

A FEMINIST SUBVERSION OF GENDER BINARISM ON CYBORGIAN GROUNDS  
THROUGH A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF CYBERPUNK FICTION: MARY SHELLEY'S  
*FRANKENSTEIN* AND MARGE PIERCY'S *BODY OF GLASS*

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## ABSTRACT

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MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN* AND MARGE PIERCY'S *BODY OF  
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The aim of this thesis is to explore the transgressive role of cyborg as a posthuman subject in feminist cyberpunk fiction in destabilizing the socially constructed binarisms concerning humanness and gender stereotypes in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Marge Piercy's *Body of Glass*. With the fall of Humanism, the taken-for-granted assumptions of Enlightenment mindset have begun to be unsettled by posthumanists. The problematization of what it means to be human set the ground for elucidating the artificiality of phallogocentric categories and thereby transgressing the borders of conventional dichotomies. In "A Manifesto for Cyborgs", Haraway challenges binary oppositions and advocates a new fusion of identity. Her cyborg theory not only facilitates a territory for the discussion of humanness, it provides a new space for feminists to articulate possibilities of liberatory identity formations and escaping the heteronormative stereotypes of the patriarchal discourse as well. Regarded as the first science fiction novel and identified as a proto-cyberpunk novel, *Frankenstein* presents the relationship between the Western male scientist Victor and

the posthuman monster in a subversive fashion which enables a cyborgian reading of the nineteenth century text from the lenses of a twenty first century reader. Similarly, Piercy's work combines the elements of the cyborg theory with feminist agenda of revisionary mythmaking based on the relationship between Avram Stein and his cyborg Yod with reference to *Frankenstein*. The juxtaposition of these works enables insights about the possibilities of subverting binarisms that serve to exclude women from technoscientific areas.

**Keywords:** cyborg, posthumanism, cyberpunk, deconstruction, cyberfeminism.

## ÖZ

### MARRY SHELLEY’NİN FRANKENSTEIN’I VE MARGE PIERCY’NİN *BODY OF GLASS*’INDA CİNSİYET İKİLİĞİNİN SİBERFEMİNİST AÇIDAN YIKILMASI

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Bu tezin amacı Mary Shelley’nin *Frankenstein* ve Marge Piercy’nin *Body of Glass* isimli feminist siberpunk romanlarında siborgların sosyal olarak oluşturulmuş insanlık ve cinsiyet kalıplarıyla ilgili ikilikleri sorunsallaştırması bağlamındaki insansonrası özne rolünü incelemektir. Hümanizmin çöküşüyle beraber, Aydınlanma Çağı’nın varsayımları insansonrasıcı akademisyenler tarafından sorgulanmaya başlanmıştır. İnsan olmanın anlamının problemleştirilmesi, cinsiyet kategorilerinin ve geleneksel ikiliklerin yapaylığını açığa çıkarmıştır. Siborg Manifestosu’nda Haraway, ikili karşıtıklara meydan okuyarak yeni bir kimlik füzyonunu savunur. Haraway’in siberfeminist kuramı bir yandan insan olmanın ne demek olduğunu tartışırken; diğer yandan feministler için özgürleştirici kimlik oluşumlarına fırsat tanımaktan ve ataerkinin heteronormatif kalıplarından kurtulmanın kaçış yollarından bahseder. Hem ilk bilim-kurgu romanı hem de siberpunk türünün öncüsü olarak kabul edilen *Frankenstein*, Batılı bilim adamı Victor ile insansonrası kabul edilen canavar arasındaki ilişkiyi yapısökümcü bir şekilde ortaya koymasıyla yirmi birinci yüzyıl okuruna siborg bakış açısından bir okuma yapmasına olanak sunar. Benzer şekilde,



Piercy'nin romanı, *Frankenstein*'a atıfta bulunarak Avram Stein adlı bilim adamı ve onun yarattığı siborg olan Yod arasındaki yaratıcı-yaratık ilişkisini siborg kuramının ilkelerini feminist kuramcıların mit yaratma emelleriyle birleştirir. İki romanın bir arada incelenmesi kadınların kendilerine tekno-bilim alanlarında yer edinmesi bağlamında yaratılan kalıpların yıkılması için kaçış yolu sunmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** siborg, insansonrasicılık, siberpunk, *Frankenstein*, siberfeminizm.

*To my sweet grandmother Sevim Göksu*

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this thesis is to explore the transgressive role of cyborg as a posthuman subject in feminist cyberpunk fiction in destabilizing the socially constructed binarisms concerning gender, humanism, and subjectivity that have been considered as an outcome of patriarchal and logocentric mindset of the Western humanism. The posthumanist critique of the traditional concept of humanism elucidates the artificiality of the human agency in manufacturing categories about human and offers a deconstruction and reconstruction of what we understand from being human. Drawing on the problematization of the Cartesian paradigm of mind and body that have long provided a dualistic ground for the definition of human, posthumanism encapsulates the destabilization of gender roles as well, since it paves the way for a more fluid and heterogeneous understanding of gender by challenging the norms of male-centered dominant discourse and rethinking possible ways of opening up a new space of signification for women. Therefore, this research will set out to show how the fall of humanism has led to an unsettling concerning the assigned position of human and his/her relationship with others, which simultaneously resulted in the change of perspective towards gender.

Donna Haraway, one of the pioneers of the posthuman philosophy and the founding figure of what is called ‘cyberfeminism’, configures an image of cyborg, a combination of machine and organism, in order to offer an alternative for the transgression of Cartesian binary oppositions. According to her, this hybrid figuration is not only a product of material reality as a technological invention of our age, it also operates as a theoretical instrument for deconstructing the long-established

division between the concepts of human and its nonhuman other and thereby, suggesting a connection between the two dichotomous categories. She acknowledges that humans have always occupied a privileged position compared to machines but have always had the anxiety of possibility of their domination. Because of that, she proposes a repudiation of the borders between the two concepts and articulates both metaphorical and literal fusion of human and its technology.

Haraway's formulation of the cyborg myth lays bare the constructed nature of the myths about humanity and draws attention to all categorizations that they entail. Besides destabilizing the place of human in the universe, the strategical act of mythmaking also serves the common feminist agenda of subverting the indoctrinations of phallogocentric discourse. Focusing on the artificiality of the concepts that are based on the body, the cyborg theory relinquishes the heteronormative social patterns of the West. Therefore, rewriting the myths about human body enables feminist dialogues concerning redefinitions of femininity and masculinity without prioritizing any of them. Her mythification also functions as a literary attempt to subvert the long-established politics of patriarchal system. Haraway specifically attributes a metaphorical/literary meaning to her ambiguous entity of cyborg with the consideration of the power of both language and fiction in shaping social reality. The double layered nature of the figure enables a certain kind of restoration of the long-separated bond between fact and fiction, the sciences and humanities by the ambivalence it creates. Hence, her cyborg will not recognize the myth of origin and will not show respect to the limitations; it will create a world through completely different notions.

Within the same framework, feminist cyberpunk, as being one of the subgenres of science fiction, provides a discursive space for discussing both decentralization of the place of human in a technologically advanced age and exposition of the fabricated nature of gender categories. By employing themes of mind and body transformation based on technological improvements, the genre portrays how the future lives of genetically and electronically improved humans will experience a double layered reality; the cyberspace and the present space. In doing so, the genre deals with questions about the transference of human consciousness on a computerized platform.

Therefore, feminist cyberpunk writers challenge both the taken for granted notion of human body and the sexual, racial and natural classifications it has entailed for centuries. Consequently, these subversive articulations about what was once thought as quintessential about the reception of the human in the mainstream discourse opened a new path for feminist writers for discussing the position of women in the technologized world.

In that vein, science fiction, just as it functions as a bridge between science and fiction, generates a connection of technology and culture. It prepares the ground for imagining a relationship between human and his/her creations. As Donna Haraway points out

SF [science fiction] is a territory of contested cultural reproduction in high technology worlds. Placing the narratives of scientific fact within the heterogeneous space of SF produces a transformed field. The transformed field sets up resonances among all of its regions and components. No region or component is 'reduced' to any other, but reading and writing practices respond to each other across a structured space. Speculative fiction has different tensions when its field also contains the inscription practices that constitute scientific fact. (*Primate Visions* 2)

Though there is more than a century between their publication, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) and Marge Piercy's award-winning novel *Body of Glass* (1991) share a common point of view towards the nature of humanness and the artificial categorizations created by humanity. Although Frankenstein's monster is not considered as an unmitigated cyborg figure by scholars in academia (including Donna Haraway), my thesis situates the monster in an in-between context where the boundaries between human-nonhuman, male-female is attempted to be destabilized. Therefore, my reading, in parallel with that of Zoe Sofoulis, Nina Lykke and Chris Gray, understands the monster as a precursor/harbinger of cyborgism, which enables a discursive space for problematizing socially fabricated categories. Drawing on Haraway's cyber feminist theory, this thesis will attempt to demonstrate how these two female authors design a world in which the characters transgress the constructed binaries concerning human, and reveal the formation of gender roles attributed to subjects, within the framework of the relationship between a creator and his creation as a theme by specific emphasis



on the irony of the procreation performed by man, which is a feminine act by its very nature.

The first chapter of this thesis will deal with the theoretical background of the cyborg theory and try to explore how this theory has been recognized with its relation to the deconstruction of Humanism in the academia and the ways in which it serves the feminist agenda of destabilization of the gender roles. Since such deconstructivist analysis of humanism necessitates a closer look to the most solid products of the Humanist discourse, Western science will be under scrutiny. In doing so, the focus of argument will be feminist analyses of medical texts concerning the production of scientific knowledge since they lay bare the power of science in shaping the Western patriarchal discourse. Their investigations will be evaluated in terms of the role of scientific texts in gender formation. In relation to the feminist intervention to the territory of mainstream science, Haraway's cyber feminism will be introduced to the reader with regard to its academic reception. Critiques from various scholars will be referred in order to locate Haraway's theory on solid grounds.

Subsequently, the subgenre of cyberpunk will be treated as a field to discuss the relationship between human subject and its technology and how it is reflected on literary works. After giving a general background information about the genre, this thesis will specifically focus on the feminist cyberpunk writers. Particular attention will be paid to Mary Shelley's and Marge Piercy's use of technology as a tool to blur gender boundaries.

The object of the third chapter is to evaluate Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as a feminist cyberpunk fiction on the basis of the novel's treatment of the posthuman monster from a non-anthropocentric point of view. In doing so, Victor Frankenstein's approach towards his creature will be regarded as a representative of the Enlightenment ideal of the Humanist subject. Nevertheless, the monster's attempts to transgress the boundary set by Victor Frankenstein and the destruction caused by the monster will provide the basis in proving the existence of the breaking points from the long-established binary opposition between human subject and its nonhuman other.

Furthermore, Shelley's critical reference to the origin myth will be questioned from a feminist vantage. The loose bond between the creator and his creature will be the subject of discussion as an evidence of the novel's critical engagement with the male reproduction. The problematization of the male agency in procreation will further the argument to feminist agenda of rewriting the myths. The myth of creation will be taken as one of the grand narratives that the Western patriarchal discourse fabricated so as to restrict female subjectivity.

In a similar mode, the fourth chapter, Marge Piercy's *Body of Glass* will be scrutinized within the framework of the cyborg theory and in relation to its direct references to Shelley's work. The central figure of Yod in the main plot and the figure of Golem in the subplot will be the focal points of the argument because of their departure from the nonhuman subject to the posthuman subject. Both the main plot and the subplot break away from the traditional myth of creation, which helps the reader situate the novel as a reconsidered version of *Frankenstein*. This thesis understands the connection of the posthuman subjects with their creators as an implication of possible escape routes from the stereotyped roles fabricated by/for human.

The conclusion part will concern itself with the overall evaluation of the meaning of humanness regarding the surrounding elements of the human subject. Therefore, the final critical analysis will encapsulate numerous references to the cyborg theory and its reflections on the feminist cyberpunk genre. Shelley's and Piercy's works will be compared and contrasted in terms of their treatment of the central figure of the posthuman subject. Apart from their similarities, their differences will also be the locus of the argument. Since there are almost 200 years between the publication dates of the novels, their treatments towards the cyborgian figures and the binarisms differ; these breaking points will be highlighted so as to emphasize the evolution of the perception towards such transgressive figures.

As for the previous academic work concerning the comparison of two novels, scholars tend to refer *Frankenstein* while discussing Piercy's Yod. However, these references are generally unable to go beyond building analogies between Yod and Frankenstein's creature. In "Retrofitting Frankenstein", Veronica Hollinger identifies Piercy's

attempt as “naturalizing the “unnatural ontology of the technosubject” (227). This thesis recognizes the cyborg from a similar point of view; however, naturalization can lead to misunderstandings because what this thesis defends is that Piercy’s cyborg depends on a new fusion out of the long-established categories; that’s why it does not receive Yod’s transformation as naturalization. In *Cyberpunk Women, Feminism and Science Fiction*, Carlen Lavigne draws attention to Shira’s motherhood and the familial relationships in the novel in relation to Mary Shelley’s novel, which is not the subject of this study. In *Women, Science and Fiction: The Frankenstein Inheritance*, Debra Benita Shaw draws on the similarity between the condition of Mary Shelley’s being the only woman in the group while writing *Frankenstein* and the condition of her monster; and builds analogies between Shelley, monster and the cyborg. In “Cyborg Hierarchies: Ecological Philosophy and Cyberculture in Marge Piercy’s *Body of Glass*”, Jayne Glover also emphasizes *Body of Glass* as the rewriting of the Frankenstein story; however, she reads Yod, just like the monster, as “a symbol of hierarchical gender structures” and suggests that Piercy offers a problem “ of what happens if we maintain hierarchical divisions between the natural and the artificial in a world in which cyborgs exist” (5). This thesis understands this problem in a similar way; however, cyborg, in contrast, does not symbolize “the hierarchical gender structures”. Hence, this study aims to contribute to the literature by analysing the two novels in depth by placing the cyborgian figures at the center for their transgression of boundaries.

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

#### 2.1. The Deconstruction of Humanism

Though the term ‘posthumanism’ covers a very broad zone and it is quite a controversial task to define the borders exactly, for Rosi Braidotti, one of the leading figures in posthuman studies, it means “the historical moment that marks the end of the opposition between Humanism and anti-humanism” and “it traces a different discursive framework, looking more affirmatively towards new alternatives” (*The Posthuman* 37). Posthumanism calls upon the transgression of dichotomies such as body and mind, nature and culture, subject and object, not based on a linear logocentric ground but on an emancipatory and subversive ground. For her, the reconstruction of connections between human and its surroundings is necessary. What is inherent in the essence of humanness should be reshaped in accordance with what information technology brings about so as to formulate a posthuman future. Therefore, the posthuman condition can be understood as the “interrogation of what it means to be human in a digital age” (Toffoletti 24). As it is suggested, the posthuman condition is not only about relinquishing the binary entrapments of logocentric thought, it also connotes rethinking and reshaping them and opening up new domains for formulations which would not, in Braidotti’s terms, “sexualize, racialize, or naturalize” neither humans nor non-humans (*The Posthuman* 38).

With the advancements in science and technology, our perception of certain notions such as culture, society and subjectivity and our relations with them have changed irreversibly. Technologization of life enabled questionings concerning the position and nature of human and thereby, enabling new identity formations. In order to

explore this new model of human subject untainted by the limitations of the humanist discourse, the Enlightenment subject should be reconsidered as a model that was configured by the anthropocentric, Eurocentric and patriarchal norms which set the ground for binary oppositions and prioritizations between the poles of certain dualities. That is the reason why the posthuman subject is considered as the reshaped version of the Enlightenment human ideal.

In the same line of thinking, the orthodox apprehension of humanism which established the ground for hierarchical relationships between two seemingly oppositional concepts have given its place to anti-humanist approach where dualistic system of thought is subverted, deconstructed and reconstructed; moreover, the blending of these concepts began to be seen probable for various scholars in academia (ibid. 3). As Rosi Braidotti, points out: “These new formations are postulated on the demise of that ‘Man’ – the former measure of all things”. Braidotti considers posthumanism as a way out from the much-debated conflict between humanism and anti-humanism. According to her, disappearance of basic presuppositions of Humanism such as “the progress of mankind through a self-regulatory and teleological ordained use of reason and of secular scientific rationality allegedly aimed at the perfectibility of ‘Man’” heralded the birth of a new broader conceptualization (ibid. 37). Similarly, a prominent theorist of posthuman studies, N. Katherine Hayles also considers the birth of the posthuman subject as the indicator of the end of the constructed notion of the human subject.

## **2.2. The Transition from Humanism to Posthumanism**

The transition from humanism to posthumanism owes very much of its emergence to a wide spectrum of critical studies such as feminism, postcolonialism, anti-racism, poststructuralism, postmodernism (Nayar 24). Dwelling on the crisis that “liberal humanist subject” provoked, N. Katherine Hayles identifies the culprits of dominant Enlightenment discourse as the “constructed white European male” for feminists, “universality of the (white male) liberal subject” for postcolonial theorists, and “capitalism” for postmodern theorists (Hayles 244). Similarly, Braidotti cherishes “the structural others of the modern humanistic subject” that are marginalized by the

bourgeois epistemology as they are the pioneers of the posthuman age because of their dissident attitude. (*The Posthuman* 37). Thus, the human subject that this thesis understands will be in parallel to what Nina Lykke acknowledges in *A Feminist Companion to Posthumanities*:

I consider the “universal human subject”, implied when the humanities are defined as scholarly domain for knowledge production about the human”, to be “most often a Eurocentric construction, embedded in hegemonic and normative discourses celebrating the endeavours of class privileged, predominantly white, heterosexual, disembodied masculine subjects, and binary and hegemonic constructions of Man-Woman, White-Black, Mind-Body, Human-Animal, Culture-Nature, etc. (26)

Lykke’s reception points towards the binary couplings that are generated through “the universal human subject”. As for the humanist Enlightenment ideology, the hierarchical relations that are inherent in these couplings form the basis for the presumption of one concept’s privilege over the other. Whereas one part of the dualism is associated with power, masculinity and reason, the other part is regarded inferior and utilized as a tool to identify the privileged pole as superior. From this theoretical framework, humanist science will be under scrutiny for its power to define the borders that formulate gender stereotypes.

