be human in a technology-mediated world.

The novel itself can also be read as an embodiment of nomadic subjectivity, not only through its characters but also in its narrative structure. The text is fluid, non-linear, and fragmented, much like the concept of nomadic subjectivity. Winterson's blending of different time periods, narrative perspectives, and the intermingling of the human with the artificial create a text that mirrors the nomadic subject's constant state of becoming. Just as nomadic subjectivity disrupts stable categories of identity, the novel's form and content challenge the traditional boundaries in literature and invite readers to experience identity, gender, and existence as fluid and ever-evolving. The novel, thus, serves as a literary exploration of the nomadic subject and presents the notion of identity as a site of continual negotiation, shaped by both embodied and technological transformations. Through a Braidottian lens, the novel illustrates how literature can function as a space for theorising and performing alternative modes of becoming and being in a posthuman world.

This study contributes to ongoing scholarly discussions on gender, identity, the self, posthumanism, and the ethics of technological innovation by analysing *Frankissstein* as a literary work that both reimagines Mary Shelley's original themes for a contemporary audience and critically reflects on how identity is continually shaped within changing biopolitical and technological contexts. Scholarship on Winterson's novel can be broadly divided into three overlapping strands. The first strand concerns the questions of gender, embodiment, and transgender identity. Claudia Martori (2024) explores Winterson's portrayal of gender and embodiment, focusing on the character Ry Shelley as a representation of transgender identity in relation to transhumanism and employs transgender studies to critically examine the notion of trans* body in the novel. Building on this perspective, Aiden John

(2024) investigates the parallels between trans* identity and transhumanism, particularly through the characters Ry Shelley and Victor Stein. John analyses how the novel explores the objectification of trans* bodies while simultaneously reproducing problematic representations of them. In a complementary but distinct approach, Belgin Bağırlar (2021) offers a feminist reading of the novel through Donna Haraway's cyborg theory. Bağırlar contends that while the novel envisions posthuman embodiments that challenge patriarchal norms, it also exposes the limitations of disembodied ideals. The second strand situates the novel within broader philosophical discourses of posthumanism and transhumanism. In this regard, Fausto Ciompi (2022) analyses the characters' experiences of disembodiment and cybernetic existence, contrasting these speculative elements with the rationalist ethos of transhumanism and analysing how the novel's structure and narrative techniques engage with such ideologies. Similarly, Emily McAvan (2021) draws on posthuman theory to argue that *Frankissstein* presents modern subjectivity as inherently hybrid and entangled with monstrosity. By exploring AI, sex dolls, and transgender embodiment, McAvan demonstrates how the novel challenges Enlightenment ideals of a unified human self. Finally, a third group of studies focuses on narrative structure and intertextual engagement with *Frankenstein*. Nilay Erdem Ayyıldız (2023) frames *Frankissstein* as a postmodern continuation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and analyses the novel's temporal narrative to question human identity, gender binaries, and techno-cultural evolution. Erdem Ayyıldız argues that the novel deconstructs anthropocentric and gender binaries, suggesting that, despite historical progress, the posthuman condition remains fraught with ambiguity. In a complementary but formally distinct way, Mojca Krevel (2021) offers a postmodern analysis of the novel and reads Winterson's reimagining of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a metafictional work that employs a hybrid textual structure. Krevel suggests that Winterson transforms metafiction into a world-building strategy, aligning it with post-Cartesian ontological principles. Taken together, these studies foreground the novel's multifaceted engagement with embodiment, technology, and identity, and reveal how *Frankissstein* simultaneously engages in dialogues with its literary precursor and challenges contemporary assumptions about the posthuman condition.

This study, therefore, aims to enhance existing scholarship on Winterson's *Frankissstein* by applying Braidotti's theory of nomadic subjectivity to explore the complexities of gender, identity, embodiment, and subjectivity in the novel. While existing studies have explored the novel through lenses such as posthumanism, transgender studies, and feminist theory, this study offers a deeper understanding of the novel's fluid and hybrid nature of identity, highlighting how subjectivity is continuously negotiated in a posthuman world. By analysing Winterson's reimagining of Mary Shelley's magnum opus through Braidotti's theory of nomadic subjectivity, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on the ethics of technological advancements, identity formation, and the possibilities for alternative modes of being in the contemporary posthuman landscape. This study further highlights the potential of literature to conceptualise posthuman subjectivity and to address the cultural concerns associated with this condition in the contemporary era. In so doing, it foregrounds the enduring significance of literary texts as a means of engaging with and critically responding to the ethical, philosophical, and existential challenges posed by accelerating technological advancement.

2. NOMADIC SUBJECTIVITY

Rosi Braidotti, an Italian philosopher, feminist, and scholar, is one of the most influential figures in contemporary feminist and posthumanist studies, particularly in advancing the theoretical frameworks of posthumanism and feminist thought. Braidotti's book *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (1994) marks the beginning of her exploration and development of nomadic theory, a concept that she has continued to expand and refine over more than two decades. Braidotti's early work focuses on discussing the various aspects that contribute to the concept of the nomadic subject. Her initial aim is to explore the notion of the nomadic subject "as a suitable theoretical figuration for contemporary subjectivity" (Braidotti, 1994, p. 1). By "figuration", she refers to a way of thinking that challenges and provides an alternative to phallogocentrism, the dominance of masculine and logocentric structures in thought and culture (Braidotti, 1994, pp. 1-2). In

Braidotti's framework, the nomadic subject represents a politically conscious reimagining of identity, which is initially designed to advance feminist objectives. Nevertheless, over time, this concept has evolved and taken on broader significance and emerged as an influential framework that explores subjectivity, identity, and belonging in the context of globalisation, posthumanism, and feminist theory, thereby challenging traditional, essentialist notions of identity and subjectivity.

