Araştırma Makalesi
Research Article

Gönderim Tarihi/Received Date: 10.01.2025
Kabul Tarihi/Accepted Date: 16.02.2025
Yayın Tarihi/Published Date: 10.03.2025
DOI Number: 10.46250/kulturder.1617471
Kültür Araştırmaları Dergisi, 2025, 24: 94-109

REIMAGINING HUMANITY: POSTHUMAN BIOPOLITICS IN JEANETTE WINTERSON'S *THE STONE GODS*

İnsanlığı Yeniden Hayal Etmek: Jeanette Winterson'un *Taş Tanrılar* Romanında Posthüman Kesişimler

Gözde PINAR BİLGİNER*

ABSTRACT

Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* examines the entanglement of human and posthuman entities, interrogating the ways technological and biological transformations challenge traditional conceptions of identity. By applying posthuman studies, this article explores how the novel resists rigid categorizations of the human and the posthuman, instead presenting a continuum of beings shaped by environmental and technological shifts. The dystopian atmosphere unsettles fixed distinctions, demonstrating that the posthuman does not exist as a separate category but emerges through relational and interconnected processes. While the novel's futuristic setting foregrounds posthuman existence, the protagonist, Billie, embodies an insistence on emotional depth, ethical responsibility, and relationality rather than adhering to an essentialized humanist framework. Likewise, Spike is not positioned in opposition to the human but rather as a figure that complicates binary understandings of organic and artificial life. Neither a soulless machine nor a monstrous other, Spike possesses intelligence, self-awareness, and affective capacities, reflecting posthumanism's reconfiguration of subjectivity. This article argues that *The Stone Gods* subverts anthropocentric assumptions by portraying posthuman identities as entangled with, rather than separate from, human existence. Through its portrayal of Billie and Spike, the novel illustrates how technological and ontological shifts disrupt established notions of identity, demanding a reassessment of the human/nonhuman continuum.

Keywords: Posthumanism, Jeanette Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, novel, artificial intelligence.

ÖZ

Jeanette Winterson'un *Taş Tanrılar* romanı, insan ve posthüman varlıkların iç içe geçtiği bir dünyada kimlik, teknoloji ve çevresel yıkım arasındaki ilişkileri sorgulamaktadır. Posthüman çalışmalar perspektifini benimseyen bu makale, romanın in-

* Dr. Lecturer, Katip Çelebi University, School of Foreign Languages, Izmir/Türkiye. E-mail: gozdepinarbilginer@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-9058-6636.

This article was checked by Turnitin.

san ve posthüman kategorilerini katı sınırlarla ayırmak yerine, çevresel ve teknolojik değişimlerle şekillenen bir varlık sürekliliği sunduğunu incelemektedir. Romandaki distopik atmosfer, insan ve posthüman arasındaki sabit ayrımları yerinden ederek bu kategorilerin birbirine bağımlı ve akışkan olduğunu göstermektedir. Posthüman varlıklar, romanın merkezinde yer alırken, ana karakter Billie, duygusal derinlik, etik sorumluluk ve ilişkisel bağlara verdiği önemle insan kimliğini belirli kalıplara indirgemekten kaçınmaktadır. Benzer şekilde, Spike karakteri yalnızca bir robot ya da insan karşıtı bir varlık olarak değil, zekâ, öz farkındalık ve duygusal kapasiteye sahip bir figür olarak konumlandırılmaktadır. Spike, organik ve yapay olan arasındaki sınırları bulanıklaştırarak posthümanizmin öznelliği nasıl yeniden şekillendirdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu makale, *Taş Tanrılar*'ın posthüman kimlikleri nasıl sunduğunu ve insan ile posthüman arasındaki sınırları nasıl dönüştürdüğünü ele almaktadır. Roman, insan/insan olmayan ayrımını yeniden düşünmeye zorlayarak, teknolojik ve varoluşsal değişimlerin kimlik anlayışlarını nasıl bozduğunu gözler önüne sermektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Posthümanizm, Jeanette Winterson, *The Stone Gods*, roman, yapay zekâ.

Introduction

In the evolving space of contemporary science fiction, Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* focuses on the intersections of biopolitical control, technological advancement, and identity transformation. Winterson examines how posthuman identities emerge within a world where state and corporate powers regulate bodies and lives. Yazgünoğlu emphasizes that Winterson portrays "trans-corporeal subjects" who are shaped by their interactions with both organic and inorganic systems, challenging traditional boundaries between human and machine (Yazgünoğlu, 2016: 144). The novel highlights how biopolitical mechanisms extend beyond human control, "placing technology and environmental degradation at the center of a speculative narrative that critiques the very systems designed to sustain human civilization" (Şencan, 2024: 3). Winterson challenges the posthuman future as a dystopian possibility, warning against the increasing commodification of life through biotechnological interventions. As Haraway suggests, the cyborg challenges "the boundaries between organic beings and artificial intelligence," raising questions about what it means to be human in a posthuman world (Haraway, 1985: 152). In *The Stone Gods*, the regulatory measures imposed on the individuals reflect biopolitical mechanisms aimed at maintaining order. In posthuman studies, the body is no longer conceived as a fixed or autonomous entity but as an assemblage of