### **2.3. The Production of Gender in Humanist Science**

The fabrication of gender roles in scientific knowledge production processes has been problematized and criticized by a wide scope of feminist scholars, especially after the 1970’s feminist movements (Keller 2). Such feminist interference demonstrated how the phallogocentric discourse created by Western scientists indoctrinated a hierarchical relationship between biological characteristics of male and female human bodies in culture. Drawing on Michal Foucault’s *History of Sexuality* (1978), Hans Bertens also emphasizes this production of knowledge as: “Western culture has turned sexuality into a discourse that enables it to monitor us constantly and to exercise power [...]” (Bertens 200). Therefore, it can be inferred that analyses of humanist scientific texts from a feminist point of view have made obvious the necessity of reinterpretations and rewritings in various fields of study since they are considered as a part of grand narrative which serves to legitimize a certain kind of totality.

To start with, Susanne Kappeler, in her article “Body Images and the Pornography of Representation” highlights the Foucauldian understanding of biopower that modern science has normatively generates forms of knowledge about the body. She states that “[t]he body that is open to the scrutiny, the observation by the biomedical gaze is a body that can be manipulated; it is useful, purposeful body that can produce knowledge, thus legitimating the power of the biomedical profession (*Nomadic Subjects* 63). When the correlation between the Western science and its representation of the patriarchal discourse is considered, her examination of the body as a site in the production of knowledge reveals the heteronormative power holders which take advantage of the fragility of the body.

Emily Martin, in *Feminism and Science*, investigates the difference between the language of the physiological explanations of male and female reproduction processes (1996). In her article, she uncovers that while the production of thousands of sperms is celebrated in a highly vivid manner, the unfertilized egg of each menstrual cycle is explained as “a failure” and “waste” in the medical texts. In this respect, the impetus behind the huge gap between the descriptions lays bare the discourse-shaping power of the scientific language.

In that vein, Londa Schiebinger draws attention to the nomenclature of mammals and “the reason why mammals are called mammals” (Schiebinger 137). She points out that the word ‘mammalia’ means ‘of the breast’ and it is an umbrella term for ‘humans, apes, ungulates, sloths, sea cows, elephants, bats, and all other organisms with hair, three ear bones, and a four-chambered heart’ (ibid. 137). Nonetheless, she argues their ‘mammas’ (breasts) are not the best characteristic features of these organisms, in fact, “the ‘mammas’ are functional for only half of this group of animals (females), and among those, for a relatively short period of time (during lactation) or not at all” (ibid. 137) According to Schiebinger, this coinage, instead, could have been based on their hair, ears, or hearts; something which would not focus on a feature related essentially to female body. These two examples unveil the underlying power of scientific knowledge in gender formation and how it is manipulated for the benefit of mapping a masculine territory in the Western context, they also indicate the potentiality of gender-neutral language in terms of the subverting the dominant discourse. Because

when the ramifications of the scientific and technological discourse and the dissemination of the knowledge produced by certain power holders are taken into consideration, these seemingly small patterns of patriarchy gradually build up a large network of ideas which serve the domination of women.

## **2.4 The Cyborg Theory and Cyberfeminism**

No wonder, while tracing back the roots of posthumanism from a feminist vantage, much of the credit has to be given to Donna Haraway's "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" (1991) as her ground-breaking work has brought many different nexuses together in myriad fields, to name a few, cybernetics, biology, capitalism, bioengineering, feminism, robotics and informatics. After its publication in 1991, much debate has circled around her influential essay; however, only a limited number of scholars will be included in this thesis. While one group appreciated her figuration on grounds that she opened up a new space of signification for many structural others, the other group criticized, at times, attacked her for various reasons. Under this subtitle, her conceptualization of cyborg, its reverberations in the academia and the elements that are related to the subject of this thesis will be discussed.

To start with, though Haraway's and Hayles' concepts of posthumanism share common elements, their reception of the figure of cyborg is quite different. In "Unfinished Work: From Cyborg to Cognisphere", Hayles points out that despite of its destabilization by its fusion with the machine, the humanist subject still maintains to operate as a unifying figure on a local level. For her, the cyborgian figure "is not networked enough to encompass the emergent possibilities associated with the internet and the world-wide web and other phenomena of the contemporary digital era" (Hayles 2006: 159). Therefore, it can be suggested that her argumentation draws on the immaterial aspect of cybernetic technology. She criticizes the clear interface of human in cybernetics because it "privileges informational pattern over material instantiation" (Hayles 1997: 242).

Another critic, Susan Bordo, criticizes Haraway's theory on grounds that her 'textual dance', by which she refers to refusal of totalization and acknowledgement of multiplicity, does not take "the dancer" anywhere (Bordo 144). Unless the free-



floating of signifiers has a 'limit', such theory is doomed to suffer from not achieving 'difference' and 'locatedness' (ibid. 144). By such criticism, it might be suggested that Haraway's cyborg is scrutinized for its lack of limitations. Nevertheless, it should be remembered that it is exactly what Haraway advocates. Haraway's cyborg does not recognize any limits or categorizations and that is how her figuration bleaches the binary oppositions.

In a similar fashion, Nancy Hartsock questions the timing of the emergence of theories that ambiguate the borders of certain concepts such as progress, linearity, subjectivity, history. Since the twentieth century is the moment when the voice of the marginalized others began to be heard for the first time in the history, she asks, why is it that her figuration coincides with the moment that the history is problematized. (Hartsock 163). She asserts that it is neither a coincidence nor a conspiracy theory. Nevertheless, Haraway has already pointed out the exactness of time in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women* by stating that

I do not know any other time in history when there was greater need for political unity to confront effectively the dominations of 'race', 'gender', 'sexuality', and 'class'. I also do not know of any other time when the kind of unity we might help build could have been possible. (Haraway 157)

However, Judith Halberstam, in her article "Automating Gender: Postmodern Feminism in the Age of the Intelligent Machine" (1991) touches upon the representation of ideal woman as the goddess in the 70's feminist movement and defends Haraway's famous preference of "being a cyborg than a goddess". Halberstam points out that the cyborg parallels to the concept of femininity in that cyborgs and women are both artificial manufactures of humanity and there is nothing natural about the attributions of the category of woman and the cyborg. According to her, their common characteristic of automation can be regarded as a "coded masquerade" (Halberstam 449).

Aforementioned critical approaches affirm that academic discussions about Haraway's theory have not ceased to reverberate since the day it was published and it still continues to occupy the major locus of debates concerning the nexuses of feminism and technology. As Braidotti acknowledges in her article "Cyberfeminism

with a Difference” (1998), cyberspace provides women with a site to exchange numerous forms of the self, and, in this way, generate new subject positions for them in the posthuman condition. Thus, it seems that the echoes of Haraway’s theory will continue to be heard for a long time since it is not limited only to feminism and technology, it is relatable for a variety of fields. However, this thesis will mainly focus on the following arguments from her manifesto.

First and foremost, in order to discuss the figure of cyborg, it is useful to understand the definition and context in which the concept came into being and how it acquired transgressive meaning in technoscience as well as feminism. The term refers to the abbreviation of ‘cybernetic organism’ and it is first used in the article called “Cyborg and Space” (1960) written by Nathan S. Kline and Manfred E. Clynes. According to the article, the original aim of the research was to enhance the human capacity of survival in an extraterrestrial environment. The concept was offered as a solution to the problems arising from the insufficient nature of human biology in the case of space travel.

Though “there is no consensus on what a cyborg is” (Gray 3), Haraway’s understanding, however, adds a metaphorical meaning to their concept that it is not only “a hybrid of machine and organism’, it can be regarded as “a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction” (*Simians, Cyborgs and Women* 149). Therefore, her notion of cyborg takes its departure from the potential of the destruction of the ontological borders between human and animal, machine and organism, physical and non-physical, reality and fiction. As the world we inhabit is being reconfigured in line with the scientific and technological advancements, her technologized weapon of destruction is a figure of liberatory fusion of these categorizations. The amalgam of the two traditionally separate concepts (social reality and fiction) not only enables us to consider the possibility of destabilization of essentialist binarisms of the Cartesian thought but it also suggests a third element which transcends the coupling.

Grounded on the notions of hybridity and fluidity, Haraway’s cyborg functions as an ambiguous figure offering an alternative to the established identity politics of the

West. The mainstay of the argument, thus, can be regarded as the sense of urgency of wiping out the old dualisms of the dominant discourse.

The second key argument is based on the fictitious characteristic of the cyborg, as Haraway argues, the creation of a cyborg myth will help epitomize the blending of cultural oppositions. As the American poet Alicia Ostriker observes in “The Thieves of Language: Women Poets and Revisionist Mythmaking” (1982), the strategy of ‘stealing the language’ or ‘revisionist mythmaking’ has been a central part of socio-political struggle in the field of poststructuralist feminism, especially concerning the notion of the ‘écriture féminine’, i.e. feminine writing (Ostriker 69). Bearing in mind that ‘[...] language is the site of the cultural production of identity’, feminisms have revalorized language as a vital element in altering the balance between the traditional genderized dualities. Thus, the emphasis falls on reconfiguration of language and its mythic productions that constitute a major part in the subject formation (Talbot 115).

So as to understand the function of myths in the discourse production and subject formation, the significance attributed to language should be highlighted. The crucial importance is made clear by Rosi Braidotti:

Given that language is the medium and the site of constitution of the subject, it follows that it is also the cumulated symbolic capital of our culture. If it was there before "I" came to be and will be there after "I" disappears, then the question of the constitution of the subject is not a matter of "internalization" of given codes but rather a process of negotiation between layers, sedimentations, registers of speech, frameworks of enunciation (*Nomadic* 14).

Braidotti argues that instead of accepting myths as “the given codes” and letting them constitute subject positions to form a ground for objectifying the inferior legs of certain binarisms, changing language and thereby offering escape routes in the “cumulated symbolic capital of our culture” should be considered so as to prevent traditional role of myths from establishing hierarchies between subjects. From this conceptual framework, it can be safely argued that Haraway’s insistence on the myth system of cyborg parallels to feminist agenda of myth-making. Therefore, on the theoretical level, the figure operates as a medium to challenge male-centered “colonizing” myths of origins in a space of feminine writing without building a hierarchy based on otherizations (*Simians* 175).

In that vein, Margaret E. Toye's identification of the nexuses between French Feminist Luce Irigaray and Donna Haraway as "their similar use of irony, the creation of multiple layers of meaning, the rereading and remaking of myth, and engagement with utopic thinking" can be of importance (Toye 197). In accordance with the abovementioned feminist discussions, Haraway's cyberfeminism, which is based on her association with information technology, can be understood as an instrument for offering of a new site for signification untainted by the gender polarities. Haraway states that "cyborg writing is about power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other" (*Simians* 175).

Besides being the central figuration of the theoretical strategy, Haraway acknowledges the fact that cyborgs are not only fictitious characters in sci-fi worlds, they are part of our everyday reality. Their population is growing up and they are continuing to blur the boundaries between what is mechanic and what is organic. Thus, this endorses the idea that cyborgs do not operate only on a theoretical level, but also in practice, these entities are parts of our life as Katherine Hayles points out in her book *How We Became Posthuman*:

Cyborgs actually exist. About 10 percent of the current U.S population are estimated to be cyborgs in the technical sense, including people with electronic pacemakers, artificial joints, drug-implant systems, implanted corneal lenses, and artificial skin. A much higher percentage participates in occupations that make them into metaphoric cyborgs, including the computer keyboarder joined in a cybernetic circuit with the screen, the neurosurgeon guided by fiber-optic microscopy during an operation, and the adolescent game player in the local video-game arcade. (115)

The material reality of cyborgs strengthens the recognition of the concept since in near future their population will possibly grow and interrogations about their existence will probably be much more important than it is today. Considering that, the double-edged characteristic of cyborg helps Haraway ground her argument both ontologically and epistemologically (Sofoulis 52).

## 2.5. Cyberpunk as a Subgenre

Born as a subgenre of science fiction, cyberpunk intermingles the atmosphere of the underground culture of the 80's with a society of a technologically advanced future in which the outlaws, misfits, antiheroes become heroized and punk subculture gives its soul of anarchy to the digitalized world. One of the most comprehensive and vivid description of cyberpunk is given by Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, as follows:

[It is a genre] in which a self-destructive but sensitive young protagonist with an (implant/prosthesis/telechronic talent) that makes the civil (megacorporations /police states/criminal underworlds) pursue him through (wasted urban landscapes/elite luxury enclaves/eccentric space stations ) full of grotesque (haircuts/clothes/self-mutilations/rock music/sexual hobbies/designer drugs/telechronic gadgets/nasty new weapons/exteriorized hallucinations) representing the (mores/fashions) of modern civilization in terminal decline, ultimately hooks up with rebellious and tough-talking (youth/artificial intelligence/rock cults) who offer the alternative, not of community/ socialism/traditional values/transcendental vision), but of supreme, life-affirming hipness, going with the flow which now flows in the machine, against the spectre of a world-subverting (artificial intelligence/multinational corporate web/evil genius) (Istvan Csicsery-Ronay 268)

In the cyberpunk anthology called *Mirrorshades*, Bruce Sterling, one of the key figures concerning the genre, asserts that cyberpunk attempts to interrogate the potential conjunctions between “high tech and modern pop underground” (xi). His proclamation is that there has always been a cultural gap between “the sciences and the humanities” that needed to be reconciled (ibid xii). Consequently, cyberpunk, by juxtaposing ‘the cyber’ and ‘the punk’, thereby enabling a convergence of many previously separate notions, maps a new space full of new combinations in an inventive way.

According to Veronica Hollinger, the genre can be considered “as one symptom of the postmodern condition of genre science fiction” because of cyberpunk’s transgression of the social, cultural, ontological binaries (Hollinger 30). The symptom of the anxiety of a possible downfall caused by intelligent machines entailed a portrayal of the human subject in science fiction as the ultimate triumphant in battles

against his/her technology. For the same ends, the robotic, cybernetic, technological potential of the non-human others was disparaged and the prevailing power of the humanity was insistently reiterated (ibid. 30). As a symptomatic relief, a reexamination of the hierarchical positions between the dichotomies, e.g. the human vs. his /her creations, was needed (ibid. 30). Thus, with the cyberpunk's entrance to the scene, the solid ground on which the human-centered narratives were constructed has begun to be destabilized. The reexamination process required problematizations and formulations of patterns concerning human interaction with technology that have been taken granted so far. This thesis will concentrate on the two primary innovative notions of cyberpunk in order to strengthen the theoretical argument: decentralization of human body and dissolution of the subject.

Cyberpunk's main focus of the problematization of the interface of humanity and technology is rooted deeply in the bodily modifications that help destabilize the corporeal experience of humanness. Including themes of cybernetic implementations and genetic enhancements on human body, cyberpunk harbors myriad elements by which transformation of material aspect of human existence is presented. This transformation entails explorations and reformulations of how we define ourselves on physical grounds.

As in the Ship of Theseus, is the human body still the same body when majority of his/her organs were replaced with stronger and more effective implants? What is immutable about the physicality of human nature? If the way we perceive the world depended heavily on technological apparatuses, would we still count as 'human'? Or at which point of these alterations in the human form do we cease to be human? What is it that makes us human in the end? Such controversial questions and the difficulty of giving accurate answers to them elucidate the artificiality of our determinations about the dichotomies e.g. natural/artificial, human/machine, body/mind. Cyberpunk takes advantage of this slippery territory in which we lack clear limitations for any of the concepts and, ironically enough, upon which our understanding of the world is constructed. Thus, as our privileged position of looking at things change, what we used to place at the center of our system of thinking changes as well.

The interconnection of “computer technology and human embodiment” is commonly viewed as the major characteristic of cyberpunk, yet the notion of embodiment appears as a problematic part of the abovementioned interrogations that cyberpunk engages in (Vint 255). The human embodiment in cyberpunk does not have any close relationship with the ingrained notion of the Enlightenment body defined by the white, European, male subjects, conversely, it refers to a much broader concept. N. Katherine Hayles associates the cybernetic understanding of the body with the impetus for this paradigm (*How We 4*). According to N. Katherine Hayles, cybernetics have imagined the human nature “as a set of informational processes” and that the body is not a fundamental component for the human embodiment, which resulted in repudiation of the synthesis of the body and the mind. (*How We 4*). The refusal of the coexistence of the two notions, as she suggests, not only jeopardizes the material value of the body, it also privileges the mind over body. She, thenceforth, stands with the idea that the body should not be neglected in the course of the formation of a cybernetic body and cyberworld because, in that condition, the body will fail to acknowledge its importance.

As a conclusion, cyberpunk tries to subvert the mythology that encapsulates the cultural codifications with the aim of revealing the hidden plans of “domination, desire, will, power, and the will to power”, thereby enabling us to discover new emblems for voicing our opinions (Vint 260). In this way, it would be safe to say that cyberpunk investigates the cybernetic technologies operating in our current society.