Braidotti's nomadic subjectivity attempts to destabilise the notion of a bounded subject by introducing a nomadic figure characterised by movement, multiplicity, and resistance to fixed identities. Although the idea itself is inspired by the experiences of groups and cultures that are genuinely nomadic, the nomadism suggested by Braidotti signifies a critical perspective that opposes conforming to rigid, socially mandated patterns of thought and behaviour. "It is the subversion of set conventions that defines the nomadic state, not the literal act of traveling" (Braidotti, 1994, p. 5). In that sense, the essence of nomadism lies in challenging established conventions rather than in the physical act of moving from place to place. Braidotti's nomad, then, is

> […] a figuration for the kind of subject who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity. This figuration expresses the desire for an identity made of transitions, successive shifts, and coordinated changes, without and against an essential unity. The nomadic subject, however, is not altogether devoid of unity; his/her mode is one of definite, seasonal patterns of movement through rather fixed routes. (Braidotti, 1994, p. 22)

The nomadic subject, therefore, rejects an essential and unchanging unity and embraces fluidity, transformation, and continuous change. However, the nomadic subject does not exist in complete chaos or fragmentation. There is still a form of unity present, yet that is neither essential nor fixed.

Braidotti's nomadic theory is deeply influenced by French poststructuralist philosophy. It draws inspiration from influential figures such as Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Michel Foucault, and Luce Irigaray (Braidotti, 2014, p. 166). This reimagined subjectivity, characterised by perpetual movement and multiplicity, aligns with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome, a model of development that lacks a central point and hierarchy. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (originally published in French in 1980), Deleuze and Guattari present a model of subjectivity that embraces a rhizomatic conception of identity that resists linear and hierarchical structures. The rhizome, as they describe it,

> […] is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states. What is at question in the rhizome is a relation to sexuality—but also to the animal, the vegetal, the world, politics, the book, things natural and artificial—that is totally different from the arborescent relation: all manner of "becomings." (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005, p. 1)

Under this paradigm, "[b]ecoming is a rhizome" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2005, p. 239), and it signifies the continual transformation of identity and structure. As Deleuze and Guattari write, "[b]ecoming is a verb with a consistency all its own; it does not reduce to, or lead back to, 'appearing,' 'being,' 'equaling,' or 'producing'" (2005, p. 239). Similarly, the nomadic subject is defined by a constant state of becoming and, thus, represents a form of subjectivity that is never static but always evolving in relation to the world and its surroundings. For Braidotti, nomadic subjectivity is "quite rhizomatic in itself" as it "grew organically from a cluster of central and inter-related ideas" (2014, p. 167). By defining nomadic subjectivity as rhizomatic and organically developed, Braidotti foregrounds its adaptability and openness for contemporary discussions on identity, particularly in feminist and posthumanist contexts. In that sense, nomadic subjectivity is not a rigid theoretical framework but an evolving and dynamic notion.

The nomadic subjectivity also engages with the concept of difference, which has been central to various philosophical traditions. Braidotti, however, engages with the notion of difference by focusing more on material, embodied, and relational difference rather than on a linguistic or discursive difference, as seen, for example, in Derrida's concept of *différance*. Braidotti posits that "[…] whereas

the linguistic turn produces a negative form of social constructivism– matter being formatted and regulated by a master code– nomadic thought conceptualizes matter as self-organized and relational in its very structures" (2011, p. 3). The linguistic turn refers to the idea that language constructs reality, and our access to the world is always mediated by discourse. Therefore, within this framework, matter is considered enclosed within linguistic and symbolic systems and is thus reduced to a passive construct of power structures. In contrast to the linguistic turn, Braidotti fosters the idea that matter itself has agency and has its own capacities, relationality, and emergent organisation. It can be argued that Braidotti's concept of the nomadic subject is intricately tied to the idea of difference as a positive and affirmative force that shapes identity and subjectivity. Unlike traditional binary systems, where difference is often defined in opposition to sameness, it is treated, "as positivity at the heart of the subject" (Braidotti, 2014, p. 171), to use Braidotti's phrase, and therefore, "[n]omadic becomings are rather the process of affirmation of the unalterably positive structure of difference, unhinged from the binary system that traditionally opposed it to Sameness" (Braidotti, 2014, p. 171). This perspective transforms the subject into a nomadic becoming, in which identity is not fixed but is instead a multiple process of transformation.