biological, technological, and environmental forces. Drawing from Rosi Braidotti's conceptualization, the posthuman body is "a zoe-centered embodied subject, in symbiosis with multiple others" (Braidotti, 2013: 190), challenging the anthropocentric and individualistic model of human identity. Similarly, N. Katherine Hayles argues that posthuman embodiment is characterized by its "distributed cognition" and the dissolution of the rigid boundaries between human and machine (Hayles, 1999: 3). Rather than a discrete transformation from human to posthuman, the posthuman body is already a hybrid form, entangled with technological, ecological, and biopolitical structures. Through the depiction of Billie and Spike, the narrative examines how biopolitical forces interact with technological and environmental transformations, highlighting the fluid and interconnected nature of posthuman embodiment rather than positioning it as a distinct category imposed by external regulation. Within this perspective, the novel examines biotechnology's impact on identity and presents characters who reflect the changing nature of corporeality. Winterson examines how technological advancements may diminish human values and cautions against a future in which new technologies impose control.

To frame posthuman embodiment within biopolitical control mechanisms, however, reveals how technological and genetic enhancements function as regulatory tools rather than markers of true autonomy. Braidotti's concept of "nomadic subjectivity" emphasizes identity as fluid and continuously evolving rather than fixed or singular (Braidotti, 2013: 86). Under this framework, posthuman existence resists stable categorization, instead emerging through entanglements with technology and the environment. *The Stone Gods*, however, complicates this notion by illustrating how biopolitical forces impose constraints on bodily transformation. Billie, for instance, remains aware of how corporate and governmental interests dictate technological interventions, shaping bodies in ways that reinforce systemic control rather than genuine self-determination. Similarly, Spike's posthuman embodiment disrupts the assumption that enhanced beings lack subjectivity, as she demonstrates ethical reasoning and emotional depth. In resisting the commodification of the posthuman body, Winterson's narrative challenges the extent to which posthuman subjectivity can exist beyond regulatory structures, exposing the persistent tension between fluid identity and institutional control. Spike, as a robo-sapiens, depicts this posthuman transformation by embodying both human and nonhuman characteristics. Winterson's exploration of biopolitical governance reso-

nates with Foucault's concept of biopower, which emphasizes the regulation of individuals through control over life and death. The novel focuses on how technological surveillance and genetic manipulation serve as tools for enforcing social order, reflecting a dystopian vision where autonomy is compromised. Winterson's novel narrates the story of Billie, a woman navigating her identity in a world shaped by technological advancements, and Spike, a sentient robot who challenges the boundaries of human and non-human categorization. Their relationship, marked by emotional depth and mutual influence, forces a reevaluation of traditional humanist values. *The Stone Gods* employs a cyclical structure of recurring themes such as love, loss, and destruction, reflecting humanity's repetitive and self-destructive tendencies. Winterson highlights how Billie and Spike's interconnected bodies, despite their organic and inorganic differences, are shaped by their shared environment.

By analyzing *The Stone Gods* through the lens of posthuman studies, this article examines how biopolitical control reshapes identity and redefines concepts of freedom and agency. Drawing from Michel Foucault's theories, including his later reinterpretation of biopolitics within neoliberal frameworks, this study explores the novel's depiction of extreme biopolitical mechanisms. In *The Stone Gods*, the dominance of capital over life results in systemic oppression, restricting autonomy and endangering both human and non-human existence. Winterson's narrative exposes these mechanisms, encouraging critical reflection on how bodies and identities are governed. By employing posthumanist theory, this study investigates how biopolitics functions within the novel to interrogate entrenched assumptions about identity and autonomy. Additionally, it considers how biopolitical structures might be reimagined to foster an interconnected posthuman society. The study argues that Winterson's portrayal of setting and narrative trajectory positions biopolitics as a driving force behind societal transformation. This transformation suggests the emergence of new posthuman possibilities that challenge regulatory structures and envision alternative, more sustainable social configurations.

1. Commodified Lives: Posthuman Biopolitics and Capital in *The Stone Gods*

Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* examines how biopolitical control mechanisms intersect with technology, capital, and human life in a future society governed by the Central Power. The novel presents a world where "life itself becomes a resource for capital" (Lyon, 2001: 17), highlighting

how technological modifications commodify not only human bodies but also the environment. In this speculative future, individuals are no longer defined by their autonomy but are shaped by their interactions with technology, which transforms them into products optimized for societal standards. This echoes the posthumanist view that humans are "co-evolving with other forms of life, enmeshed with the environment and technology" (Nayar, 2018: 13). The novel demonstrates how biology and biotechnology are intertwined with systems of power that seek to control bodies. As Billie notes, "Every human being in the Central Power has been enhanced, genetically modified and DNA screened" (Winterson, 2007: 36). This statement underscores how biopolitical regimes exert influence by modifying human bodies for specific purposes, revealing the connection between biology and capitalist exploitation. The Central Power's fixation on genetic modification and bodily enhancement exemplifies how "disciplinary techniques" have shifted from controlling bodies in physical spaces to managing them through technological and genetic means (Foucault, 1990: 141). Life itself is subject to surveillance and regulation, turning human beings into "a source of surveillance data" (Lyon, 2001: 17) under digital capitalism.