## **2.6. Feminist Cyberpunk as a Subgenre of a Subgenre**

Besides the major characteristics, what this thesis refers to as the ‘feminist cyberpunk’ is a term put forth by Karen Cadora in *Beyond Cyberpunk: New Perspectives* so as to differentiate the masculinist writings of the early cyberpunk from the works of feminist writers of the genre. According to her, ‘masculinist cyberpunk is very much a boys’ club’ (Cadora 357). Another critique Carlen Lavigne emphasizes the division by stating that

[w]hile early cyberpunk is predominantly acknowledged as white male, heterosexual, and middle-class in its scope, and mainly appreciated for its

postmodern treatment of contemporary technology and identity issues, women's cyberpunk delves into more varied questions. By reconfiguring the conventions of a genre often criticized as misogynist, women have re-created cyberpunk as a medium for feminist political voices; their works may be read as acts of participation in contemporary feminist discourse. (Lavigne 4)

In this new subcategory of feminist cyberpunk, we witness a strategic use of the standard theme of disembodiment, the escapist dream of disposal of the body which leads to an understanding of uncontained life on the level of the downloaded consciousness. The authors of this genre, to name a few, Marge Piercy, Alice Sheldon (who is widely known with her pen name James Tiptree Jr.), Catherine Lucille Moore, Joanna Russ, Suzy Mckee Charna, have received the concept of embodiment not "as the 'meat', the dead flesh that surrounds the active mind which constitutes the 'authentic self'" (Lupton 101). Yet, they have taken the disembodied cyber bodies or cyborgs as an instrument to deconstruct the concept of the body that have been constructed culturally. Thenceforth, by taking advantage of the theme of decentralization of the body, these authors and many more have proposed a totally new recognition of the body which is disembodied in order to be embodied in a new form. This new form of embodiment sets the scene for feminist cyberpunk authors to challenge the stereotypical gender structures and enables an articulation of both posthuman and feminist considerations within the framework of science fiction.

To conclude, this study will recognize the figuration of cyborg that is offered by Donna Haraway as an acknowledgement of ontological and epistemological transgression of long-established dichotomies within the posthuman and feminist frame of reference. By disavowing the traditional reception of human subject of the Enlightenment ideology and, thereby, refusing the anthropocentric understanding of human and the categorizations it has foregrounded for centuries, the posthuman representation of cyborg thinks through the meaning of being human and maps a territory in which the marginalized other of the human is reconsidered as a deconstructive figure. Distortion of the conventional representation of the ideal human, therefore, entangles a reformulation of the stereotypical gender roles as they are heavily inflicted with the oppressive indoctrinations of humanism and can be regarded as products of this heteronormative identity formulation.



The new form of identity incarnated in the subversive figure of cyborg also functions as a means for accomplishing the feminist ends of redefining a female subject position that is untainted by strict patriarchal genderization. Thus, this new form insistently suggests a recuperation of gender and social attributions to female and male bodies. In that vein, cyberfeminists take advantage of the technological advancements to define a new place for women in the digitalized world. They emphasize that the women have always been excluded from the site of science and technology. Because of that, cyberfeminists have begun their job by analyzing the Western scientific, medical, biological, technological texts and proving their sexist attitudes towards the female body. In doing so, they have elucidated the deliberate construction of gender ideals, which paved the way for a deconstructive reading of science and technology and this enabled cyberfeminists to criticize heteronormativity of the Western science on both epistemological and ontological grounds. Therefore, this revelation of the constructed nature of gender hierarchies raised awareness as to the necessity of formulating a gender-neutral identity.

Starting from the decentralization of the concept of body, they aim at destabilizing the patriarchal concept of body with all its negative connotations. These include representations of body in the myths and range of narrations. Haraway follows the feminist trajectory of rewriting and retelling myths which construct an inferior image of femininity through power of language. Her figuration of cyborg, which is “a hybrid of machine and organism”, offers a totally new understanding of gender by writing a myth about a half human half machine product of technology. Furthermore, language and narration play crucial role in Haraway’s theorization since she acknowledges the fact that in order to challenge the patriarchal system of signification, we need to rethink its metaphorical and literal tools and subvert them. Therefore, in order to open a new space for women, Haraway challenges these phallogocentric narrations and presents the myth of cyborg which refuses a heteronormative language since her cyborg is “a creature in a post-gender world” (*Simians* 150).

At this point, science fiction provides a fruitful literary ground as it is the combination of science and fiction constituting a bridge between technology and literature. Donna Haraway’s posthuman theory of cyborgs and the futuristic worlds of science fiction

are two relatable areas. Moreover, Haraway acknowledges that she is inspired by science fiction. Thus, her cyberfeminism collaborates with both the posthuman thought and science fiction. From a more specific point of view, the subgenre of feminist cyberpunk allows a more relatable frame for the discussion of the cyborg theory and cyberfeminism since it strategically and critically explores the failure of humanism and builds a new picture of the posthuman enhanced by technological implementations and lives in a cyberworld.

Bearing in mind the abovementioned theoretical concerns of cyberfeminism and its collaboration with cyberpunk, this study will attempt to give a detailed analysis of two novels in relation to their treatments of the posthuman subjects; the first one being Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* and the second, Marge Piercy's 1991 novel *Body of Glass*. As it is stated above, Shelley's monster is not regarded as an unmitigated cyborg figure; however, this thesis will take the monster as a cyborg because it bears similar characteristics to Haraway's figuration. Also, the two novels approach the situation of the othered subject from similar vantage points. Shelley's monster is a creation of the Western humanist male scientist. It comes to life by the hands of a man, unlike the natural order. It is a product of medical technology and is severely othered by its creator and the society it belongs to, just like the main character of Yod in the *Body of Glass*. The real cyborg figure Yod in Marge Piercy's novel is the tenth cyborg attempt of the male scientist Avram Stein in collaboration with a female computer scientist (The resemblance of the names of the scientists might not be coincidental). These characters are badly in need of their creator's attention; however, they receive none. Yod also goes through social difficulties and at times marginalized by the members of the society. The cyborg characters of these novels try their best to be accepted in the society and they gradually acquire human qualities.

The rationale behind bringing together these two works of cyberpunk fiction is that both novels define a new space of signification for deconstructing established binarisms concerning humanness and gender by using technology and science as a medium. The fact that both novels concern themselves with the myth of creation offers a fertile ground to understand the artificiality of the humanist categorizations. Since

Percy's humanist male scientist Avram Stein makes a direct reference to Shelley's Dr. Frankenstein enables the reader building analogies between the two characters. Their critical engagement with the creation stories suggests a comparison between the humanist ideologies of different time periods.

## CHAPTER 3

### *FRANKENSTEIN*

Born into a highly intellectual family, Mary Shelley (1797-1851) has been an ostensible literary figure not only during her lifetime, but after years following her death as well. Her masterpiece *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus* (1818), though written out of amusement during a visit to her acquaintances' with her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron in the Alps, has taken its place among the world classics and it perpetuates its relevance to contemporary literature especially concerning its intersections with feminism, subjectivity and scientific ethic. Common reading of the novel places it in the category of the gothic science fiction genre; however, Veronica Hollinger rereads Mary Shelley's work as a feminist cyberpunk novel since it bears numerous characteristics of the cyberpunk genre. Taking Hollinger's categorization will enable this study to evaluate the field of technoscience as a useful space to relate feminism and science in favour of the subversion of stereotypical gender constructions. This chapter, in its broad sense, aims to demonstrate how the binary opposition between the human (Dr. Victor Frankenstein) and his non-human other (the monster) is artificially constructed and the possibilities of escaping and subverting this binarism within the framework of posthuman theory and grounding on the literary instruments that feminist cyberpunk enables for this kind of interrogation. In order to emphasize such kind of duality, several number of binary oppositions that prioritize the human over his nonhuman other will be analyzed thoroughly. Drawing on the cyborg theory, Chris Gray confirms that "many see Mary Shelley's monster, Frankenstein's creature, as the first cyborg; certainly, he is among the most powerful." (Gray 5) Thus, this thesis will consider the monster as a cyborg figure.

It is quite notable that the novel harbors numerous elements of scientific and medical discoveries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and it takes its gothic characteristics from these novelties. Additionally, when the predominance of the male writers of the time is taken into consideration, the strong effects of the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution can be observed in her protest writing. Considering the description of the procreation process by a scientist, it is quite obvious that Mary Shelley aims at unsettling the Western point of view towards concepts of science, reproduction, humanness.

Regarded as the first science fiction novel, and a prominent example of the gothic genre, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* draws reader's attention to the Icarus-kind of forcing the limits of human knowledge and offers a fertile ground for figuring out the ways in which the human approach towards nonhuman can be analyzed thoroughly. From the very beginning of the book, as early as the author's introduction, Shelley sets a slippery ground as to 'the nature of the principle of life':

Many and long were the conversations between Lord Byron Shelley, to which I was a devout but nearly silent listener. During one of these, various philosophical doctrines were discussed, and among others the nature of the principle of life, and whether there was any probability of its ever being discovered and communicated. They talked of the experiment of Dr Darwin (I speak of what the Doctor really did, or said that he did, but, as more to my purpose, of what was then spoken of as having been done by him), who preserved a piece of vermicelli in a glass case, till by some extraordinary means it began to move with voluntary motion. Not thus, after all, would life be given. Perhaps a corpse would be re-animated; galvanism had given token of such things: perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together and endued with vital warmth." (Shelley 4)

Bearing in mind the pace of the scientific inventions of her time, it can be uttered that she is very much concerned here with the ideas about the reach of human knowledge, science and civilization its relationship with the human nature. Her point of departure, the wish to discover "the nature of the principle of life", leads to investigations about the future of human.

The narration begins through the lenses of Robert Walton who resolves to realize his childhood dream of becoming a captain after finishing his studies with the help of the fortune that he is granted after his uncle's death. He engrossedly studies to accomplish

his purpose at the age of twenty-eight. After finally achieving the title, he departs to discover the Northern Pole with his crew. During his travels, he encounters Victor Frankenstein, the ambitious scientist who, in pursuit of knowledge brings his unfortunate end, and hears his frightful and suspenseful story. Away from his sister, he regularly writes letters to her and informs the conditions in which he has been trying to survive. It is through these epistles that the story of the main characters, Frankenstein and the monster he created, is revealed to the reader in a gothic fashion. Mary Shelley's use of the epistolary form and construction of a frame-within-a-frame story instantly draws attention to the distance that is formed between the monster and the reader because what the monster have told to Victor is transferred to the reader by the narration of Robert Walton, who sends these letters to his sister Margaret. This thrice-folded narration seems to function as an instrument to create a distance on behalf of the monster. Mary Shelley, therefore, highlights the otherization of the nonhuman subject by placing unseen barriers in order to problematize the relationship between human and nonhuman. Nonetheless, this thrice-folded distance can be considered as an exaggerated way of exposing the monster's story. By presenting a multilayered picture, it can be suggested that the othering of the nonhuman subject becomes an object of parody. However, the nonhuman other transgresses these barriers set by its creator, the representation of the Western, white, male scientist, by disrupting his privileged position and causing his life to end in misery.

### **3.1. Science vs. Humanities**

To prepare a ground for a posthuman discussion, it is quite crucial to begin with an investigation of the fundamental qualities that lay bare the essence of human nature. One of the most debated binarism concerning the essence of humanness is that of between reason and emotion. According to humanist discourse in which "man is the measure of all things", human intellect has been situated hierarchically superior to his/her emotions that may possibly render him/her weak concerning a linear mental progression. Remembering that the novel was written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in which the rise of the modern medical experiments accelerated the development of science and technology, it is important to note that Europe was under the influence of a great wave

of distinguished inventions concerning the human body and its environments. In that vein, the novel reflects these thoughts and offers a rich soil for an inquiry about how the Western science affected the apprehension of humanness and presupposed a privileged position of reason over emotion.

First of all, the first narrator, Robert Walton presents an effectual example from the very beginning of the novel. Like Frankenstein, he has an excessive desire for knowledge which can be associated with the superiority of the mind and reason over emotions. Victor also accentuates the resemblance between himself and Robert by saying that “[y]ou seek for knowledge and wisdom, as once I did; and I eagerly hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been” (ibid. 24). He has obsessively dedicated himself to the expedition mission and he has devoted his early years to the “study of mathematics, the theory of medicine, and those branches of physical science from which a naval adventurer might derive the greatest practical advantage” (ibid. 14). The parallelism between Walton and Victor that is built from the beginning of the novel draws reader’s attention to Shelley’s emphasis on the thirst of knowledge and its consequences.

The impetus behind this dedication is to discover the unvisited parts of the world, the Northern Pole. Although he is aware of the danger he is undertaking, for the sake of this voyage, he even neglects his life and does not consider the fact that how very unfortunately this expedition might end up because, for him, “[o]ne man’s life or death were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge” ( ibid. 23). When he embarks on the ship, he is seized by a ‘trembling sensation, half pleasurable and half fearful’ (ibid. 18). Such dialogues, from the very beginning of the novel, provides a basis for the future misfortunes caused by the uncontrolled curiosity and ambition for acquiring knowledge and instantly presents a picture of the incarnated version of misery. Victor justifies his means and idealizes himself by contrasting his work with that of greatest figures in the history by saying that “Greece had not been enslaved Caesar would have spared his country; America would have been discovered more gradually; and the empires of Mexico and Peru had not been destroyed” (ibid. 44). It is quite obvious that his egotistical ambition in the pursuit of knowledge supposedly positions him as the superior subject.

Though Victor seems to be a man of reason, a scientist, a doctor, there are numerous instances in the novel in which he complains about his sensibilities and prefers their absence from the nature of humanness. These moments provide proof for his uncertainty towards his justification of scientific ends:

Alas! Why does man boast of sensibilities superior to those apparent in the brute; it only renders them more necessary beings. If our impulses were confine to hunger, thirst, desire, we might be nearly free; but now we are moved by every wind that blows, and a chance word or scene that that word may convey to us. (76)

This ambivalence suggests the blurring of the hierarchical boundaries between reason and emotions that are inherent in the essence of humanness and the fusion of the categories that are supposedly separate.

It is a well-known fact that Frankenstein's egocentric thirst for knowledge leads to his miserable end and four people's death; however, it is noteworthy to note that he does not go through an anagnorisis in Aristotelian terms; that is the recognition of his faults. After all devastation, at the end of the day, when Walton's ship is truck in the ice and he asks his crew whether they want to return their homes or continue their voyage in spite of the fact that they might die for the sake of the mission, Frankenstein expresses his ambitious opinions concerning the significance of this glorious expedition by stating with great enthusiasm that

What do you mean? What do you demand of your captain? Are you then so easily turned from your design? Did you not call this a glorious expedition? And wherefore was it glorious? Not because the way was smooth and quiet as a southern sea, but because it was full of dangers and terror; because at every new incident your fortitude was to be called forth and your courage exhibited; because danger and death surrounded it, and these you were to brave and overcome. [...] Ye need not come thus far, dragged your captain to the shame of a defeat, merely to prove yourselves cowards. Oh! Be men, or be more than men. Be steady to your purposes and firm as rock. This ice is not made of such stuff as your hearts may be. [...] Do not return to your families with the stigma of disgrace marked on your brows. Return as heroes who have fought and conquered, and who know not what it is to turn their backs on foe. (163-4)

This quotation suggests Frankenstein's obsessive ambition by virtue of science even though it means the death of tens of people including his new friend Walton and himself. Hence, his insistency directs attention towards his lack of reasonable



consideration of scientific ends. In that vein, he utters that he “would rather die than return shamefully-[his] purpose unfulfilled” (164). Therefore, his reason becomes almost meaningless in that sense. Furthermore, he justifies this act by stating that because his hopes were sunk, he tries to encourage him to succeed in his aims of accomplishing the expedition which demonstrates an uncontrolled ambition towards science. In this way, Shelley points to the unreliability of the rigidity of the Western scientific knowledge.

### **3.2. Creator vs. Creature**

As Catherine Waldby observes in *Prefiguring Cyberculture* (2002), “Frankenstein belongs to a long lineage of mythic creation stories – Pygmalion, Prometheus, der Golem – in which a human creator usurps the power of the divine and imbues a creature with life” (30). Shelley’s association with the problematic relationship between creator and the creature can be overtly observed in the subtitle of the book; *the Modern Prometheus*. Remembering the Greek mythology, the Titan Prometheus, by stealing the fire from divinities and granting it to the humankind, is associated with culture, intelligence and science in different sources. The equalization of Frankenstein and Prometheus is quite essential for the posthumanist analysis of the novel since Prometheus can be also considered as the embodiment of transgression. Therefore, his situation can be applied to Frankenstein’s case.

Two parallel lines of crossing the borders and playing God give significant clues about the novel’s emphasis on the disobedience to limits set by authoritative figures. Whereas Prometheus does not obey the rules of Gods, Frankenstein refuses to obey the laws of nature and attempts to involve in the act of procreation. However, his neglect is two-folded. Firstly, in the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Christian society, Shelley portrays a figure who transgresses the boundaries of human as a creation of God and, in fact, takes the role of God. Secondly, considering the fact that human reproduction is attributed to female human beings, therefore, Frankenstein steals the natural act of procreation from woman.

In the first page of the book, Shelley’s epigraph from John Milton’s remarkable epic poem *Paradise Lost*: “Did I request thee, Maker, from my clay/ To mould Me man?”

Did I solicit thee/ From darkness to promote me?" (11). These lines, concordant with the myth of Prometheus, lays the ground for the discussion based on the link between the 'Maker' and the creature. Milton's lines elucidate Adam's confrontation with God, which forms a parallel regarding the bond between Victor Frankenstein and the monster. Shelley's direct reference to Milton sheds light upon the very basic question of humanity that why God created man. The monster also relates his position to that of Adam; however, he assumes that his condition is more bitter than Adam's because of the fact that Adam "had come forth from the hands of God a perfect creature. He was happy and prosperous, guarded by the especial care of his Creator. He was allowed to converse with, and acquire knowledge from, beings of a superior nature" (100). Thus, he cannot even compare himself to the position of Adam, rather he finds "Satan as the fitter emblem of [his] condition" (100). When he confronts Frankenstein after following him for a long while, he reprimands him saying that

Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance. Satan had his companions, fellow-devils, to admire and encourage him; but I am solitary and abhorred. (100)

His comparison of himself to Adam can be read as a solid example of the relationship between god and his creatures; however, his situation is even worse than Adam since he resembles himself to Satan. This indicates a double otherization of the monster because if Adam constitutes the other of God, then Satan forms an example of the other against the position of God.