The nomadic subjectivity is fundamentally against essentialism, very much like postmodernism and many strands of feminism, particularly those influenced by poststructuralism, intersectionality, queer theory, posthumanism, and new materialism. Reconceptualising the complex relationship between body and identity is one of the foundational elements of the epistemological project of nomadism. According to Braidotti, "[t]he body, or the embodiment, of the subject is to be understood as neither a biological nor a sociological category but rather as a point of overlapping between the physical, the symbolic, and the sociological" (1994, p. 4). Traditional theories, such as biological determinism and Cartesian dualism, tend to reduce the body to either a biological entity which is governed by predetermined physiological features or a purely sociological construct. In contrast, nomadic subjectivity fosters an idea of the body which becomes a site of intersection where physical, symbolic, and sociological factors overlap and interact. Braidotti defines the nomadic subject as a "myth" and "political fiction" (1994, p. 5), underlining the anti-essentialist nature of the concept. Defining the nomadic subject as a myth does not necessarily mean it is false or unreal. Myths are powerful narratives that shape how one understands the world. In that sense, the nomadic subject as a myth becomes a conceptual tool or framework designed to challenge and rethink existing structures. Likewise, by defining the nomadic subject as political fiction, Braidotti emphasises its role as a strategic construct that serves a political purpose. The nomadic subject as a myth and political fiction is not an essential or fixed identity but a fluid, imaginative construct which allows one to question and move beyond such essentialist notions as gender, race, and nationality. She further justifies her definition by arguing that she believes in "[…] the potency and relevance of imagination and myth-making as a means of stepping out of the political and intellectual stasis of these postmodern times" (Braidotti, 1994, p. 5). Braidotti foregrounds the power of imagination and storytelling as strategic tools that can lead to political and intellectual change. Through creating new myths, like the nomadic subject, one can envision alternative ways of being and relating to the world. Braidotti also criticises the stagnation of postmodern philosophy and politics, which fail to construct alternatives. The nomadic subject, then, is envisioned as a means to break free from this stagnation, as it offers a dynamic and engaging framework for rethinking identity, politics, and ethics in a posthuman world.

In contemporary critical theory, many scholars argue that identity is not a constant or fixed essence. Instead, they treat it as a dynamic and ongoing process of becoming, which closely aligns with the principles of the nomadic theory. Judith Butler's theoretical insights, for example, develop a framework for understanding identity as fundamentally fluid and shaped through relational dynamics, very much like Braidotti's concept of nomadic subjectivity. In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Judith Butler argues that "[g]ender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory framework that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (2002, pp. 43-44). Butler emphasises the fact that gender is not an innate essence; rather, it is a performative construct which is created through

repeated behaviours and societal norms. Over time, these repeated actions become solidified within strict social frameworks, thereby creating the illusion that identity is a fixed and natural entity. Like Braidotti, Butler rejects essentialist notions of identity and challenges the idea of a pre-existing, stable subject by claiming that the body is "[…] an aging process, a mode of becoming that, in becoming otherwise, exceeds the norm, reworks the norm, and makes us see how realities to which we thought we were confined are not written in stone" (2004, p. 29). This process is exemplified by figures such as drag, butch, femme, transgender, and transsexual persons, whose embodied practices not only destabilise what is perceived as real or necessary but also show that social norms are fluid and can be reshaped (Butler, 2004, p. 29). It can be argued that both Butler and Braidotti present a notion of subjectivity that is fluid and transformative, thus opening up possibilities for more inclusive, dynamic, and ever-evolving understandings of the self. Together, the arguments of Butler and Braidotti highlight the importance of rethinking identity as a process shaped by both embodied experiences and the constantly evolving nature of social relations.

Building on this conceptual groundwork, Elizabeth Grosz offers a complementary perspective that deepens the discussion of fluid subjectivity by emphasising the corporeal and material dimensions of identity formation. In *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (1994), Elizabeth Grosz writes: "[…] the body, or rather, bodies, cannot be adequately understood as ahistorical, precultural, or natural objects in any simple way; they are not only inscribed, marked, engraved, by social pressures external to them but are the products, the direct effects, of the very social constitution of nature itself" (1994, p. x). According to Grosz, bodies are dynamic sites where history, culture, and power converge. They are neither passive recipients of social influence nor static natural objects but active products of the interplay between materiality and societal constructs. She further contends that "[…] new terms and different conceptual frameworks must also be devised to be able to talk of the body outside or in excess of binary pairs" (Grosz, 1994, p. 24). Grosz's arguments resonate with Braidotti's concept of nomadic subjectivity, which also understands embodiment as a fluid and political process of becoming. Grosz focuses on the material and physical aspects of social identity, while Braidotti develops this concept further into a broader theoretical framework that considers global and posthuman transformations. Their perspectives together foreground that subjectivity is not only discursively constructed but also deeply embedded in embodied experience.

Donna Haraway, widely recognised for her contributions to feminist theory, posthumanist thought, and the study of how humans, technology, and the natural world interact, introduces the cyborg as "a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self" (Haraway, 1991, p. 163), envisioning a figure that challenges traditional notions of identity. By describing the cyborg as "disassembled and reassembled", Haraway emphasises the fluid, dynamic nature of the self in a technologically mediated world. Like the nomadic subject, the cyborg is not a unified, coherent entity but a patchwork of influences, experiences, and technologies. By defining the cyborg as "[…] a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation" (Haraway, 1991, p. 150), Haraway presents it as a powerful symbol that encapsulates both imaginative and material aspects of existence. The cyborg is not merely a product of human imagination; it is also a material reality shaped by technology and science. She argues that "[b]y the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs" (Haraway, 1991, p. 150), and thus, envisions humans as cyborgs, hybrids of machine and organism, and both imagined and materially constructed entities. Haraway calls this era "mythic" to foreground its transformative nature and the collapse of traditional boundaries like human/machine and natural/artificial. Therefore, it can be argued that the cyborg represents a new way of being, one that embraces hybridity and challenges rigid categories, reshaping how the notions of identity, politics, and reality are understood. In this sense, the notion of cyborg invites one to rethink the most basic assumptions of subjectivity in an age where the boundaries between the organic and the technological are increasingly blurred, a perspective that has resonated strongly with feminist, posthumanist, and new materialist discourses. While Haraway's cyborg envisions identity as a fragmented, reassembled hybrid, Braidotti portrays

subjectivity as an ever-evolving process shaped by the interplay of technology, culture, and materiality. In exploring the fluidity of contemporary subjectivity, Braidotti contends that "[t]he biological and the informational bodies converge into a new subject compound, which is nomadic and hence not unitary, hybrid and hence impure, and denaturalized through technological mediation and hence post-humanist" (2006, p. 96). In this regard, Braidotti not only questions conventional ideas about a consistent, singular identity but also foregrounds the profound effect that technology-mediated experiences have on the development of identity.

For Braidotti, "[…] new figurations of the subject (nomadic, cyborg, Black, etc.) function like conceptual personae" (2002, p. 13); and they are not metaphors but are materially embedded within power relations. These figurations challenge the notion of oppression and enable transformation. In that sense, they reflect how "[a] range of new, alternative subjectivities have indeed emerged in the shifting landscapes of postmodernity" (Braidotti, 2002, p. 13). By embodying power relations and reflecting processes of change, these subjectivities not only expose structures of domination but also offer new ways to rethink and reshape identity. Thus, they become critical tools for analysing existing hierarchies while enabling more fluid, adaptable, and context-specific forms of subjectivity. This perspective emphasises the fluidity and hybridity of identity, thereby highlighting how individuals can negotiate, resist, and reshape their embodied experiences in response to constantly changing socio-cultural dynamics. When read through the lens of nomadic subjectivity, Winterson's *Franskissstein*, therefore, emerges as a text that resists fixed identity constructs and embraces a dynamic process of becoming. The following analysis, then, explores the ways in which the novel conveys the fluid interplay between materiality and subject formation in a postmodern, technology-driven context. By challenging the conventional categories of identity, the novel invites its readers to rethink subjectivity and demonstrates how literary texts still help us think through the ethical, philosophical, and existential questions that rapid technological change raises.

2.1. Dr Ry Shelley as a Nomadic Subject

In *Frankissstein*, through the character of Ryan Shelley, Winterson portrays a protagonist who exemplifies the state of constant becoming, and thus, challenges the rigid notions of gender, embodiment, and identity in ways that resonate with nomadic subjectivity. Ryan Shelley's identity is fundamentally fluid, transcending traditional gender binaries and resisting fixed categorisation. Identifying as transgender and using they/them pronouns, Ryan occupies a liminal space that embraces multiplicity and challenges definitive markers of identity. Ryan states: "I am liminal, cusping, in between, emerging, undecided, transitional, experimental, a start-up (or is it an upstart?) in my own life" (Winterson, 2020, p. 29). This self-description does not merely signal an individual statement of identity but embodies the conceptual framework of becoming central to Braidotti's theory. It illustrates the refusal of fixed definitions in favour of a processual selfhood. This sense of multiplicity is further deepened when Ryan reflects: "My mind idled around the difference between desire for life without end and desire for more than one life, that is, more than one life, but lived simultaneously" (2020, p. 30), a statement that problematises singular identity and gestures toward a radical openness to multiple, coexisting existences. This reflects a deliberate destabilisation of binary modes of being and suggests a speculative vision of selfhood that is not limited to linear temporality but embraces simultaneity. Ryan's statement reflects Braidotti's argument that nomadic subjects exist in a state of perpetual 'becoming' and resist 'oppositional dualisms'. The words Ryan chooses to identify themselves with, such as "liminal" and "in between", indicate the idea that Ryan exists at the intersection of multiple identities rather than being confined to a singular definition. Since Ryan is "emerging", "undecided", and "experimental", they are in an ongoing process of self-discovery and transformation rather than a completed or finalised state. As Braidotti argues, "[b]ecoming is an intransitive process: it's not about becoming anything in particular—only what one is capable of and attracted to and capable of becoming; it's life on the edge, but not over it" (2011, p. 313). Ryan's metaphorical idea of self-multiplicity is reinforced when they claim: "I could be me and me too. If I could make copies of myself - [...]. Later, all my selves could meet, share the day, and reassemble into

the original self I like to believe is me" (Winterson, 2020, p. 30). This reflection elaborates on the conceptual openness of Ryan's selfhood, proposing a vision of identity as distributed and collective rather than singular and fixed. It resonates with posthumanist understandings of subjectivity as a network of relations, where the self is a dynamic composition rather than a stable entity. Likewise, Ryan metaphorically describes themselves as "a start-up" (2020, p. 29), something new, innovative, and still in the process of development.