In the case of the novel, it is relatable to the monster's reproaches towards Frankenstein, and at the same time, Frankenstein's curiosity directed towards "the secrets of heaven and the earth" (62), "the elixir of life" (65), and his desire to "explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation" (70) so that he "can pioneer a new way" (70) and "discovering the cause of generation of life" (80). Therefore, the novel provides two subject positions that are characterized by their yearning for the benevolence and sympathy of the creator: one is the monster and the other is Frankenstein. From this vantage point, it can be safely argued that Frankenstein, as being simultaneously the creator of a monster and the creation of

God, destabilizes the borders of the two subject positions. While occupying the weaker leg of the dichotomy of God and his creatures; Frankenstein is positioned in the stronger leg when he is “infusing life into an inanimate body (86). This problematization lays bare the constructed nature of categories of identity and, thence, it offers a possible way of escaping the binarism between the creator and the creature.

After years of devotion and engagement in the scientific and medical studies directed towards the re-animation of a lifeless matter, the moment of creation marks a vital aspect in Frankenstein’s apprehension of his creature.

I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and the breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room, and continued a long time traversing my bedchamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep (45).

When he completes the operation of gathering together the organs collected from dead bodies of people and the creature opens his eyes, he escapes the laboratory and takes “refuge” (46) as if it was not something that he put his ardent efforts for years and years. He utters that although his organs were selected with diligence, when they form a unity in the embodiment of the monster, it only makes it more horrible (45). These words are remarkable in that they reveal the relationship between the creator and the creature from the lenses of the creator.

In the proceeding chapters of the novel, the reader is presented with the moment of creation from the point of view of the monster. In the opening paragraphs concerning his rising at the laboratory, the monster puts strong emphasis on the material aspects of its coming to life. He refers to the “multiplicity of sensations” including the sensitiveness of his eyes towards light, excessive feeling of hunger and thirst, and coldness (79). In fact, this strong emphasis on the bodily needs of the monster in his very moments of coming to life highlights the fundamental part of our existence, our embodiment and advocates the underlying superiority of physical reality of human beings, which is also a debatable subject concerning the mind vs. body dichotomy. However, the very next thing he does after his adaptation to the light, cold and other natural conditions is sitting down and crying out of loneliness. This demonstrates how

badly he needed the presence of his creator from the very moment of coming to life. The essential connection between the creature and his creator and his desolation underlines the symbiotic relationship between the two.

### **3.3. The Human vs. Monster**

Under this subtitle, the monster, that is positioned against the ideal Enlightenment human, will refer to the posthuman subject in terms of its being othered and put in the inferior place. Throughout the novel, the creature is recursively addressed as “devil”, “daemon”, “wretch” and a range of words for humiliation. According to Victor, his ugliness is so much so that even Dante would not have imagined such wretchedness (46). In fact, it is through his horrifying complexion and gargantuan stature that the novel receives its gothic feature. He is degraded in every circumstance that Frankenstein involves in. After Frankenstein’s abandonment of the creature, monster confronts him months later when he was most defenceless and begins to tell his sorrowful story in the hope of benevolence and mercy.

Have I not suffered enough that you seek to increase my misery? Life, although it may be an accumulation of anguish, is dear to me, and I will defend it. Remember, thou hast made me more powerful than thyself; my height is superior to thine; my joints more supple. But I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to thee USE IT. I am thy creature, and I will be even mild and docile to my natural lord and king, if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me. Oh Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other, and tremble upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection, is most due. Remember that I am thy creature; I ought to be thy Adam; but I am rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed. Everywhere I see bliss, from which I alone am irrevocably excluded. I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall be virtuous. (77-78)

He claims rightfully from his creator to take care of and feel sympathy, instead of hatred for him.

Not only does Frankenstein abhors him, but any human being who sees his ‘ugly’ face and his overproportioned body treats him as if he was a supernatural creature of which any contact should be avoided. Whereas the villagers, whom he secretly watches day and night and gathers information about the daily activities of humankind, are

addressed as his “protectors” by the monster, the villagers do not treat him even close to the same way. The monster learns the ways of humans from these villagers because he spends most of his time watching and enjoying their communication towards each other. Day by day, he builds a one-sided relationship in his imagination as a result of which he feels sympathy and affection for each of them and helplessly wishes their companionship. He figures out the means of communication, and learns their language which he calls the ‘god-like science’ and writing (87). He appreciates the sound of the guitar which the elder member of the house plays. Moreover, he distinguishes the music from the sound of nightingales (84). Therefore, it can be uttered that the monster acquires human attributions by the deliberate or undeliberate exposure to the society and it can be considered as the transgression of the boundaries on the side of the monster.

The monster’s acculturation includes the study of a number of books, namely Volney’s, *Ruins of Empires*, *Paradise Lost* by John Milton, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Goethe, Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives*. While listening to the conversation between his neighbor Felix and Felix’s guest Safie, he asserts that their discussion about *Ruins of Empires* provided him with “an insight into the manners, governments, and religions of different nations of the earth”. With the help of these books, he develops a greater understanding of the world and himself. He questions his existence on both microcosmic and macrocosmic level.

Concerning the *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, the monster grasps a chance to deepen his feelings by contrasting his position to Werter. However, his comparison can be considered as twofold. Because, though he has similar feelings with Werter and understands his pain and his reflections on suicide, he cannot completely relate to Werter since he is not a human being and does not have any social connection with the rest of the society. The monster’s ambivalent feelings and questionings of his existence lay the ground for the blurring of the human vs. nonhuman binarism and best elucidated in the following quotation:

The words induced me to turn towards myself. I learned that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow creatures were high and unstained descent united with riches. A man might be respected with only one of these

advantages; but, without either, he was considerate, except in very rare instances, as a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profits of the chosen few! And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant; but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and hateful; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they, could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around, I saw and heard none like me. So, was I a monster, a stain on the earth, from which all men fled, and whom all men disowned? (167)

These existential reflections give a great deal of details as to his understanding of himself and his place in the face of the humankind and affirms his solicitude in the universe. Further, the more he develops intellectually, the more he becomes aware of the loneliness that his creator caused. Therefore, his hatred towards Frankenstein is ignited and he finalizes his discussion of the books by saying that “[s]orrow only increased with knowledge” (93). It becomes visible that he has a feeling that he is “unseen and unknown” (94). In fact, this process of acculturation plays a significant role in the self-development of the monster in that he takes advantage of the situation so as to compare himself to the inhabitants of the outer world and grow a greater sense of desolation caused by his creator.

Because he was attacked by other neighbours before, which he criticizes as “the barbarity of man”, the monster is afraid to introduce himself to the villagers (83). However, he delicately plans a visit to his protectors’ place in order not to experience a similar reaction to his earlier attempts. Knowing that the elder member of the house is blind and thenceforth, he is unable to judge the monster according to his appearance, he waits until the children leaves home and the old man is left alone. The monster builds up his courage and pays a visit to their place. At first, the old man welcomes him very kindly, offers food and communicates with him in a gentle way; however, what the monster asks for is far beyond that. The moment he is about to reveal the fact that he is not a human being born of woman, the children unexpectedly come home and they start screaming helplessly and escape from him in an offensive manner. Even the old man hits him with a stick.

It is important to note that the monster is well aware of the fact that if the monster wanted to hurt the villagers or his ‘protectors’, he could have easily done that since

he is physically much superior compared to a normal human being. However, he does not even attempt to respond to their disrespectful manners. As he puts his sorrow into words: “My heart sunk with me as bitter sickness, and I refrained. I saw him on the point of repeating his blow, when, overcome by pain and anguish, I quitted the cottage and in the general tumult escaped unperceived to my hovel” (104). This also marks the moment of his declaration of an “everlasting war against the species, and more than all, against him who had form” the creature (105). After this incident, the cottagers move their house and seeing that, the monster burns down their house out of anger and hatred for his ‘protectors’.

One other similar scene in which a little girl falls into the water and the monster rescues her provides a good example of how the monster needs and seeks acknowledgement from the society and how the rejection from the human world results in his isolation. In fact, the scene has become a very popular scene concerning the movie adaptations of the novel. After his heart was broken by the cruel treatment of the cottagers, he sees a little girl who falls into the water. The monster rushes towards her and saves her from dying. However, seeing that a gargantuan figure with his daughter, the father of the little girl runs toward her and takes her from the hands of the monster. Moreover, the father attempts to shoot him. Considering that the monster only wanted to help her, the father, instead of thanking the creature for saving his daughter, he tries to kill him. These eventually leads his isolation from the society.

Another instant where the human vs. monster dichotomy is destructed can be seen in the parallel binary between master and the slave. After the monster begs Victor to create a female monster as a companion for his solitude, Victor comes to terms with the monster and agrees to create her. However, after a second thought, Victor breaks his promise and destroys the female creature. The monster forces him to do so by saying that “you are my creator but I am your master; - obey!” (227) This reveals the subversion of the binary opposition between the master, Victor, and the slave, the monster and provides a proof of the monster’s transgression of the boundary that is earlier set by Frankenstein. Frankenstein, therefore, relegates himself to the subject position of the slave, in doing so, they exchange the hierarchical subject positions formulated from the beginning of the novel.

### **3.4. Subversion of Gender Binarism in Frankenstein**

It is viewed as quite extraordinary by numerous scholars that in her novel, Mary Shelley, the daughter of a feminist writer and philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft, create a world in which the female characters occupy a considerably minor place whereas male characters dominate the narration and lead the major events that take place in the course of the novel. However, it seems that it is not because Mary Shelley complies with the eighteenth and nineteenth century social norms which presuppose the subordination of women. As James. P. Davis notes in his article “Frankenstein and the Subversion of the Masculine Voice”, it is more likely that her turning down the female voice stems from the fact that portraying a world of minimum female presence would be a more striking criticism of the Enlightenment patriarchal discourse (Davis 307). The submissive female characters strategically highlight the scenario in which the dominant male-centred ideology insists on its misogynist approach towards women. The gender inequality in the novel, therefore, should not be viewed as a medium to present the female inferiority; but an alternative trajectory to demonstrate the idea of a world where women appeal to their preassigned jobs and even leave the role of giving birth to man and procreation is done in the laboratory by the hands of male scientists. This chapter sets out to present proofs of subversion of the hierarchical relationship of gender which presupposes the superiority of man.

### **3.5. Rewriting the Myths**

From a broader perspective, Shelley’s conceptual framework is inextricably interwoven with a modern myth of creation, and therefore the novel aptly merges feminist theory with science fiction in a subversive fashion. Shelley builds the story of the monster and its creator in such a way that she, in a sense, elucidates the feminist agenda of rewriting the myths years before feminist movement. The aims of feminist theory and, especially cyber feminist theory, in reformulating the phallogocentric discourse was investigated in detail in the Chapter 2. Therefore, this subtitle will engage with an implementation of the cyber feminist theory into the novel and, by exemplifying the possible escape routes in which numerous binary oppositions that are based on a nineteenth century European genderized mindset will be attempted to



be subverted. In doing so, particular attention will be paid to Shelley's boundary crossing figure; the monster.

Rewriting the patriarchal myths and narrations for the sake of feminist purposes has been a common strategical pathway for a wide range of authors for decades. This theoretical strategy has been interiorized and applied on various texts by cyber feminists as well. Though Mary Shelley's novel have been among the most cited feminist narrations, there is no reason not to take a step further and analyze it from a cyborgian feminist theoretical context. As Anne K. Mellor argues in her chapter "Usurping the Female" in one of the seminal books about *Frankenstein*, called *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*, by femininizing the nature, Victor,

participated in a gendered construction of the universe whose negative ramifications are everywhere apparent in the novel. The uninhibited scientific penetration and technological exploitation of female nature is only one dimension of a patriarchal encoding of the female as passive and possessable, the willing receptacle of male desire. The destruction of the female implicit in Frankenstein's usurpation of the natural mode of human reproduction symbolically erupts in his nightmare following the animation of his creature [...] (115).

Moreover, it is a fact that, from the very beginning of Mary Shelley's introduction, the foundation of the novel is laid upon the philosophy of nature or natural sciences. Notwithstanding, by attributing a female identity to nature, Victor engages in yet another binarism in which nature is considered as the inferior other of the human or the society. As Mellor furthers her argumentation, his attempts of learning "the secrets of the heavens and earth" results in the usurpation of the nature which metaphorically comes to mean the usurpation of the female. Nonetheless, from a greater perspective, after giving life to the monster in an unnatural way, and then monster's taking revenge from Victor and consequently causing him to lose his beloved friends, family and at the end, his life provide proof for the destabilization of the binary opposition between nature and culture. From that vantage, it is not the human that is superior to the nature, but by taking its revenge and leading him to a miserable final position, nature is elevated to a privileged position in the long-established hierarchical relationship. The monster here, thus, represents the marginalized other of the man, that is nature. In

doing so, Shelley, in a subversive mode, provides the reader with a feminist problematization of the nature which is incarnated in the character of the monster.

Against the three dominant male characters, Shelley opposes four seemingly major but minor female characters; that are Margaret, Elizabeth, Caroline and Justine, all of whom are excluded from the main focus of the novel. Shelley's marginalization of the woman characters through passive, submissive portrayal begins with the character of Margaret. At a first glance, it quite striking that the reader is informed only of the presence of Margaret by the letters of Robert Walton writes. Margaret is not involved in any action throughout the novel, she is only existent as the addressee of the letters, through which the main framework of the novel is constituted and the stories of the three male characters are unfolded. Ironically enough, the reader is not provided with her correspondent letters either. Therefore, the silence of the character, in fact, signals a very important message. Her absent presence gives a metaphorical layer to the novel concerning the status quo of the women in the nineteenth century Western Christian society. From this vantage point, Shelley assigns a superior ontological position to Margaret because, in fact, Margaret is the one female character without whose absent presence the letters would be meaningless and Robert's ontological being would be quite shattered.

Secondly, Elizabeth Lavenza appears as a passive and dominated character as well. She is an orphaned child adopted by Frankenstein's father and she becomes "more than sister" to Frankenstein (29). Before she first comes to the Frankensteins' house, Victor's mother presents Elizabeth by saying that "I have a pretty present for my Victor" and the day she comes little Elizabeth is mentioned as "the promised gift" and "till death she was to be [his] only" (29). The commodification of Elizabeth is acknowledged from the beginning of the novel.

It is also quite important to note that though Victor, when mentioning Elizabeth, refers to her as "more than sister", they address each other as cousins. What is more complicated is the fact that they get married at the end of the novel at the request of Alphonse Frankenstein, Victor's father. However; ironically enough, this is not a forced marriage because they both reveal their love for each other through the end of

the novel. As Elizabeth is portrayed as a submissive figure who complies with the norms of the patriarchal society, it is quite obvious that it is Victor's will that determines the direction of their relationship. Therefore, this example forms a solid proof for his incestuous desire towards his "more than sister" bride, Elizabeth.

It is worthwhile to consider the memorable scene where the monster threatens Frankenstein that he "shall be with [Victor] on [his] wedding night]" (29) from a feminist point of view. Before that the monster follows Frankenstein for days hoping that Frankenstein will keep his promise and create a female monster in order not to leave the monster alone and do his duty as a creator. Nevertheless, fearing that if he generates a female monster, out of their union, the population of the monster race would increase and humankind would be under the threat of their barbarity. With this thought in his mind, he destroys the female creature that he attempted to create. On seeing that, the monster faces Frankenstein and vows to take revenge from him by saying that "I go, but remember; I shall be with you on your wedding night!". This impressive statement is analyzed by Mladen Dolar (11). He considers that strangling Frankenstein's bride, therefore taking the place of the bride, the monster transgresses the border defined for him. As he does not leave Frankenstein alone in his wedding night, he creates himself a position of a female other. The monster causes great destruction on Victor's behalf. This spectacular example proves the monster's transgression of the boundaries and his refusal of the position of the submissive other.

Concerning the abovementioned scene, Mellor links Victor's destruction of the female creature to Victor's fear of the "independent female will" which, once more, relegates Victor's position to an inferior other (ibid. 119). The new female creature might claim her right to freedom and disobey Frankenstein as the male monster did. Underlining that "he is afraid of her reproductive powers, her capacity to generate an entire race of similar creatures", therefore, she concludes, "[w]hat Victor Frankenstein truly fears is female sexuality" (ibid. 120). The possibility of a female creature, in this way, poses a threat to the tyranny of the male dominancy. Frankenstein's anxiety suggests that women's claim of identity is feared so much so that it should be destroyed before its construction. The novel's engagement with female subjectivity brings awareness as to the potential power of the female sexuality. Hence, Shelley presents yet another

image of the absent presence of a female character who is promised to be brought to life, nonetheless, destroyed by the hands of a white Western male scientist before it is generated in order to serve greater ends for the humankind. From a feminist vantage point, this can be read as Shelley's criticism of the suppression of the female sexuality and her leading a more liberatory path to a future in which the articulation of female desire is not attempted to be destructed.

The moment of the murder of the female creature provides a fertile ground for the analysis of the female body from Frankenstein's eyes, and also symbolically from the white male Western scientist's view point. Soon after Frankenstein contemplates on the idea of creating a female companion to the monster and therefore causing the future existence of a potential race of monsters, he relinquishes the idea of generating a female creature. He "thought with a sensation of madness on [his] promise of creating another like to him, and trembling with passion, tore to pieces the thing on which [he] was engaged" (127). The day after his destruction, he builds up his courage and enters his laboratory and "[t]he remains of the creature, whom [he] had destroyed, lay scattered on the floor, and [he] almost felt as if [he] had mangled the living flesh of a human being" (130). Regarding that, Mellor furthers her argument highlighting the tone of speech he uses. For her, this use of language is quite suggestive of some kind of a forced sexual intercourse. She argues that "Victor Frankenstein violently reasserts a male control over the female body, penetrating and mutilating the female creature at his feet in an image which suggests a violent rape" (ibid. 120). Her assertion that "Frankenstein's "passion" is here revealed as a fusion of fear, lust, and, hostility, a desire to control and even destroy female sexuality" affirms the female monster's relegation to an inferior submissive subject position. (ibid. 120).