Ryan uses a gender-neutral nickname, Ry, which is short for Mary. When introducing themselves, Ry acknowledges that they are "hybrid" and "transgender" (Winterson, 2020, p. 83). Ry's choice of a gender-neutral name and their decision to undergo top surgery while opting out of bottom surgery both can be considered acts of resistance against the biopolitical structures that regulate and categorise bodies. Ry defines themselves as "fully female" and "partly male" (2020, p. 97). As Braidotti argues, "[…] power today is a matter of selection and control, entitlement and access: it is bio-power, centred on the body in its material and immaterial manifestations" (2006, p. 53). Biopower enforces societal norms by dictating how bodies should appear, function, and be recognised within gendered frameworks. Their name, much like their identity, exists in a "liminal space" since the name, Ry, is neither fully male nor fully female. By choosing the name and selectively engaging with medical transition on their own terms, Ry asserts autonomy over their identity. This self-recognition and resistance are vividly expressed in Ry's reflection: "When I look in the mirror I see someone I recognise, or rather, I see at least two people I recognise. That is why I have chosen not to have lower surgery. I am what I am, but what I am is not one thing, not one gender. I live with doubleness" (Winterson, 2020, p. 89). This statement does not simply describe a personal decision but enacts a political declaration of refusal to submit to fixed gender categories. It exemplifies the lived experience of hybridity and doubleness that Braidotti identifies as central to nomadic subjectivity, in which subjectivity exists in a state of perpetual transformation rather than fixed identity. Here, Ry explicitly embraces a fluid and hybrid sense of self. By refusing to fully adhere to either the male or female category, Ry disrupts the normative structures that biopower enforces. As Braidotti contends, "[w]e live in permanent processes of transition, hybridization, and nomadization. And these in-between states and stages defy the established modes of theoretical representation, precisely because they are zigzagging, not linear and process oriented, not concept driven" (2011, p. 217). This idea is particularly relevant to Ry's identity, as their identity exists in a state of hybridity, multiplicity and transition, defying established modes of representation.

Braidotti's argument that "[…] rejection of gender roles triggers a process of disidentification with established forms of masculinity and femininity, which has fueled the political quest for alternative ways of inhabiting gender and embodying sexuality" (2011, p. 321) reflects Ry's character in the novel, as they challenge traditional gender norms and refuse to conform to binary identity categories. "Disidentification", in this context, refers to a self-conscious distancing from socially imposed gender roles in favour of a more fluid and self-defined way of inhabiting the body and experiencing identity. Rather than simply shifting from one gendered category to another, Ry actively resists biopolitical structures and thereby enacts a political effort to redefine the lived experience of gender and the expression of sexuality. Ry states: "I do not feel comfortable as a woman" (Winterson, 2020, p. 85), and their discomfort being constrained to a singular, imposed gender identity foregrounds their refusal to conform to binary classifications, which is also indicative of a rather political quest for a self-determined way of inhabiting and expressing gender. This refusal is further reinforced when Ry affirms: "I am a human being" (2020, p. 93), a declaration that transcends normative gender categorisation and situates identity within the broader affirmation of self-determination and shared humanity. This statement aligns with posthumanism's aim to dissolve rigid boundaries and affirms Ry's ability to define themselves beyond imposed limits.

Ry is portrayed as a character who is capable of 'becoming', in Braidotti's sense, as they refuse to adhere to pre-determined categories of gender and sex. Ry identifies themselves as liminal, situated between different states of being, and their conscious decisions about this transition demonstrate a

wider political and philosophical opposition to rigid identity labels. Ry resists binary categorisation, embraces hybridity, and more significantly, exercises agency over their body and identity. In that sense, Ry destabilises the structures of biopower that aim to regulate and define individuals through normative classifications. Winterson's portrayal of Ry, then, exemplifies how gender is not a static category but an ongoing, relational process of becoming. The novel, therefore, reflects contemporary discussions around gender and identity and corresponds with Braidotti's concept of a nomadic framework, in which subjectivity is dynamic, evolving, and defies rigid categorisation. The most repeated intertextual reference in the novel — Shakespeare's lines, "What is your substance, whereof are you made, / That millions of strange shadows on you tend?" (Winterson, 2020, p. 5) — performs a similar theoretical function by evoking the multiplicity of identity. It reminds readers that selfhood is shaped by a plurality of influences, stories, and embodiments, resisting singular definitions.

2. 2. Posthuman Embodiment and Nomadic Subjectivity

Winterson's *Frankissstein* further problematises the concepts of biology, identity, and the self through exploring how advanced technologies influence these conventional concepts by depicting a posthuman landscape where biological limitations are transcended through technological advancements. In this sense, the notions of posthuman embodiment and nomadic subjectivity are connected through a narrative that questions and challenges the boundaries of such traditional frameworks as biology, gender, and identity. The novel, then, explores how technological advancements, including robotics, artificial intelligence, and cryonics, are reshaping our understanding of bodies and identity. As a result, it undermines the idea of biological determinism as a central principle.

Victor Stein, who takes "[…] pride in technological achievements and in the wealth that comes with them" (Braidotti, 2006, p. 35), can be identified as the novel's transhumanist futurist. In his lecture titled The Future of Humans in a Post-Human World, Victor Stein provocatively claims that "[…] binaries belong to our carbon-based past. The future is not biology – it's AI" (Winterson, 2020, p. 72). He further articulates that "[t]he nearby world of AI will be a world where the physical limits of our bodies will be irrelevant" (2020, p. 73). Apparently, Victor Stein envisions a technology-driven future where artificial intelligence transcends traditional human limitations, particularly those centring around the biological and binary constructs. Such "carbon-based" binaries, to use Victor Stein's phrase, as male/female and mind/body, which have historically defined human identity, will be eradicated by artificial intelligence, giving way to a more fluid and inclusive understanding of identity. Victor Stein's perspective aligns with Haraway's concept of the cyborg, a hybrid entity that combines the organic and the mechanical, thereby challenging conventional notions of identity and embodiment. Haraway argues that "[l]ate twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines" (1991, p. 152). She challenges the idea that only living organisms possess qualities such as autonomy and creativity by proposing that machines in the contemporary world demonstrate qualities reminiscent of life, which challenge conventional understanding of existence. This raises important discussions about what it means to be human, the concept of agency, and how our physical presence may change in a world where technology is not just a tool but actively transforms our understanding of life and intelligence.

Ry Shelley's statement, "I am part of a small group of transgender medical professionals. Some of us are transhuman enthusiasts too. […] We can understand the feeling that any body is the wrong body" (Winterson, 2020, p. 104), draws an analogy between transgender experiences and transhumanist agendas. Both domains endeavour to transcend the limitations of the body's original form in order to construct an identity or mode of existence that more authentically reflects one's inner self. In a similar vein, Victor Stein states that,

> […] I believe that the modern diaspora – so many of us find ourselves somewhere else, as migrants of some kind – global, multicultural, less rooted, less dependent on our immediate

> history of family or country to shape ourselves – all of that is preparing us for a looser and freer understanding of ourselves as content whose context can change. (2020, p. 110)

His statement highlights the fluidity of identity in our increasingly interconnected world. This perspective can be argued to foster specifically cultural dislocation as essential in reshaping self-identity and to emphasise a move away from strict ties to one's biological as well as historical or geographical roots. These reflections can be seen as presenting subjectivity as nomadic and open-ended. They highlight the empowering aspects of dislocation and suggest that it can act as a catalyst for creative reinvention of the self. Through this lens, the novel invites its readers to reconsider the notion of identity as a dynamic construct that can evolve in response to changing contexts and experiences.

The novel, however, does not straightforwardly celebrate artificial intelligence or present posthuman embodiment as a transcendence of biology. Instead, it explores how posthuman embodiment emerges through its entanglement with the biological, raising questions about identity, agency, and new forms of dehumanisation. As McAvan argues, "[w]hile there is the pleasure of self-determination (as for Ry), and the potential to transcend human limits, there is also the possibility of new forms of de-humanisation" (2021, n.pag.). This possibility and the related ethical questions are reflected through the character named Ron Lord. Ron is an entrepreneur who sells sex robots. In the novel, Ron serves as a foil to Victor Stein's technology-oriented futurism and Ry Shelley's embodiment of hybrid subjectivity. The way Ron interacts with Ry during their first meeting exemplifies this contrast. Rather than trying to understand Ry's intellectual and existential stance, Ron reduces Ry's sense of the self and identity to a series of reductive questions that foster binary oppositions like "Have you got a dick?" (Winterson, 2020, p. 85), "Why would you want to be a man if you don't want a dick?" (p. 85), "Did you fancy women?" (p. 86), and "You fancied women but you didn't fancy being a lesbian?" (p. 86). It is apparent that Ron's questions are framed through the concept of biological essentialism, and he is unable to conceptualise identity beyond rigid categories of sex and sexuality. By contrast, Ry's embodiment shows that the posthuman does not reject or replace the biological body, but emerges in and through it, so that biological existence becomes an integral part of posthuman subjectivity. Ry's embodiment, therefore, challenges fixed, essentialist definitions of identity by showing that the body itself can be transformed and reimagined.

Ron's reductive stance further manifests itself in his descriptions of his sex-bots. He boasts of their having "[v]ery tight figure – little waist, double-G-cup – and I tell you what, her tits and her pussy are always warm" (Winterson, 2020, p. 43), and goes on to argue, "I don't know if you've ever had sex with a bot –[…]– but I tell you there's none of that Bonjour Tristesse afterwards, and none of that doubt about whether she's had an orgasm or not. All my girls orgasm when you do" (p. 44). Moreover, he says, "[a]ll of these girls come in different skin tones: black, brown or white" (p. 47). Instead of reflecting diversity, Ron reinforces heteronormative and racialised perspectives. His obsession with genitalia and heteronormative labels reflects the design of his sex robots, which are programmed as befitting the rigid gender roles. Ron's ideas about sex and gender stand in stark contrast to how Victor Stein envisions the posthuman future. Victor argues, "The world I imagine, the world that AI will make possible, will not be a world of labels – and that includes binaries like male and female, black and white, rich and poor. There will not be a division between head and heart, between what I feel and what I think" (2020, pp. 79-80). While Victor refers to a posthuman future in which artificial intelligence urges the dissolution of essentialist boundaries and binary thinking, Ron's sex-bots continue to reify existing structures of dominance. The contrasting perspectives of Ron and Victor, therefore, elide provoking questions regarding power, authorship, and access to technology and the future: Who will programme the artificial intelligence? What if individuals like Ron become the architects of such systems? Furthermore, the assumption that the progressive transformative potential of artificial intelligence and technology, as envisioned by Victor Stein, will be universally accessible overlooks the significant disparities in technological distribution among social classes, racial groups, and nations. This reflects Haraway's term, "the informatics of domination," which refers to the idea that digital networks

transform power dynamics from apparent, hierarchical structures into subtle, algorithm-driven systems that perpetuate the same inequalities (2020, pp. 161-165). Winterson's *Frankissstein*, therefore, questions the Janus-faced potential of posthumanism. On the one hand, while technology promises to transcend biological and social constraints, it also carries the risk of perpetuating the very hierarchies it is believed to dismantle.

In this context, Winterson's choice to place Ron, Victor, and Ry within the same narrative space serves as a deliberate ethical provocation. Ron represents the exploitative commodification of technology, while Victor embodies a more ambiguous but still controlling approach to human-artificial intelligence interaction. In contrast, however, Ry's ever-evolving and hybrid sense of self challenges both of these perspectives. Consequently, the novel, instead of providing a singular vision of technological progress, encourages a multifaceted critique of the ideological, ethical, and social assumptions that shape our imagined futures.