By bestowing the capacity of artificial reproduction to a man, Shelley also problematizes a utopic scenario in which the female act of procreation is co-opted and male individuals have the ability to generate a new form of life. This topic requires attention because manufacturing a living organism is a female characteristic in nature. Victor's attempt of crossing this boundary can be read as abuse of nature. However, though he succeeds in giving life to a composition of organs collected from dead bodies by electricity, his creation results in failure which also signifies his failure in

attempting to cross the boundary. Since nature has been characterized as feminine by him earlier in the novel, this example provides proof for his inability to suppress his “inferior other”, that is nature.

The topics which have been discussed and analyzed above exemplifies how Mary Shelley, in her feminist Gothic science fiction novel *Frankenstein*, which is categorized under the subgenre of feminist cyberpunk in this thesis, lays bare the possibilities of escaping the patriarchal binarism between woman and man by foregrounding the absurdity of unnatural male reproduction and its horrible aftermaths, employing exaggeratedly absent present female characters who are silenced and suppressed, femininizing the nature as if it were there to be usurped and violated and demonstrating the failure of such an action. Shelley’s writing, therefore, illustrates the status quo of the nineteenth century women through whom the Western white male defines himself a misogynist subject position in accordance with the tenets of modernity.

## CHAPTER 4

### *BODY OF GLASS*

Marge Piercy's 1991 cyberpunk novel *Body of Glass* facilitates the reader with a contemporary representation of the entire topics previously discussed in this thesis. It can be identified as contemporary because, written after the World War II, the novel takes its source from a spectrum of contemporary ideas ranging from the deconstructivist critique of humanism to the posthuman project, from feminist cyberpunk features to a feminist reading of the myths of creation. Also, it follows a nonlinear trajectory from Frankenstein's monster to Haraway's cyborg and back to Frankenstein's monster. Parallel to the Shelley's work, Piercy's novel situates the otherized posthuman cyborg named Yod in a central position around which the main action revolves. Her approach towards the cyborg raises similar questions to that of Shelley's, e.g. the limits of scientific knowledge, the essence of being human, the boundary between human and its posthuman other, artificiality of gender categorizations. While investigating such questions, Piercy cleverly intermeshes cybernetics with biology; she imagines a future in which the means of high technology are inextricably combined with the environment of the humankind and human nature. This chapter aims to argue how the main character, Yod the cyborg, challenges the established boundaries between human and nonhuman, creator and creature and emerges as a posthuman subject and how the novel makes use of the cyborg figure in order to problematize the stereotypical gender categories with particular attention to its nexuses with Shelley's *Frankenstein* within the framework of Donna Haraway's cyber feminist manifesto.

Piercy's work unveils the story of a young psycho-engineer Shira Shipman, who is recently divorced from her husband and lost her son's custody, and leads to her hometown Tikva, a free town under the threat of the enclaves, upon the job offer from Avram, a middle-aged scientist and a very close friend and ex-lover of her grandmother Malkah. Having lived several years in the multi enclave of Yakamura-Sticthen, one of the leading political co-operations of the world, Shira returns to Tikva to educate Yod the cyborg in social terms. This mission leads, first, to their close relationship and then, their romantic relationship. Shira's grandmother Malkah, also a resident of Tikva, works as a scientist to develop Yod's emotional and intellectual programming. Since Shira was brought up by her grandmother, their relationship is represented as that of mother and daughter. Therefore, these two women play crucial roles in the context of the cyborg's development. Like Frankenstein's monster, Yod is designed with special care and technology; but, unlike the monster, he is taken care of by its creator and becomes successful in his transgression of the social boundary, in other words, the Tikva people do not exclude him from the society thanks to Shira's and Malkah's intervention. It can be uttered that there is still a recognizable distance between Yod and his creator Avram. Though Yod considers him as a father, Avram holds an oppressive attitude towards his creation, thus marginalizes him.

#### **4.1. Human vs. Nonhuman**

Together with Malkah, Avram, the Jewish scientist creates Yod out of the need for protection of their free town. Yod is a "secret project of his own" because the future world of Piercy's dystopia is ruled by multi enclaves and Tikva is one of the few free towns which is still independent thanks to its high technology. Multi enclaves seek after their technology and for that reason Yod is of importance for Tikva people. Yod encapsulates the capacity of defending the free town, that's why he can be considered as a very important weapon and a killing machine. For that reason, Avram refers to him as "our security, our protector" (95). Accordingly, remembering "the three laws of robotics" that are introduced by the Russian science fiction writer Isaac Asimov in *I, Robot* (1950), he is programmed to self-destruct before he injures anyone (BG 95). However, they refuse calling him a "robot" that's why they call him with the pronoun "he". Sometimes people find "anthropomorphizing" to call him with a male pronoun;

however, Yod defends himself by saying that he is “anatomically male” which provides an insight of his perception about himself because his utterance comes to mean that he has anatomy similar to humans (96).

After returning to her home town, Shira’s mission is “to educate to how to speak to human, how to behave socially, how to handle his functions” (97). Shira still finds it strange that how a cyborg can be different than an artificial intelligence. Shira’s initial repudiation of the distinction between a cyborg and a robot overtly reflects the humanist prejudice and a shared anxiety towards automatons. For her, cyborgs equal to artificially intelligent machines, that’s why they cannot claim any identity. However, Malkah, though two generations elder from Shira, “consider[s] Yod a person and enjoy[s] his company” (104). This also provides proof for Piercy’s destruction of the taken-for-granted assumptions concerning the difference in the recognition of technology by different generations that an elder member of the house can be more open to adapting to the new products of technology.

Humanization of Yod is not necessarily limited to acquiring social capabilities that humans have, it also includes building a peaceful relationship with the nonhuman surroundings of the human. In fact, nature is one of Piercy’s major concerns. She reiterates the possible severity of the future ecological condition throughout the novel e.g. the depiction of a world in which “the sky is not blue because of the greenhouse effect” (122). With frequent references to the dystopic condition of the world in the year 2059, she stresses the message that unless due precautions are taken, environmental catastrophe will be inevitable. In order to recuperate the human/nature relationship, Piercy presents various instances in which nature is first defamiliarized to the reader and then refamiliarized to Yod. Starting from the very second day of Yod’s education, when Shira objects to teach Yod “metaphorical thinking, the ability to create analogies”, Shira discovers that Yod has never been out of the laboratory (118). Since, in order to make analogies, he requires the knowledge of the outer world, Shira takes Yod outside and introduces the environment. When she starts off teaching metaphorical thinking through a poem by the Scottish poet Robert Burns and gives a reference to roses, Shira understands that Yod has only the dictionary knowledge of the word rose. Nonetheless, when Shira shows her favorite rosebush, Yod



immediately seizes the sixty-years- old rose and uproots it because it was “armed” by which he refers to thorns of the rose (122). He sees the world from a completely stranger eyes, therefore his perception is not that of a human. He learns fast; however, there are enormous number of things that he has to learn. At the end of this scene, he learns how to use a metaphor which is, for Shira, the prerequisite of sounding like a human. Thus, thanks to Shira’s help, he step by step acculturates himself with the knowledge of the outer world and takes a step forward in becoming a more human-like cyborg.

Together with the prerequisite of metaphors, particular attention is paid to literature concerning Yod’s acculturation process. Yod reads novels in his spare time in order to “grasp [his] own inner life” (159). He reads Frankenstein as well. As the ex-lover of Shira and son of Avram Stein, Gadi gets jealous of his father’s creation and becomes irritated from the presence of Yod and shouts out: “[w]ell, call me Son of Frankenstein!” (199). Not knowing what he means by this, Yod questions who Frankenstein is. As a respond, Gadi says that “[h]e built a monster [...] Like my father has” (199). In the proceeding chapter, Yod downloads the novel and reads it. After that, it is revealed that Gadi’s reference to the monster leads Yod to consider himself as an “unnatural monster” (202). Nevertheless, Shira approaches the situation from a subversive point of view by highlighting the dehumanization of humans in contrast to his mechanization by uttering that

Yod, we’re all unnatural now. I have retinal implants. I have a plug set into my skull to interface with a computer. I read time by a corneal implant. Malkah has a subcutaneous unit that monitors and corrects blood pressure, and half her teeth are regrown. Her eyes have been rebuilt twice. Avram has an artificial heart and Gadi a kidney. [...] I couldn’t begin to survive without my personal base: I wouldn’t know who I was. We couldn’t go unaided into what we haven’t yet destroyed of ‘nature’. Without a wrap, without sec skins and filters, we’d perish. We’re all cyborgs, Yod. You’re just a purer form of what we’re all tending toward (203).

One of the major boundary crossing features of the cyborg can be viewed as his romantic relationship with a human being which provides proof of his destabilization of what we understand from human or machine. As a nonhuman entity, he falls in love with Shira and he reveals it to her when he is unable to endure Gadi’s (Shira’s first

love) attention after returning to Tikva. He makes a comparison with Gadi and himself by stating that “I promise. I am stronger than Gadi, more intelligent, more able in every way. I want to please you far more than he ever could” (176). It is quite revolutionary that a self-conscious cyborg contrasts himself to a human being. It is also important to note that his self-confidence to regard Gadi as his rival in winning Shira’s love and respect helps Piercy situate the cyborg in the category of humankind.

The romantic relationship between Shira and Yod can be regarded as the disappearance of the humanist anxieties and prejudices towards machines and can be read as Marge Piercy’s attempt to overcome the boundaries between the posthuman and the human. As their relationship advances, they even get involved in a sexual intercourse through which Piercy acknowledges the sexuality of the cyborg. The reflections of their romantic exchange on Yod is expressed in the following quotation: “Before you, the strongest feeling I knew was fear. Fear that Avram would destroy me too. But this desire to be with you is stronger than fear. Sometimes I think of you, and my body reacts as if you were with me” (249). The fact that Yod prioritizes the feeling of desire for a human over fear from human, once more, exemplifies the transgressive characteristic of Piercy’s characters. At last, Shira settles upon the idea of Yod’s embodiment as the conjunction of machine and organism by saying that “Yod is somewhere in between us” (251). The ambiguity created by Yod’s in-betweenness also reflects the anxiety of the humans towards their technology whether it is robot, humanoid, or cyborg. The text repeatedly offers situations that invite comments concerning the affirmative interconnection between the human and posthuman. Though Malkah and Shira have internalized the fact that such a romantic affair between human and machine is not nonsensical, there are other characters that do not approve of such kind of a relationship. Gadi was, as mentioned above, was against the union of a human and a cyborg. Likewise, Shira’s mother, Riva, while discussing about Shira’s affair, refers to the news as “speaking of a relationship with a dildo” (265). Her mother’s comments irritate Shira because “they all talked around and about and over Yod as if he were a piece of furniture” (267). Here, Piercy underlines the objectification of Yod and reflects this instance in such a way that there is a sense of empathy created towards Yod.

Regardless of Gadi's and Riva's negative attitudes towards Yod, Shira treats Yod as if she were responsible for their neglect. That is why she tries hard to compensate their approach in every possible way. This situation, in effect, brings Shira and Yod closer in that they share their weaknesses with each other. For example, Yod internalizes the discrimination aimed at him by uttering

Does it feel almost as if I were human? Am I imitating behavior I can never match? Is Avram right that the lab is more suited to me than this place with all the facilities humans require? I don't sleep, can extract energy from almost anything. Am I pretending at something I'll always fail? (322)

Nonetheless, Shira does not share the same opinion with them. In contrast, she encourages him to fit into the society in which they live. While Yod is trying to make up for his artificiality, Shira, in order to cease his feeling of failure, reflects her humanness as something undesirable by a fascinating and subversive speech:

If I wanted a human mate, Yod, the town is full of men. I'm with you because I want to be with you. Some things work between us and others don't – for what couple isn't that the way? But does it ever bother you I'm so messy and biological, that I'm an animal? I bleed, I sweat, I get tired. Sometimes I feel embarrassed before you since you're so much neater. Don't I seem rather gross to you, always putting stuff in or letting it out? (324)

Here, Shira subverts the binary opposition between human and nonhuman by positioning Yod to a superior level in which there is a chance that Yod may feel irritated of the "animality" of her humanness. Furthermore, Shira's emphasis on her animality to prove Yod's humanization helps to blur yet another boundary that is the problematic distinction between humans and animals.

Piercy ostensibly destabilizes the borders of humanness by picturing a posthuman figure who is conscious of his existence. When Yod's opinion about the concept of self-awareness is questioned, he affirmatively utters in parallel with Haraway's cyborg figure that "I think, I plan, I feel, I react [...] I feel the desire for companionship" (126). He even deconstructs the presupposition about the fact that reproduction is an essential part of human nature by a rhetorical question: "[I]f I can't reproduce, neither can many humans. Doesn't infertility afflict half your population?"

(126). No matter how conscious Yod is, the feeling when she hugs him is still very much “bizarre” (127). Eventually, her confusion leaves its place to normalization of the situation and she gets used to his human-like reactions though a little piece of suspicion stays because “they might be simulacra of human emotions” (131). She even contends that she has a better communication with Yod compared to her ex-husband, Josh, which endorses the very subversion of the binarism between human and nonhuman (139).

#### **4.2. The Creator vs. the Creature**

Throughout the novel, the tense relationship between Avram and Yod is not reflected on the foreground since Shira and Malkah has been involved in Yod’s later programming more than Avram. However, Yod’s anxiety about Avram has been present as a minor concern in the course of events. Most of the time the tension rises because of Yod’s fear that Avram might one day can dismantle him. Yod’s fear is provoked because when his lineage is considered, his predecessors, which were also created by Avram, were destroyed by Avram because “they didn’t measure up to” his ideas (126). As his name also reveals, Yod (the tenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet) is Avram Stein’s tenth attempt of creating a human-like being. The proof that nine other conscious creatures were disposed by his creator causes Yod to distance himself from Avram. Yod speaks about his fear stating that

If your mother had killed eight siblings of yours before your birth because they didn’t measure up to her ideas of what she wanted, wouldn’t you be alarmed? You fear he will destroy you also? I’d be foolish If that fear didn’t occur to me. That’s why I address him as Father. (126)

As it can be inferred, Yod maintains a father-son relationship just to prevent his potential death by the hands of Avram; therefore, it is obvious from Yod’s approach that Avram is merely a creator for him, which means he has no love or affection for his creator unlike the monster in Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. The creature’s distance for the Western male scientist also suggests a rereading of the creation story. What Piercy underlines here is, in parallel to Haraway’s figuration, that Yod also shows no respect

for his origins; he is only afraid of Avram because he does not want to be destroyed by his creator.

From Avram's vantage, the situation is not different; Yod is only another weapon for protecting the town of Tikva from the attacks of multi corporations just like nine other robots or humanoids that he created to serve him. Therefore, Avram does not have any kind of emotional bond for Yod; he is only a killing machine, a tool, a means for the end of maintaining their independence. To dismantle him or to send him to a war at the cost of his death does not make much difference because he can design the same machine if he wishes. Thus, it can be suggested that there is a mutual pragmatic relationship between Yod and Avram.

On the other hand, Malkah's intervention to Yod's programming as a second creator contrasts to Avram's machine-like coldness towards Yod. Throughout the novel, it is frequently stressed that Yod feels much closer to Malkah than Avram because Malkah "gave him a gentler side, starting with emphasizing his love for knowledge and extending it to the emotional and personal knowledge, a need for connections" (192). Malkah's teaching is based on the creation story of the golem. In order to better educate Yod, Malkah tells the story of Rabbi Judah Leow, who is supposedly her grandfather, and Joseph, a golem made from clay. The action of the subplot takes place in Prague in the year 1600. Joseph is created by the hands of Rabbi in order to protect the Jewish town from invasions just like Yod. Nonetheless, after fulfilling his mission, the golem is unmade by his creator without making any explanation. Upon hearing the story of golem, Yod compares himself to him; Joseph's miserable ending arouses a feeling of fear in Yod since there is no reason for Avram not to destroy him. The parallelism between the conditions of golem and Yod, in effect, feeds the urge of revenge on Yod's side and prepares the ground for the final scene of the novel where the balance between the two is irreversibly destabilized by Yod's plan.

The ending of the novel makes a critical contribution for the re-evaluation of the relationship between the creator and the creature portrayed in *Frankenstein*. When multi corporations ceaselessly attack Tikva and cause the death of Shira's mother Riva, Avram decides to send Yod to the war against the multi enclaves to protect the

town. For Avram, Yod was designed as a soldier and his absence would not make any difference because of the fact that Avram keeps necessary documents for creating another cyborg and he can create another when he wishes to do so. On Yod's side, however, the situation is different; both Shira and Yod cannot accept the fact that he is obliged to fight in the war because Yod is still Avram's property. Yod is recognized as a member in the family, even in the society. After Avram's decision to send him to the war, Yod applies for the acquisition of citizenship to the town council which can also be read as challenging the borders of his nonhumanness. Before the procedure is finalized, Avram, being the ultimate decision-maker, sends him to the war. As Lewitz writes in *Pretend We're Dead*, "[the novel] features a man whose desire for love and domesticity supersedes his desire for warfare, and whose programming tragically supersedes all desire" (Lewitz 132). No matter how much Yod desires to be a part of the community, he has to cooperate with Avram and he agrees enforcedly. However, before leaving the town, he fills Avram's laboratory with explosives. By this way, he makes it impossible to design another Yod. He leaves a note for Shira saying that

I have died and taken with me Avram, my creator, and his lab, all the records of his experiment. I want there to be no more weapons like me. A weapon should not have the capacity to suffer for what it does, to regret, to feel guilt. A weapon should not form strong attachments. I die knowing I destroy the capacity to replicate me. I don't understand why anyone would want to be a soldier, a weapon, but at least people sometimes have a choice to obey or to refuse. I had none. (562)

Yod's revenge on Avram, in effect, destabilizes the actor of decision making. It is a fact that Avram has shaped Yod's destiny as God shapes that of his subjects; however, in the end, it was Yod who decided on Avram's life. Hence, it can be claimed that the power of making decisions on Avram's life provides proof for his ontological superiority.

#### **4.3. Rewriting the Myth of *Frankenstein***

Similar to Shelley's novel, Piercy also frames her narrative with another narrative about the creation of the golem. It is quite relatable that both creation stories, the one in 1600 and the other in twenty-first century, in 2059, are about small Jewish towns that are in danger of attacks from outside. The Jewish culture is inextricably

interwoven in every detail of the novel. Marge Piercy, being a Jewish herself, tells the story of a Jewish woman and her Jewish family and Yod's acculturation is, therefore, influenced immensely by the Jewish culture. At first sight, it might be related to ethnic and religious identity of the novelist; however, it can be suggested that such notion of Jewishness that is reiterated in terms of its being under constant threat points towards the Jewish identity as "the other" of the Christianity.

Piercy, by underlining Jewishness as a religious minority, calls attention to the marginalization of yet another minor community; that is the nonhumans, preferably the posthumans. Nonetheless, her depiction of Jewishness is not something frowned upon. She glorifies Jewish culture and Jewish people in many cases by presenting a victimized profile in which Jews were blamed for every crime, every murder, and every mistake without any proof, in the end they are attacked and slaughtered in return. Although their sufferings never cease, and they are constantly positioned as the victims throughout the novel, they succeed in challenging the oppressors and in developing their technology and standing up for themselves. It can be suggested that their otherization can be read in parallel to the marginalization of the posthuman characters. Moreover, regardless of their sense of otherness, both Jewish and posthuman characters succeed in their missions that serve greater good for their communities in the end. The golem Joseph, the cyborg Yod, Avram Stein, Malkah, Shira, Rabbi Judah Leow can all be given as examples of such successful accomplishments with regard to their fight against the oppressive figures that attempt to dominate their community.

Similar to Yod's efforts of becoming human, the protagonist of the story of the Jewish ghetto attempts to exceed the limits of its nonhumanness. Compared with the cyborg, it can be safely said that Joseph is an infantile version of Yod. In this sense, Joseph can be arguably resembled to Frankenstein's monster. In parallel with the monster, Joseph has a gargantuan stature which facilitates him with the power to intimidate enemies of the community but his huge body leads his physical exploitation in his social life by his creator as he was brought to life for a mission to protect the free town.

In line with Frankenstein's monster, Joseph is educated by Rabbi's grand-daughter Chava and socialized as a human being. He learns how to read and write from her, and reads books to acculturate himself. When he is sent to the outside of the town in order to spy on the enemy and learn their plans concerning the Jewish ghetto. However, he discovers that he carves out a space of his own in the society and "[a]mong them, he does not feel stupid or cast out. They admire his strength. Half of them cannot read or write. He is "an intellectual, a scholar by comparison, and he is comfortable with their jostling and joking" (277). The fact that Joseph ensconces himself in the society invites an analysis of this example as Piercy's attempt to rewrite the story of Frankenstein's monster.

After fulfilling his function, the golem is returned to clay. As he has transgressed the borders of monstrosity and has become a humanlike figure, when he learns that he will be returned to his "previous existence", he objects to his master Rabbi Judah Leow by saying that "[n]o! I want to live. I want to be a man! [...] I deserve to live! [...] I fought for you! I saved you! I am a man too, I have my life as you have yours. My life is sweet to me" (542). The fact that he is conscious of his existence and does not want to be returned to clay by his master reveals the similarity between Yod and Joseph. They acknowledge their right to live just like human beings; however, they are only viewed as a medium to protect their town by their creators which can be read as Piercy's criticism on the decision-making potential of the humankind concerning their technology. Whether it is artificial intelligence or an ancient golem, Piercy engages in the ethical considerations of generating life.

The subplot can be regarded as a revisionary mythmaking since Piercy, just as in Yod's case, involves a female character in the development of the posthuman character. The golem Joseph gains respect in the Christian society thanks to Chava's attempts of educating him. Thus, the minor plot presents yet another example to highlight the significance of female intervention in the male reproduction process and directs reader's attention to Frankenstein's monster. In Shelley's novel, the creature was left alone after its creation; however, Piercy adds a female touch to the social development of the golem by employing Rabbi's granddaughter Chava.



It is mentioned above that the subplot of the creation of Golem is unveiled to the reader through Malkah's bedtime stories for Yod. By this way, Malkah prepares Yod for interaction with society. In accordance with that, in *Women, Science and Fiction: The Frankenstein Inheritance*, Debra Benita Shaw points out this parallelism by stating

Yod in *Body of Glass* fulfils the monster role in his relationship with Avram, who [...] is identified with Victor Frankenstein, but [...] Yod is prevented from acting out the violent aspects of the monster that his predecessors had succumbed by the intervention of Malkah, who provides him with social skills and a myth which enables him to identify as a member of the community with a stake in its future. (Shaw 182)

"The intervention of Malkah", here, is of importance because the previous cyborg attempts were done solely by Avram, a male scientist, and all have failed eventually. About Yod's programming, Avram asks Malkah's support in order to provide the cyborg with more feminine understanding of the world. A male scientist demanding a female scientist's help can be regarded as a criticism of Victor Frankenstein since Shelley's depiction of the failure of male procreation also reflects the infertility of patriarchy.

#### **4.4. Subversion of Gender Binarism**

This subtitle aims to provide proofs for Piercy's engagement with the feminist agenda of destabilization of gender roles through characters such as Yod, Shira, Malkah and Nili and investigate the novel's presentation of how technology can be used as a space in which generation of new gender identities is possible. It can be suggested that the female characters in the novel are delicately interwoven with feminist ideals. All of the women in the novel, even Shira who is presented as traditional for her own era, repudiate the stereotypical gender patterns and offer numerous alternatives for the reconsideration of female sexuality. From a wider perspective, the reader is presented with three generation of women whose sexual preferences vary in different directions. Their fluid gender identities can be roughly outlined that Shira is a widow who rediscovers her sexuality after her affair with a cyborg; Riva, Shira's mother, leading a homosexual life with her cyborg girlfriend Nili; Malkah portrayed as a grandmother enjoying her bisexual life on cyberspace. Nevertheless, from their conversations about

sexuality, it is revealed to the reader that the year 2059 is a future in which the gender stereotypes are still predominantly heteronormative; for instance, the society of Yakamura-Stichen, where Shira has lived for years but left after losing the custody of her son, is reflected as a patriarchal society.

In the beginning of the novel, Shira has been portrayed as a character who conforms to the norms of the patriarchy; however, it can be argued that her perspective has been shifted after moving to Tikva, “the free town”. Leaving a patriarchal society, here, can be regarded as leaving her internalized patriarchy as well, which parallels to the gender formative role of the society. This does not necessarily mean that the Jewish free town of Tikva does not inflict patriarchal patterns on women since there are proofs in the novel that when Shira was a child, boys were supposed to play with boys and girls with girls. Moreover, “every girl had been given an implant in order to prevent pregnancy” (57). However, it can be said that Y-S enclave was more rigid in terms of patriarchy and Tikva is more open in terms of the society’s perspective on gender.

During the mission of educating Yod, Shira has gone through several internal conflicts as to the nature of humanness. The questions about her nature have been replaced by the very questions of her sexuality after the romantic and sexual relationship with Yod. For Shira, Yod was “her inhuman, her better, dearer than human lover” and he was “a part of her [...], her real mate” (517-518). This, in effect, unveils the idea that articulation of the multiplicity of feminine sexuality necessitates a serious reconsideration of human nature. After her sexual intercourse with Yod, she feels “embarrassed by his observation on the intensity of pleasure” and she wonders “[d]o I think [...] that a nice girl shouldn’t show her orgasms? That a good woman doesn’t enjoy sex too much?” (248). Such questionings eventually lead her to overcome her prejudices against posthuman relationships and involve in alternative forms of sexuality.

One of the most significant characters that reflect the unconventional representation of femininity is Malkah, a respected scientist. For Malkah, “love was mostly nonsense and self-hypnosis, and men were by and large fine to work with and fun in bed, but

never expect much otherwise” (32). It is not a common representation of a grandmother figure; that’s why, it is quite challenging to offer such a transgressive figure whose marginalization poses a threat to patriarchal forms of grand mothering. It is later revealed in the novel that, in addition to her romantic relationship with Avram; while developing the Yod’s computational programming, she tries Yod’s sexual capabilities in order to ensure his sexual intelligence. Moreover, she overtly expresses that she finds her daughter Riva’s girlfriend Nili attractive. Her understanding of multiple sexualities reveals a lot about Piercy’s reception of female sexuality. For Malkah, Shira reports that Malkah did not have one single type that she enjoyed being in a romantic relationship with; “[t]hin, heavysset, tall, short, dark, fair; intellectuals, adventurers, scientists, captains, artists, musicians; they had to be able to talk, or she got bored, but otherwise she was always interested in trying something different”(438). The spectrum of the forms of sexuality expands as the novel progresses. In addition to her corporeal sexual life, Malkah maintains multiple relationships on cyberspace. As to her cybersex life, it is mentioned that she “has mental boyfriends and girlfriends too”, because for Malkah, “it’s the congress of minds, not bodies” (100). Further, Malkah clearly expresses unconventional opinions about the cyber sexuality in the following quotation:

In the image world, I am the power of my thought, of my capacity to create. There is no sex in the Base or the Net, but there is sexuality, there is joining, there is the play of minds like the play of dolphins in surf. In a world parcelled out by multis, it is one of the only empowered and sublimely personal activities remaining. (217)

Additionally, sexuality “in the image world”, that is cyberspace, is also reiterated in the relationship between Yod and Shira. After making love with Shira, Yod emphasizes that “[t]he pleasure is entirely in [his] brain” (229). These instances prove Piercy’s understanding of disembodiment as a strategy to transgress the borders of bodily entrapments.

Though Yod is programmed to act as a male cyborg, his masculinity is not a standardized type, which invites comments on the novel’s approach towards the problematization of gender. Throughout the novel, the ambiguity of Yod’s sexual identity is revealed from the lenses of Shira. For instance, after losing her son’s

custody, Shira does not give up the fight against her ex-husband Josh. Since she does not spend a day without thinking about her son Ari, she settles upon the idea of kidnapping her own son. As the relationship between Yod and Shira progresses, Yod volunteers to support Shira's rightful plan because he is aware of the fact that he cannot give a child to Shira and he wishes to "understand the mystery of human childhood" by observing Ari's behaviours (435). However, Yod's self-confident manners about taking Ari back from Josh worries Shira since, as a devoted mother, she cannot bear the possibility of failing the mission. When Yod observes that this discussion makes Shira anxious, he changes the subject and begins to kiss her. Also, when Yod ends the conversation in order not to make Shira more nervous just like a thoughtful human partner, Shira considers his act as a demonstration of femininity and reflects on Yod's sexuality

Sometimes Yod's behaviour was what she thought of as feminine; sometimes it seemed neutral, mechanical, purely logical; sometimes he did things that struck her as indistinguishable from how every other male she had been with would have acted. (435)

Attributing femininity to Yod's masculinity also reveals Piercy's deliberate aim of blurring the standardized gender boundaries.

As a conclusion, Piercy in the framework of the feminist agenda of rewriting the myths, generates new gender identities in opposition to humanist ideals. It is impossible for her female characters to be categorized under one stereotypical role. All of them offer different notions of femininity regardless of their race, class, economic or social statuses. In doing so, Piercy uses technology as a medium to map out a gender-biased space of signification. At this point, by situating the cyborg Yod at the center of the action, she proposes a third element to the long established binarisms. The main character's role in enabling the multiple sexual identities of other characters invites comments on the role of technology in relinquishing dualist gender stereotypes and discovering more fluid understandings as to female sexuality.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This study analyzed two feminist novels that foreground the posthuman other of the human subject; Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Marge Piercy's *Body of Glass* from posthumanist point of view in relation to their treatments of the relationship between first, human and nonhuman and second, man and woman. Though Mary Shelley's work is generally known as the first science fiction novel, numerous scholars recently acknowledge *Frankenstein* as an example of proto-cyberpunk drawing on its problematization of technology, monstrosity, posthumanism and its engagement with the nature of humanness within the context of the nineteenth century. Based on its posthuman characteristics, this thesis regarded the monster as a precursor of the cyborg and treated the monster from a cyborgian point of view.

As a contemporary novel, *Body of Glass* has been argued as a dystopia in which high technology has been inextricably interfaced with the human body and mind. Centralizing a posthuman figuration of cyborg named Yod and his relationships with his surroundings, the novel combines the elements of the cyberculture with the very notion of humanness. Piercy's novel was also suitable building analogies with Shelley's *Frankenstein* in that it makes direct references to the cyborg and its creator, Avram Stein whose name instantly reminds the reader of Victor Frankenstein. Furthermore, Piercy presents the story of the creation of a golem by a Jewish Rabbi as a subplot by which the reader is provided with yet another story in relation to the subject of male procreation. It has been argued that the two novels, giving reference to three different stories of reproduction by three different men, suggest the problematization of myths of origin and destabilize the relationship between the

creator and the creature. Therefore, particular attention has been paid to their treatments of this subject from a feminist perspective.

Following the introductory chapter which aimed at familiarizing the reader with the main argument of this study, the second chapter tried to give necessary theoretical background to analyze the novels from a posthumanist perspective. First of all, it has been interrogated that how the Enlightenment ideology gave rise to the production of binary oppositions and manufactured hierarchies between these binaries. The constructedness of these binaries has been emphasized with special emphasis on the possibility of their deconstruction. Further, the Enlightenment human has been evaluated as his/her reference to the Western, white, male subject. However, it has been pointed out that the posthuman subject, in contrast, should emphasize a more liberatory identity and therefore, should not have any connection to the previous limitations of the Humanist ideal. The critique of Humanism has been mainly discussed from the vantage points of scholars such as Rosi Braidotti, Katherine Hayles. In that sense, Western science has been scrutinized in terms of its role in producing heteronormative knowledge which traditionally fabricates hierarchical relationships between man and woman. For that reason, the reliability of Western science has been questioned. The proofs of prioritization of masculinity over femininity has been revealed by referring Evelyn Keller's and Linda Shiebinger's analyses of the medical and biological texts. It has been argued that female and male bodies are scientifically considered as texts that are open to discussion and manipulation from dominant heteronormative discourse. Therefore, female sexuality can be thought as a site through which the phallogentric and misogynist knowledge is produced and the superiority of male sexuality is reiterated.

Feminist analyses of scientific texts have elucidated the role and the power of Humanist science in manipulating knowledge production processes. It has been asserted that this kind of interrogation have shattered the objectivity of science which greatly influenced the feminists to reclaim their rightful place in the male dominated space of signification from which women have always been excluded; that is science and technology. At this point, this thesis paid specific attention to Donna Haraway's ground-breaking work "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" whose work raised

multidisciplinary questions and relations regarding the position of women in variety of fields of cybernetics, bioengineering, artificial intelligence and so on. Grounded on a socialist feminist theoretical argument, her cyborg figuration aimed at transgressing the long-established gender binarism by its emergence as a third element to dichotomous categorizations. She suggests that concepts manufactured by the “white capitalist patriarchy” such as representation, organism, microbiology, reproduction have replaced with notions such as simulation, biotic component, immunology, replication, what she refers as “informatics of dominations” in general. By this way of altering the Western patriarchal epistemology, she opens up a new system of signification in which women are not excluded. Thus, the cyborg creation holds the potential of changing the dominant discourse by blurring the conventional boundaries that serve the male hegemony. Haraway’s strategical approach towards the destabilization of the binarisms becomes visible in her attribution of mythic qualities to the cyborg figure. Throughout this thesis, her attempt to mythologize the cyborg has been regarded in parallel to feminist agenda of reconsideration of the myths. In doing so, particular attention has been paid to the significant function of myths in shaping the hegemonic discourse of patriarchy. Within the context of technological empowerment of women, the gender-neutral myth of cyborg is understood as a necessary part of social construction based on a liberatory and anti-sexist ground. Thus, the cyborg metaphor has been received as a medium to deconstruct certain binary oppositions that build up hierarchies between organism and machine, nature and culture, man and woman, self and other and to reconstruct new affinities among them.

In accordance with the technoscientific imaginations of a new world order, it is noteworthy to consider that taking advantage of technology as a tool to portray new futures has already been a subject of science fiction for decades. As a subgenre of science fiction, cyberpunk, in this thesis, has been viewed as a relatable genre in which various new identity formations are posited as an alternative to the conventional stereotypical characters. By intermingling high technology with a punk world view, cyberpunk has contributed to mapping out spaces untainted by the normative patterns of Western dualistic thought system. Nevertheless, this thesis emphasized the fact that

first examples of this genre, no matter how revolutionist they have been, could not escape from falling into the patriarchal entrapments of the dominant ideology which ultimately served a dystopian future through which objectification of women is reiterated. In opposition to the binary logic of the mainstream cyberpunk, feminist cyberpunk authors emphasized the artificiality of gender categorizations in a subversive fashion influenced by the punk subculture. It should not be wrong to say that their narrations have contributed to the inclusion of feminine voice to the discourse of science and technology which is previously defined within the borders of the masculine dominancy. They have called attention to the possibility of gender-neutral futures in which the boundaries between machines and humans are blurred which ultimately served to the deconstructive feminist agenda.

To conclude, the juxtaposition of the two novels lays bare how different myths of creation function to represent different gender ideals in different time zones based on the very same binarism between human subject and his/her nonhuman other. The third chapter of this thesis have investigated Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* from a new perspective by evaluating it as a proto-cyberpunk novel. Because of its association with the questions dealing with the relationship between human and his/her approach towards technology, and the relationship between the creature and the creator, *Frankenstein* provided a rich soil to analyze the hierarchies between the human and the posthuman other. In this context, Victor Frankenstein's monster, emerging as the posthuman other of the human, have been evaluated on a cyborgian ground, which enabled an escape for the destabilization of the binary opposition between the creator and the creature. To explore the similar context from the eyes of a different author writing from almost 200 years later, Marge Piercy's *Body of Glass* has been compared and contrasted to *Frankenstein* in the fourth chapter. The chapter concerned itself with the analysis of the posthuman figures of Yod the cyborg and Joseph the Golem and their relations with both their creators and the society in which they reside in. With reference to the portrayal of a self-conscious cyborg, it is argued that Piercy problematized an inescapable future in which the human beings are to build peaceful relationships with their technological creations. In that sense, it is claimed that, Yod can be accepted as a proof to demonstrate the successful integration of a cyborg or



posthuman subject to a society whose major population consists of humans thanks to Malkah's story of the golem.