2. 3. The Narrative Structure as an Embodiment of Nomadic Subjectivity

Winterson's *Frankissstein* can be read not just as a novel that explores the idea of nomadic subjectivity, but as a text that embodies it. Much like Braidotti's theory, in which the nomadic subject is defined by movement, transformation, and a resistance to fixed identities or linear thinking, the novel itself becomes a nomadic entity. It moves fluidly between different times and places, connecting Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* of 1816 with a speculative, technologically advanced present. Its dual timelines, shifting perspectives, and juxtaposition of past and present resist any fixed or linear conception of identity, narrative, or definition. Like the nomadic subject, *Frankissstein* does not belong to a single time, voice, or discourse. Rather, the novel moves between them and constantly repositions itself, reconfiguring both its form and its philosophical questions as it engages with fact and fiction, science and myth, embodiment and disembodiment. Rather than offering a single, stable story, *Frankissstein* creates a layered, shifting narrative that mirrors the very kind of subjectivity it endeavours to explore.

The dual timelines of the novel are not only a formal device but a way of reimagining and rewriting Shelley's *Frankenstein* for a contemporary audience. By juxtaposing the early nineteenth century with the present day, Winterson highlights the enduring relevance of Shelley's original concerns, such as scientific ambition, the ethics of creation, and the boundaries of human identity. In doing so, she also reframes them through the lens of current debates around artificial intelligence, gender fluidity, and transhumanism. The temporal layering in *Frankissstein* enables the novel to pay homage to its source material while also exploring and expanding upon it. This approach suggests that the questions posed by Shelley are still relevant and unresolved today. As a result, the novel avoids providing a definitive conclusion; instead, it illustrates how literature constantly adapts, evolves, and responds to contemporary issues. The phrase "THE FUTURE IS NOW" (Winterson, 2020, p. 101) appears as one of the initials in the novel and also serves as the slogan for Victor Stein's company. This phrase not only reflects the technological ethos of Victor's transhumanist ambitions but also serves as a deliberate reference to the continued relevance of Mary Shelley's novel today. Shelley imagined a future shaped by science and ethical dilemmas surrounding it, and Shelley's concerns are no longer speculative but part of our lived reality. In this sense, the initial can be argued to foreground the fact that we are already inhabiting the world Shelley foresaw.

The names and roles of the characters in the novel reflect those in Mary Shelley's work. The shared surname between Mary Shelley and Ry Shelley establishes a symbolic connection across time by linking the author of *Frankenstein* with one of the central figures in *Frankissstein*. Furthermore, this connection can be argued to highlight the issues of authorship, gender, and creative power. In *Frankissstein*, Percy Shelley's statement to Mary, "You are father and mother to this tale" (2020, p. 131), emphasises not only her imaginative power but also her distinct role as a woman writer within a male-dominated literary culture. Percy Shelley foregrounds the fact that Mary possesses the ability to create life in both biological and intellectual ways. By combining science, philosophy, and fiction in a

way no one had done before, Mary Shelley wrote a novel that was strikingly original for its time. In the novel, Mary Shelley also reflects on the gendered reception of her work: "The response of society was unexpected, she said, perhaps because I am a woman. […] Shelley is a poet. He is Ariel, not Caliban. He did not write Frankenstein" (2020, p. 217). Here, Winterson foregrounds how Mary's authorship was historically obscured or doubted, as her gender disrupted assumptions about who could author such a scientific and terrifying narrative according to the standards of the time it was written. In this framework, it can be argued that both Mary and Ry challenge dominant norms: Mary through her position as a woman in a male-dominated intellectual sphere, and Ry through their transgender identity, which they "made" (2020, p. 122), to use Ry's phrase, for themselves in a world still uneasy with fluid embodiment. In both cases, the name "Shelley" stands for a refusal to be defined by the limits of one's time, and for the power of fiction to imagine other futures.

Victor Stein's name echoes Victor Frankenstein, the original "modern Prometheus" created by Mary Shelley. Compared to Victor in *Frankenstein*, who is a Romantic and aspiring scientist, Victor in *Frankissstein* is a charismatic transhumanist who is endeavouring to overcome death through cryonics. Like Victor Frankenstein, Victor Stein is driven by the same scientific and philosophical aspirations: to transcend human limits and defy nature. When he discusses the idea of replacing the human body or transferring the mind into machines, there is a familiar hubris, a conviction that human progress justifies any cost: "Victor nodded. He said, Tell me this, Ry, 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? (He's crazy, I thought.)" (Winterson, 2020, p. 112). It can be argued that through the character of Victor Stein, the Frankenstein myth is reinterpreted in the context of transhumanism. The novel, thus, reflects the fluidity of identity and ideas as it shows that Shelley's original questions about creation, responsibility, and humanity remain relevant and increasingly urgent in a technology-driven contemporary world.