The analogies built between the novels made visible first Shelley's, then Piercy's interrogations about humanness and their feminist agenda of revisionary mythmaking. Shelley's rewriting the myth of Prometheus have been underlined as its being used as a tool to criticize the 19<sup>th</sup> century male dominant Western society which is identified by the absence of femininity. On the other hand, Piercy's novel has been discussed as a rewriting of the myth of *Frankenstein* to demonstrate the probability of the escape routes that lead to a future in which stereotypical gender identities can be replaced with multiple gender ideals with the inclusion of female presence in the technological sphere. In doing so, it has been concluded that both authors placed cyborgian figures at the center of their plots to challenge gender categorizations that have so far marginalized them because only monstrous, nonhuman or preferably posthuman figures could have collaborate with them in their fight against patriarchy since they are also othered by the same hegemonic ideology. Furthermore, by this way, they could offer new fluid and heterogenous identity formations untainted by humanist indoctrinations.

In parallel with Haraway's cyborg, the characters Yod, Joseph, and monster are marginalized, are without roots, are in need of connection. These three figures are all products of some white male scientists' who demand to make use of them for their own ambitions regardless of the creatures' rights to live similar to humans; therefore, they are situated to a position inferior to that of the Humanist subject. No matter how much they are oppressed by their creators, they seek revenge one way or another since all of these characters are fully conscious of their existence and become successful in disturbing the superior position of their creators. Each of them attempts differently to transgress the borders of monstrosity that are set by their male rivals and succeed in acquiring human characteristics. The monster learns languages, reads books, gains insights about the nature of humanness, feels love, affection and guilt; Yod learns the ways of humans, involves in a romantic relationship with Shira, accepts the role of a father, applies to the city council for citizenship; Joseph successfully accomplishes his secret mission of spying on the Christian society without being recognized, learns

reading and writing, builds healthy friendships. Nonetheless, all of them fail to acknowledge their identities in the eyes of their creators.

Besides the correlations between the novels, it is an undeniable fact that there are almost two hundred years between the publication dates of these novels and this entails many differences concerning their approaches towards the aforementioned binarisms. First of all, it should be remembered that Piercy gives specific references to Shelley's work which can be read as an indication of Piercy's deliberate attempt to add on to Shelley's argument. Hence, it can be safely argued that Piercy carefully maps out a space to include female voice to patriarchal domain of technology. Whereas Frankenstein, as soon as he creates the monster, abandons his creature for whose creation he has made great efforts, Avram Stein does not set Yod free out of his laboratory until Shira takes over the mission of his social education because, in Yod, Avram sees the independence of the town. His pragmatic approach towards Yod can be linked to the political value of Yod; however, it is Piercy's addition that Yod is only released from his captivity only with the help of Shira. Furthermore, concerning the creation processes, Frankenstein does not get help from anyone and gives life to the monster on his own while Avram Stein receives the support of a female scientist. By Malkah's intervention to Yod's emotional programming, Yod becomes successfully adapted to the society. Thanks to the female interference, the members of the Tikva town do not find Yod strange and they even consider providing Yod with the right of citizenship, which helps Yod's transgression of the border of monstrosity. It is also valid for the social development of the golem since Rabbi Judah Leow's granddaughter Chava plays an important role in Joseph's social development. It is crucial to note that the entrance of the female characters in the progresses of male procreation is what makes the greatest difference concerning the integrations of the creatures compared to Shelley's scenario. If it were not the supports of Chava, Malkah and Shira, these creatures, in fact, would not be able to succeed in their orientation in their societies and they might as well have ended up as violent as Frankenstein's monster. By this way, Piercy stresses the significance of the female presence and female autonomy in technoscientific areas.

There are also divergencies about how these cyborgian figurations situate their creators. It should be admitted that Haraway makes a clear-cut distinction with Frankenstein's monster and her cyborg figure on grounds that her cyborg is a fully developed figure and does not suffer from oedipal complexes. It is true that the monster positions Victor as his father in his psychic world. In contrast, Yod makes use of this so-called father-son relationship so as to prevent Avram from dismantling him since, in the past, he has destroyed nine other technological products. That is the reason why Piercy strays from Shelley's approach towards the binary opposition between the creator and the creature. In addition, Piercy's cyborg can be considered as a more developed entity which, as a result, enables Yod to transgress the boundaries set for him and to become more human-like. Yod harbours many characteristics that can be regarded as exclusive to humans; that's why he applies for acquiring citizenship to the town council.

It should be marked that the endings of these creation stories call upon critical analysis since they all have the same pattern; however, their working mechanisms differ from one another. The monster does not directly kill his creator but causes his death by murdering his loved ones by one by one; Joseph follows the same pattern as well but he does not kill anyone close to his creator; however, Yod, plans Avram's death by his hands and fills Avram's laboratory with explosives so as to prevent the future production of any conscious entities. The pattern can be identified as the simultaneous deaths of the creatures and the creators. These endings suggest that unless the posthuman subjects receive their rightful recognition in the eyes of their creators, that is the peace between the human scientist and his/her posthuman project, the humanist ideology is doomed to suffer from tragic scenarios even if the cyborg is as sophisticated as Yod.

To conclude, by depicting the relationship between creators and creatures, these novels offer possible ways of escaping the humanist binarism between the human subject and its posthuman other. In doing so, the characters reveal the artificiality of human agency in forming categorizations which generate hierarchical gender relations. Therefore, they suggest a new space of signification for women regarding the fields of science and technology.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A: TURKISH SUMMARY/TÜRKÇE ÖZET

#### MARRY SHELLEY’NİN FRANKENSTEIN’I VE MARGE PIERCY’NİN *BODY OF GLASS*’INDA CİNSİYET İKİLİĞİNİN SİBERFEMİNİST AÇIDAN YIKILMASI

Batı felsefesinde Aydınlanma epistemolojisinin yarattığı ikili karşıtlıklar yüzyıllardır egemen ideolojiyi güçlü kılarak belirli bir grubu tahakküm altına almak için dayanak noktası oluşturmuştur. Doğa-insan, insan-makine, kadın-erkek gibi karşıtlıklar arasında yaratılan hiyerarşi her zaman ikiliğin bir tarafını üstün, diğer tarafını ise zayıf ve savunmasız olarak tanımlayarak sömürüye açık hale getirmiştir. Yapısökümcü teorisyenler, çalışmalarında Hümanist anlayışın beraberinde getirdiği bu karşıtlıkları yıkarak veyahut bu karşıtlıkların birleşimlerini savunarak ikiliklere üçüncü bir element sunmuş ve böylece felsefeye özgürleştirici bir bakış açısı kazandırmışlardır. Bu çerçevede, Donna Haraway, Siborg Manifesto’sunda yukarıda bahsedilen zıtlıklara üçüncü bir element olarak siborgu sunmuştur. Haraway’in siborg metaforu hem ontolojik olarak hem de epistemolojik olarak temellendirildiği için akademik camiada oldukça rağbet görmüş ve Batı felsefesinin yarattığı sınıflandırmaları sorunsallaştırmada bir araç olarak kullanılmıştır. İnsansonrası düşünce tüm bu ikiliklerin ilerisine geçmenin gerekliliğini ve yeni kimlik oluşumlarına fırsat vermenin zorunluluğunu tartışmaktadır. Bu çalışmada *Frankenstein* ve *Body of Glass* isimli romanlarda siborg özelliği taşıyan karakterlerin ikili zıtlıklar arasındaki sınırı nasıl ortadan kaldırarak hümanist obje konumundan insansonrası özne konumuna geldikleri ve bu paradigma değişiminin feminist açıdan önemi tartışılmıştır.

Hümanist anlayışın en güçlü dayanak noktalarından biri akli ve mantığı önceleyerek insanı evrenin merkezine konumlandırmasıdır. Bu yaklaşımla birlikte insan haricinde kalan her şey nesneselleştirilmiş ve ötekileştirilmiş. Söz gelimi, bilim ve teknoloji doğayı ötekileştirerek doğayı sömürülebilir bir objeler bütünü olarak kabul etmiştir. Tezin ikinci kısmında da belirtildiği üzere, kadın bedeni de aynı bakış açısıyla üzerine söz söylenebilir ve hak iddia edilebilir bir pozisyona konumlandırılarak bilimsel metinlerde erkek bedeniyle arasında oluşturulan hiyerarşide bir alt basamağa yerleştirilmiştir. Feministlerin bilimsel metin analizleri ortaya koymuştur ki; biyolojik metinlerde kadın ve erkek bedenleriyle ilgili varılan sonuçlar objektif bir dille anlatılmamaktadır. Örneğin; Evelyn Fox Keller'ın *Feminism and Science* adlı kitabında tespit edildiği üzere, bir yandan kadınların aylık döngüde ürettiği yumurtanın kullanılmamasından bir ziyan olarak olumsuz bir üslupla bahsedilirken, diğer yandan erkeklerin ürettiği milyonlarca sperminden bahsedilirken kullanılan dil övgü dolu bir dildir ve oldukça olumlu bir üslupla yazılmıştır. Bunun gibi örnekler ışığında, feminist akademisyenler Batılı bilimin cinsiyet ayrımcılığını yaptığına dair kanıtlar sunmuşlardır. Bilim ve teknoloji gibi alanların erkek egemenliği altında olduğunu ve bu gibi alanlarda kadınların ötekileştirildiğini tartışmışlardır. Bu tespitlerin ardından yaptıkları ikinci iş kadınların bu alanlara dahil edilmesi için çalışma başlatmak olmuştur. Haraway'ın Siborg Manifestosu'nun bu kapsamda değerlendirilmesi yanlış olmaz. Donna Haraway, kadınların teknoloji ve bilim alanlarına dahil edilmesinin Batı felsefesinin bir ürünü olan cinsiyet ve insanlıkla ilgili kalıpların yıkılmasına katkı sağlayacağını savunur.

Üçüncü bir element olarak sunulan siborg, hem makine hem insan, hem organik hem inorganik olduğundan dolayı insanlıkla ilgili temel ikilikler arasındaki çizgileri belirsizleştirmektedir. Herhangi bir kökeni, geçmişi veya aile bağları olmadığı için Oedipal çatışmalardan da uzak durur. Kurguyu ve hakikati birleştirerek bu ikilik arasındaki sınırları da ortadan kaldırır. Haraway, siborgunu cinsiyet sonrası olarak kurguladığı için kendisinden önce tanımlanan cinsiyet kalıplarına uyma gibi bir zorunluluğu yoktur. Bir diğer yandan, Haraway siborgunu bir mit olarak anlatır. Bu da kendisinden önceki feministlerin ortak bir stratejisi olan mit yaratma ya da mitleri yeniden yazma amacına hizmet etmektedir. Feminist akımın bu stratejisi erkek

egemen diskuru kadınların lehine dönüştürmenin en etkili yönteminin önce dili sonra anlatıların en temeli olan mitleri ve masalları değiştirmenin gerekliliği düşüncesinden kaynaklanmaktadır. Dilin gerçekliği belirleyici, düşünce sistemini şekillendirici yapısından ötürü bilgi üretimindeki temel bir rol oynadığı bilinen bir gerçektir. Bu sebeple halihazırda üretilen bilginin eril bir dil aracılığıyla epistemolojiyi şekillendirdiği düşünüldüğünde bu dilin değiştirilmesi ve dönüştürülmesi kadınlar-erkek ikili zıtlığında hiyerarşiyi altüst edici bir rol oynar. Dili değiştirmek ve dönüştürmek de ancak ilkin mit ve masallar gibi temel anlatıların değiştirilmesiyle gerçekleşeceğinden mit yaratımı feminist diskurda olmazsa olmaz bir önem teşkil eder. Bu bağlamda, Haraway'ın aydınlanma epistemolojisine meydan okuyan özgürleştirici siborg miti feministlerin bu stratejisiyle paralel bir şekilde okunabilir.

Haraway'ın manifestosu, akademik camiada ilgi gördüğü kadar, eleştiri oklarının da hedefi olmuştur. Kimi akademisyenler Haraway'ın argümanını soyut olmakla suçlarken, kimi akademisyenler de manifestonun sınırlarının belirgin olmayışını eleştirmiştir. Ancak, bu çalışma, Haraway'ın manifestosu soyutluktan oldukça uzak görmektedir; zira, Katherine Hayles'in de belirttiği gibi sadece Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin bile popülasyonunun yüzde 10'unu siborglar oluşturmaktadır; çünkü günümüz teknolojisi sayesinde insan vücudu teknolojiyle iyileştirilmektedir. Söz gelimi, kontakt lens kullanan bir insanın bile siborg olarak sayılmaması için hiçbir neden yoktur veyahut kalp piliyle yaşayan bir insan da pekâlâ siborg sayılabilir. Dolayısıyla siborg sadece kuramsal bir metafor olmanın ötesinde günümüz gerçekliğinin bir parçasıdır. Manifestonun sınırlarının belirgin olmaması yönündeki eleştiriye bakacak olursak, Haraway kasten siborg karakterine kalıplaştırıcı sınırlar koymaktan kaçınmıştır; zira, bu varlığı belirli bir çerçeveye sığdırıp sınırlar çizmek ve belirli zorunluluklar atfetmek Aydınlanma epistemolojisini yinelemekten başka bir şey değildir.

Bu bağlamda siberfeminizm hem insan olmanın sınırlarını problemleştirir, hem de cinsiyet kalıplarının yapaylığını eleştirerek yeni ve özgürleştirici bir alan oluşturmaya katkı sağlar. Daha önceden eril tahakküm sınırları çerçevesinde değerlendirilen teknobilim alanlarına kadınların entegre edilmesine zemin sağlayarak yeni kimlik oluşumlarını destekler.

Paralel olarak, bilim kurgu türünün bir alt kategorisi olarak sayılan siberpunk da insanın teknoloji sayesinde iyileştirilmiş versiyonlarını konu alan eserler sunarak insan-makine ikiliğini problemleştirir. Punk kültüründen oldukça etkilenen bu alt kategori, sınırları yıkması ve toplum tarafından kabul edilmeyen olguları gözler önüne sermesi sebebiyle ikiliklerin yıkılması noktasında geniş bir alan tanımaktadır. Ancak, genel kaniya göre, siberpunk türünün ilk ve en önemli örneklerinde yer alan karakterler, erkek egemen zihniyetin yarattığı kısıtlamaların ilerisine geçememektedir. Bu nedenle bu tezin odak noktası, yapısökümcü bir bilinçle yazılmış olan, Karen Cadora'nın deyimiyle feminist siberpunk alt kategorisidir. Bu türün öncüsü yazarlar, teknolojiyi günümüze kadar süregelen basmakalıp ikili düşünce sisteminden bir an önce kurtarmak amacıyla bir araç olarak görmüştür. Feminist siberpunk siberfeminizm düşüncesiyle aynı çizgide durarak teknolojik iyileştirmeleri ve teknoloji ürünlerini önce insan olmanın sorunsallaştırılması noktasında ele almış, sonra ise cinsiyet rollerinin yapaylığını ortaya çıkarmakta kullanmıştır.

Mary Shelley'in 1818 tarihli kitabı bilim kurgu türünün ilk örneği olmakla beraber Romantik ve Gotik edebiyat kategorileri altında konumlanır. Ancak Veronica Hollinger, *Frankenstein*'in öncü bir siberpunk romanı olarak kabul edilebileceğinden bahseder. Romanın baş karakteri olan canavar belirgin ölçüde siborg benzeri özellikler taşıdığından bu tez de Shelley'nin canavarı öncü bir siborg, *Frankenstein* ise öncü bir siberpunk romanı olarak incelenmiştir. Hümanist ideolojinin kendini en çok hissettirdiği ondokuzuncu yüzyılın bir ürünü olan roman, bilime, akla ve bilgiye olan kontrolsüz arzunun nasıl sonuçlar doğurabileceğini diğer bir baş karakter olan Victor karakterinde eleştirel bir şekilde gözler önüne sermektedir. Roman Robert Walton isimli bir denizcinin Kuzey Kutbu'nu keşfetmek amacıyla çıktığı yolculuğu sırasında kız kardeşi Margaret'a gönderdiği mektuplar çerçevesinde anlatılır. Doktor Victor Frankenstein burjuva bir aileden gelmekte olan saygın bir ailenin bilimle uğraşan çocuğudur. Üniversite yıllarında merak saldığı konular, onu hayatın iksirini keşfetme, ölüme meydan okuma, sonsuzluğu keşfetme gibi doğa felsefesine ait sorunlarla baş başa bırakır ve kontrol edemediği bilme arzusu yüzünden ölü hayvan ve insan bedenlerinden topladığı organları ve uzuvları elektrik marifetiyle birleştirerek yeni bir insan yaratmak ister ve yaratır; ancak yarattığı canavar sedyede

gözlerini açar açmaz Frankenstein laboratuvarı terk eder ve bir daha da girmez. Frankenstein yarattığı canavarın bilincinde olarak hayatını sürdürmeye devam etmek ister ancak canavar, ondan intikam almak için doktorun sevdiği insanları bir bir öldürür. Frankenstein nereye gitse canavar onu takip etmektedir. Frankenstein'ın inzivaya çekildiği bir zamanda canavar onun karşısında çıkar ve doktorun onu terk edip gitmesinden sonraki süre zarfında çektiği eziyetleri anlatır. Çok büyük ve çok çirkin bir dış görünüme sahip olduğu için toplum tarafından mütemadiyen dışlanmıştır. Civardaki köylü insanların arasındaki sevgi dolu ilişkileri görüp kendini bu ilişkinin bir parçası olarak hayal etmiştir. Ancak insanlar tarafından sadece ötekileştirip kötü davranışlara maruz kaldığı için yalnız kalmıştır. Bu sebeple Frankenstein'dan ona bir kadın canavar yapmasını talep eder. Böylece iki canavar yalnız kalmayacak ve Afrika'nın en ücra köşelerine giderek insanlıktan uzak yaşayacaklardır. Victor önce bu fikri kabul edip canavara söz verse de daha sonra yaratmaya başladığı kadın canavarı yok eder. Bu yıkıma tanıklık eden canavar Victor'dan intikam almaya yemin eder ve düğün gecesinde Victor'la olacağını söyler. Cinayetlerine devam eden canavar, düğün gecesine kadar Viktor'u takip eder ve düğün gecesinde evleneceği kadın olan Elizabeth'i öldürür ve uzaklaşır. Bu özetin ışığında, toplum tarafından dışlanmış olan canavarın ona koyulan sınırları tanımayarak insanlaşmaya çalışması önem arz eder. İzlediği köylülerden dil öğrenen canavar Goethe'nin *Genç Werther'in Acıları*, John Milton'ın *Kayıp Cennet* gibi kitapları okuyarak insan olmanın ne demek olduğunu sorunsallaştırmıştır, ancak bir yandan canavar insanlığın iç çatışmalarını anlasa da diğer yandan kendisi tam bir insan olmadığı için kendini tam da kitaplardaki karakterlerle özdeşleştirememektedir. Bu noktada canavarın insan ve hayvan, organik ve inorganik, yaratıcı ve yaratık arasındaki ikili zıtlıkları belirsizleştirdiği söylenebilir.

Shelley'nin kitabının alt başlığı olan *Modern Prometheus* yukarıda bahsi geçen mit yaratımı ve mitlerin yeniden yazımı konusunda önem arz etmektedir. Bilindiği üzere, Prometheus Yunan mitolojisinde ateşi tanrılardan çalarak insanlara hediye etmesiyle ünlü bir titandır; bilgiyi, medeniyeti ve kültürü temsil eder. Kendisine çizilen sınırları tanımaması onu egemen zihniyete başkaldıran bir figür olarak değerlendirmemizi sağlar. Paralel olarak, Shelley Doktor Frankenstein'a modern Prometheus özelliği atfederek onu da transgresif bir figür olarak konumlandırmıştır. Frankenstein'ın sınır

tanımazlığı iki boyutludur; çünkü Frankenstein kendine bir kul yaratarak hem tanrının hem de bir varlık yaratarak kadının rolünü çalmaktadır. Bu bağlamda Shelley'nin kitabının başlangıcında yer alan John Milton'ın *Kayıp Cennet* şiirinin dizeleri önem kazanmaktadır. Adem, Havva ve tanrı arasındaki ilişkileri anlatan epik şiirin Ademin tanrıya yakarış dizeleri kitabın ilk cümlelerini oluşturmaktadır. Bu noktada Frankenstein hem tanrının karşısında bir kul hem de yarattığı canavarın karşısında bir tanrı rolü üstlenmektedir ki bu da Frankenstein'in ikinci kez insan olmanın sınırlarını sorunsallaştırması konusunda örnek teşkil eder. Hem tanrıyı hem kulu oynayan Batılı bir bilim adamı olan Frankenstein iki rolü de birbirine karıştırarak bir canavar yaratmış ve onu ötekileştirerek sorumluluğunu üstlenmemiştir; bu durum da hem kendisinin hem sevdiklerinin hem de yarattığı canavarın hayatlarına mal olmuştur. Bu kaotik durum, Shelley'nin Aydınlanma ideolojisini temsil eden ataerkil bilime yönelik bir eleştiri olarak okunabilir. Bir diğer yandan doğa kültür ikiliğinde kültürü temsil eden Victor, bir canavar yaratarak karşısında doğayı almıştır. Ne var ki, kendini bu hiyerarşide üst basamağa konumlandıran Victor, romanın sonunda kendisinden aşağı olduğunu düşünen canavarın hezimetine uğramıştır. Bu güç ilişkisinde kendinden aşağı gördüğü canavar tarafından sonunun getirilmesi canavarı ontolojik olarak üst bir konuma taşımaktadır. Böylece bir başka ikili zıtlık da bu şekilde ters düz edilmiştir. Benzer şekilde, canavarın “[s]en benim yaratıcısın ama ben senin sahibim” sözlerinde de görüldüğü üzere, sahip-köle ikiliğindeki roller belirsizleştirilmiştir.

Shelley'nin biyografisine bakıldığında felsefeci bir baba ve feminist yazar bir annenin çocuğu olarak dünyaya geldiği görülür. Ancak romanında kadın karakterlere çok az yer vermesi şaşırtıcı ve dikkat çekicidir. On dokuzuncu yüzyıl toplumunda kadının yeri düşünüldüğünde, Shelley'nin kadın bir yazar olarak toplumda yer edinmemesi ve dolayısıyla romanlarında da kadın karakterlere minimum rol vermesi ihtimali göze çarpmaktadır. Ancak bu yanlış anlaşılmalara sebebiyet verme ihtimali yüksek bir düşünce biçimidir. Shelley romanında kadınların yeni bir canlı üretme rolünün bile erkekler tarafından çalındığı, kadınların tahakküm altına alındığı ve ötekileştirildiği bir dünyayı resmederek on dokuzuncu yüzyıl epistemolojisine ciddi bir eleştiride bulunur. Dolayısıyla romanda bahsi geçen marjinalize edilen canavar aslında kadınların o günün toplumunda nasıl algılandığının yansımasından başka bir şey

değildir. Kadınların erkek tahakkümüne tehdit oluşturan bir canavar gibi algılanmasını eleştiren roman, erkek egemen toplum yapısına canavar gibi bir figürle zarar vermektedir. Shelley kadınlara yönelik bu baskıcı ideolojinin değişmemesi durumunda ataerkil sistemin kendi kendini bitireceğini müjdelir. Bir başka örneğe bakacak olursak, Frankenstein'ın yaratma sözü verdiği ancak potansiyel canavar soyundan korktuğu için kadın canavarı yok etmiştir. Doktorun bu yeni yarattığı yok etme sebeplerinden bir diğeri de bu kadın canavarın kendi iradesinin olma ihtimali ve Frankenstein'ın sözünden çıkma potansiyelidir. Kadın bağımsızlığından ve üretkenliğinden korkan ataerki, söz verdiği kadını daha yaratmadan yok etmektedir. Bu da açık olarak Batılı bilimin kadınları epistemik şiddete maruz bırakmasına yönelik bir eleştiri olarak okunabilir. Bunlardan yola çıkarak, Shelley'nin yeniden yazdığı yaradılış mitinde ataerkinin ve kadına yönelik nefretin devam etmesi durumunda, erkek ve insan merkezli bilimin kendi sonunu getireceğine yönelik bir eleştiride bulunduğu kanısına varılabilir. Böyle bir dünya tasvirinde hümanist objenin karşısında konumlandırılan canavar, hem cinsiyet anlamında hem insanlık anlamında çizilen sınırları geçmesi yönüyle insansonrası bir siborg olarak yorumlanabilir.

Tezin üçüncü kısmında yer verilen feminist siberpunk romanı *Body of Glass*, Marge Piercy'nin *Frankenstein*'a referanslar vermesi yönüyle faydalı bulunmuş ve incelenmiştir. Roman 2059 yılında Amerika'da geçmektedir. Dünya büyük şirketlerin yönetimi altındadır ve bazı özerk bölgeler dışında kontrol altında olmayan bölge yoktur. Küresel ısınmanın tahrip ettiği bir dünya tasviri yapan Piercy'nin baş karakterleri psiko-mühendislik yapan genç bir kadın olan Shira ve savunma amaçlı yaratılmış bir siborg olan Yod'dur. Eşinden yeni boşanan ve oğlunun velayetini eşi Josh'a karşı kaybeden Shira, anneanesi Malkah'nın arkadaşı Avram'ın iş teklifini kabul ederek çalıştığı büyük şirketten ayrılır ve özerk bir Yahudi bölgesi olan Tikva şehrine yerleşmeye karar verir. Avram yaşadığı yerin bağımsızlığını korumak için bir ölüm makinesi olarak Yod'u tasarlamıştır. Yod'un duygusal zekasını programlayan kişi ise Shira'nın bilgisayar mühendis anneanesi Malkah'dan başkası değildir. Avram'ın Shira'ya teklif ettiği iş ise Malkah ile beraber tasarladıkları siborgu sosyal açıdan geliştirmektir. Yod'un sosyal olarak eğitildiği bu süreçte Shira ile Yod birbirlerine aşık olur ve bu iki karakter kendilerini hem romantik hem cinsel bir

ilişkinin içinde bulurlar. Başlarda Yod'un siborg olmasını garipseyen Shira onun insanlara benzeme yönündeki kabiliyetini keşfettikçe onu bir insan gibi kabul eder. Yod'a metaforik düşünme, doğadaki canlılara zarar vermeme, sağlıklı insan ilişkileri kurma gibi konularda eğitim veren Shira sayesinde Yod artık neredeyse insan olmuştur. Yod'un gelişimi sırasında Shira insan makine ikiliğini sorgular ve Yod'un bu sınırı nasıl belirsizleştirdiğine tanıklık eder. Öyle ki, Yod'un insana benzeme konusunda yetersizlik gösterdiği noktalarda, Shira insanların makineleştiğine dikkat çekerek Yod'u teselli eder. Söz gelimi böbrek implantı olan Gadi, retinal implantı olan Shira bu duruma örnek olarak gösterilebilir. 2059'da herkesin vücudu teknolojik olarak iyileştirildiği için herkes bir sibor olarak kabul edilebilir ki bu da Donna Haraway'in manifestosuna doğrudan yapılan bir gönderme olarak kabul edilebilir. Buna benzer olarak, ikilinin romantik ilişkisinde Yod'un makineliği Yod için sorun teşkil ettiğinde, Shira kendi hayvansılığının Yod'u rahatsız edip etmediğini sorgular. Bilinçli bir varlık olan Yod, bir yapay zeka olarak çevreye ne kadar hızlı uyum sağlasa da toplumdaki insanların eleştirisi oklarına maruz kalmaktan kaçamaz. Shira'nın çocukluk aşkı ve aynı zamanda Avram Stein'in oğlu olan Gadi, Yod'u kışkırdığı için babasına Frankenstein benzetmesini yakıştırır. Kendi babasını Frankenstein olarak adlandırmakla Yod ve canavar arasında bir analogi kurar. Romanın Shelley'nin eserine sık sık atıfta bulunması iki romanın da paralel şekilde değerlendirilmesine olanak sunar. Yod, Gadi'yi rakip olarak kabul ettiği için Shira'ya Gadi'den daha güçlü olduğunu ve Gadi'nin verebileceği de Yod'u veremeyeceği bir şey olmadığını kanıtlar. Hatta o kadar ileri gider ki, kendini insanlarla kıyaslayarak kendisinin Shira'ya çocuk veremeyeceği gerçeğini insanlığın ortak bir problemi olarak addeder çünkü kısırlık insan popülasyonunun yarısını etkileyen bir durumdur ve Yod üretken değilse, insanlığın yarısı da aynı şekilde üretken değildir ve çocuk sahibi olamamaktadır. Bu yüzden Yod, Shira'nın oğlu Ari'yi babasından kaçırma planlarında Shira'ya ortaklık etmektedir. Öbür yandan dünyayı yöneten şirketlerden biri olan Yakamura Stichen, Avram'ın ürettiği ve Malkah'nın geliştirdiği siborgun peşindedir ve Tikva'ya savaş açarlar. Tehditlerden korunma amacıyla geliştirilmiş olan Yod savaşa gönderilir ancak Shira da Yod da ayrılmak istemezler. Bu esnada Yod Avram'ın tahakkümünden kurtulmak için Tikva şehir meclisine vatandaşlık başvurusunda bulunur. Ancak süreç sonuçlanmadan Yod savaşa gönderilir ve Tikva'yı savunmak uğruna şehit olur.



Dikkat edilmesi gereken nokta şudur ki Yod savaşa gitmeden önce Avram'ın laboratuvarına çok sayıda patlayıcı yerleştirmiştir ve Yod'un gittiği gün Avram da laboratuvarında ölmüştür.

Yaratıcı-yaratık ilişkisi yönünden incelenecek olursa, Avram ve Yod arasında karşılıklı bir fayda söz konusudur. Avram Yod'u bağımsızlığın korunmasında bir araç olarak görür. Yod'dan önceki dokuz denemesi başarısız olduğu için Malkah'dan yardım istemiştir ve Malkah'nın yaratım sürecine dahil olması Yod'u önceki robotlardan, androidlerden farklı kılmıştır. Bu yüzden Yod Avram için önem arz eder ancak şu da göz önünde bulundurulmalıdır ki Yod'un tasarlanması sürecindeki bütün bilgiler Avram'ın laboratuvarında mevcut olduğu için Yod'un savaşa gitmesi Avram için önemli değildir. Avram, istediği zaman yeni bir Yod tasarlayabilir ve onun yerini doldurabilir.

Bu durum Yod açısından daha farklıdır çünkü Yod, bilinçli bir varlık olduğu için Avram'ın kendisinden önceki dokuz varlığı yok ettiği gibi Yod'u da yok edebileceği gerçeğinin bilincindedir. Bu yüzden, Frankenstein'in canavarı gibi, Avram'a "baba" diye seslenir. Yod'un bu korkusunun oluşmasındaki en büyük faktör, Malkah'nın ona gece masalı olarak anlattığı golem hikayesidir. Bu çerçevede hikaye, bir Yahudi rabbisi olan Juhah Leow, diğer adıyla Maharal, ve yarattığı golem olan Joseph'i konu alır. Bu hikaye 1600'lü yıllarda Prag'da bir Yahudi kasabasında geçer. Kasaba Hristiyan tehdidi altında olduğu için Maharal kasabayı korumak amacıyla çamurdan bir varlık yaratır ve bu yaratığa hayat nefesi üfler. Tıpkı Yod gibi bilinçli bir canlı olan golem yaratıcısı tarafından bir araç olarak görülmektedir. Ancak Joseph de canavar ve Yod gibi kendisine tanınan sınırları zorlayarak insan gibi davranmaya başlar. Maharal'ın torunu Chava tarafından eğitilir ve casus olarak gittiği kasabada okuma yazma bildiği için bir aydın, bir entelektüel gibi karşılanır ve sevilir. Birçok suçu üstüne alarak ve birçok cinayeti engelleyerek bir kahraman olarak toplumda yer edinir. Ancak Joseph'in golem olduğunu sadece Maharal ve onun yaratma sürecinde yardım aldığı müritleri bilir. Bir Hristiyan saldırısında Yahudi toplumunu koruyup işgalden kurtardıktan sonra Joseph tekrar toprağa dönüştürülür. Bir şeylerin ters gittiğinin farkında varan Joseph yaratıcısına onu öldürmemesi için yalvarır ancak bu yakarıları boşunadır.

Bu bağlamda Malkah'nın Yod'u sosyal olarak geliřtirmesi konusu önemlidir çünkü Malkah'nın miti feministlerin mit yaratma süreciyle paralel olarak okunabilir. Yod'un sosyal çevreye vatandaşlık başvurusunda bulunacak kadar adapte olması Malkah sayesinde. Frankenstein'ın canavarının aksine Yod, çevresine zarar vermeyen insana oldukça benzer bir yaratık haline gelmiştir. Bu da Piercy'nin Frankenstein mitini yeniden yazması olarak okunabilir.

Ek olarak, romanın yer verdiği kadın karakterler açısından da Piercy ataerkiye meydan okumaktadır. Bir anneanne figürü olan Malkah, toplum normlarının aksine kadınlığının ve cinselliğinin farkında bir karakterdir. Öyle ki; Malkah'nın siberlanda hem kadın hem erkek eşleri vardır, Yod'un cinselliğini test etmek için Yod'la cinsel ilişkiye girmiş, kızı Riva'nın sevgilisini cinsel olarak çekici bulmuş, Avram'la geçmişte ilişki yaşamıştır. Kadın cinselliğinin çeşitliğini temsil eden bu karakter, Piercy'nin toplum normlarına meydan okuması olarak kabul edilebilir. Söz gelimi, Shira'nın annesi Riva da Nili adında lezbiyen bir siborgla ilişki yaşamaktadır. Bu özgürleştirici tutum Piercy'nin ataerki normlarının yarattığı ikili zıtlıklara bir eleştirisi olarak yorumlanabilir.

Sonuç olarak, üç yaratılış hikayesinde ortak olarak, bu siborg karakterlerin kendilerine izin verilmeyen şekillerde canavarlık çizgilerini zorlayarak insan olmaya çalışması, bu şekilde hümanist epistemolojinin insan tanımını belirsizleřtirmesi ve içkin olarak cinsiyet kalıplarını sorunsallařtırmaları onların hümanist objeden çok insansonrası subje konumuna yerleşmelerine örnek teşkil etmektedir. Romanlarda örneklenen siborg/canavar karakterlerin insanlık tarafından dışlanması da yine hümanist ideolojinin kendini yarattığı objeden üstün görerek kendisini ayrıcalık bir pozisyona konumlandırması konusuna dikkat çekmektedir. Marge Piercy'nin Mary Shelley gibi bilim kurgu türünün mihenk taşı sayılabilecek önemli bir yazara atıfta bulunarak geliřtirdiğı siberpunk romanında yaratıcı-yaratık ilişkisini mitler çerçevesinde incelemesi bu çalışmaya temel oluşturmaktadır. Bu sebeple, bu çalışma feminist mit yaratımını konu alan üç paralel hikayedeki siborg karakterleri Aydınlanma epistemolojisinin ürünü olan ikili zıtlıklara üçüncü bir element sunması bağlamında yapışökümcü bir üslupla incelemiştir.

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TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (İngilizce / English) :

A Feminist Subversion of Gender Binarism on Cyborgian Grounds through a Critical Analysis of Cyberpunk Fiction: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Marge Piercy's *Body of Glass*

TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE: Yüksek Lisans / Master  Doktora / PhD

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