Frankissstein is a profoundly fragmented and intertextual novel, and this is more than just a narrative technique as it reflects the novel's own nomadic identity. Through a collage of initials, quotations, and references drawn from both literary and scientific sources, Winterson blurs the lines between past and present, fact and fiction, the imaginative and the empirical. The novel, then, incorporates different voices from Mary Wollstonecraft and Emily Dickinson alongside Max Planck and Larry Page, the co-founder of Google, which span centuries, genres, and epistemological frameworks. These quotations disrupt a unified narrative voice and instead create a text that constantly shifts, reframes, and re-situates itself across various historical, cultural, and disciplinary frameworks. Quotations such as Byron's commentary on Mary Shelley's authorship, Max Planck's assertion that "[t]he mind is the matrix of all matter" (2020, p. 69), or Ovid's metaphysical vision of reincarnation that "Nor dies the spirit but new life repeats / In other forms and only changes seats" (p. 315), Emily Dickinson's argument that "[t]he Brain – is wider than the Sky" (p. 259), Mary Wollstonecraft's declaration that "I am not born to tread in the beaten track" (p. 211), and the statement from the Edinburgh Magazine (1818) that "[t]here never was a wilder story imagined, yet, like most of the fictions of this age, it has an air of reality attached to it" (p. 53) produce a nomadic text that resists fixity and closure. Moreover, the vocabulary page (p. 143) illustrates the meanings of such terms as "artificial", "intelligence", and "practical intelligence" and contributes to the sense of a self-consciously hybrid text. The last section of the novel, titled "Note from the Author," furthermore, reinforces the nomadic status of the text. It describes the novel as "[…] an invention that sits inside another invention - reality itself" (p. 345). Read through Braidotti, this framing allows the novel to be understood not only as a narrative about nomadic subjectivity embodied by its characters but also as a text that performs nomadism in its very form. In this sense, the novel exemplifies Braidotti's argument that "[…] writing is the visualization of ethical relationality through the in-depth critique of power. By acknowledging the constitutive presence of otherness within and all around the self, writing enacts the destitution of unitary visions of the subject as an autonomous entity" (2014, p. 165). The novel's formal experimentation thus enacts Braidotti's claim that creativity is a "matter-realist" (Braidotti

2014, p. 170) nomadic process that displaces dominant formations of identity, memory, and tradition in order to open them to alternative voices and perspectives. Content and form are therefore mutually constitutive: the characters embody nomadism thematically, while the text's structure enacts it formally, directly echoing Braidotti's vision of the nomadic subject as a composition of overlapping identities and realities.

Frankissstein, thus, represents the concept of the nomadic subject through its formal characteristics. It challenges traditional narrative structures, blends genres, and engages in intertextual dialogue. The novel features a fragmented narrative, a variety of voices, and thematic complexity, all of which reflect a fluid and dynamic approach to identity and subjectivity. This aligns with Braidotti's notion of the nomadic subject, which is constantly evolving, resisting fixed definitions, and embracing transformation. This approach is crucial because it not only creates a stylistically engaging novel but also enables us to draw meaningful connections between Mary Shelley's early 19th-century inquiries about science, ethics, and humanity and the questions that are still being explored today. By moving across time and perspective, *Frankisssstein* reminds us that the issues surrounding technology and life are not new; they have always existed. However, these issues now emerge in new forms and are accompanied by modern anxieties, dilemmas, and ethical concerns in our technology-driven world.

3. CONCLUSION

By reading Winterson's *Frankissstein* through the lens of Braidotti's nomadic subjectivity, this study explores how the novel destabilises rigid and essentialist constructions of gender and identity, and instead, offers a notion of subjectivity which is fluid, dynamic, and perpetually in flux, mirroring the novel's own narrative structure. Nomadic subjectivity, as defined by Braidotti, encourages a shift from fixed models of selfhood to an understanding of identity as relational, situated, and continually negotiated through processes of transformation. When applied to *Frankissstein*, this perspective allows for a critical reading of the novel's representations of technology, artificial intelligence, gender, body, and the self. The novel, then, frames them as discursive tools through which the text reimagines what it means to be human in the context of accelerating technological change. In this sense, this study contends that Winterson's *Frankissstein* not only revisits and reinterprets the philosophical themes in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, but also contributes to broader posthuman and gender studies by proposing a model of subjectivity that is increasingly relevant to contemporary debates about identity in the age of high technology. At the same time, the novel expresses a deep scepticism about how technology is developed, distributed, and utilised, and thus, it raises urgent ethical questions about power, access, and the commodification of bodies and intelligence. It thereby opens up new ways of understanding the entangled relationship between human imagination, technological progress, and the evolving sense of subjectivity. Furthermore, by foregrounding literature's power to blur the lines between the imagined and the real, the study illustrates how *Frankisssstein* challenges readers to reconsider the role of fiction in shaping and redefining reality. In that sense, the novel not only revisits the speculative legacy of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* but also affirms literature's enduring capacity to engage with the scope of human imagination, desire, and technological aspiration. Far from being a passive reflection of the world, literature emerges here as a powerful site for anticipating, interrogating, and even shaping possible futures. What Shelley once imagined as fiction has, in many respects, become our reality. As Winterson puts it, "Story: a series of connected events, real or imagined. Imagined or real. Imagined And Real" (2020, p. 23). The way Winterson describes the notion of story reflects the novel's insistence on the fluid and reciprocal relationship between invention and actuality. In doing so, *Frankisssstein* invites readers to rethink the blurred boundaries between fiction and fact and, in line with Braidotti's thought, to reconsider the notion of human as always already relationally entangled, thus acknowledging subjectivity as a fluid, co-constituted process emerging through dynamic interactions with technology, matter, and other-than-human forces.

Declarations and Statements

1. The author of this study confirms compliance with the principles of research and publication ethics.

2. The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

3. This study was screened for plagiarism using plagiarism detection software.

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