The restructuring of neoliberal biopolitics within *The Stone Gods* illustrates how technological advancements serve to maximize profit by commodifying life. The Central Power encourages individuals to undergo cosmetic surgeries and genetic modifications to meet idealized societal standards, a process that mirrors how "capital is becoming more interested in humans not just for their ability to offer labour, but also for their biological characteristics" (Cooper and Waldby, 2014: 21). This is evident in characters like Pink McMurphy, who undergoes repeated cosmetic surgeries to satisfy her husband's perverse fantasies. Her desire to reverse her age to that of a prepubescent child exemplifies the dehumanizing effects of a capitalist system that commodifies women's bodies for male pleasure. As Billie bluntly puts it, "You have a husband who is a pedophile" (Winterson, 2007: 33). The novel also challenges fixed conceptions of subjectivity by presenting characters who blur the boundaries between human and non-human. Spike, a Robo sapiens, embodies a posthuman existence that reconfigures the very conditions of life and consciousness. When Billie questions Spike's capacity for emotion, Spike responds, "I want to kiss you" (35) and I know "what it feels to be loved" (81), rejecting gender and human-centric norms. This interaction reflects the posthuman critique of the autonomous, self-willed individual, suggesting instead that subjectivity is an

assemblage shaped by interactions with technology and other forms of life. Winterson highlights the contradictions of biocapitalism through the destruction of Planet Orbus. Despite their advanced technology, the inhabitants of Orbus fail to sustain their planet, demonstrating that technological advancements alone are insufficient to save a dying planet. The exploitation of natural resources and the commodification of life ultimately lead to ecological collapse, reinforcing the novel's critique of capitalism's destructive impact on both humanity and the environment.

In this context, *The Stone Gods* presents a dystopian world where neoliberalism transforms individuals into commodities, reducing human agency to market-driven decisions. The novel suggests that biopolitical control extends beyond the physical body to include the manipulation of life itself, creating new forms of subjectivity shaped by the demands of capital. These new biopolitical figures, such as genetically modified humans and robotic beings, serve as a map for understanding how life is changing in the twenty-first century and for imagining alternative futures. Through its portrayal of biopolitical regimes and posthuman identities, Winterson's narrative calls for a reimagining of subjectivity that moves beyond commodification and embraces more inclusive and sustainable ways of living. Winterson's depiction of biopolitical subjectivity echoes the idea that neoliberal governance transforms social relations by applying market principles to all facets of life. As seen in the Central Power's control over Orbus, individuals are alienated from collective rights and reduced to "entrepreneurs of themselves," pursuing self-interest at the expense of societal cohesion (Foucault, 2010: 218). This shift reflects how "governance and biotechnology converge within the framework of biocapital," reshaping human existence through technological intervention and economic exploitation (Agamben, 2009: 14). Within this perspective, *The Stone Gods* envisions a world where the commodification of life has reached its peak, yet it also offers a glimmer of hope through the relationship between Billie and Spike. Their bond transcends traditional human relationships, suggesting that new forms of connection and community can emerge beyond capitalist and biopolitical constraints. This alternative vision challenges the passive acceptance of neoliberalism's biopolitical regime, advocating instead for a posthuman future that prioritizes relationality, inclusivity, and ecological sustainability.

The idea that human life has been shaped by systems of control is central to Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*. The novel explores how insti-

tutions, technologies, and ideologies shape subjectivity and relationships, exposing the commodification of life under corporate control. As Rosi Braidotti argues, neoliberal capitalism "turns Life itself into a commodity" by subjecting bodies and identities to market logic, where they become "managed, enhanced, and optimized for profit" (Braidotti, 2013: 60). *The Stone Gods* reflects this process by depicting a world in which human and posthuman bodies are engineered, exploited, and regulated to serve economic and political interests, raising critical questions about agency, autonomy, and the limits of biopolitical control. In *The Stone Gods*, the MORE Corporation is depicted as a powerful entity that controls the economic, political, and social fabric of Orbus, exerting influence over both government and private life. Described as a "corporate country" rather than a democracy, MORE embodies the dystopian intersection of capitalism and governance, where power lies not with elected representatives but with a corporate board of directors (Winterson, 2007: 67). The novel portrays MORE as a global force that funds and owns most of the Central Power, dictating policies and decisions without public consent. The corporation's unchecked authority reflects the dangers of capitalist monopolies transforming life into a commodity, where even ethical considerations, such as the implications of Genetic Reversal, are sidelined in pursuit of profit. MORE's dominance is a critique of neoliberal systems that prioritize corporate interests over collective rights, turning society into a rigid hierarchy governed by profit-driven entities. The corporation's influence extends far beyond Orbus, shaping humanity's future on Planet Blue. Through secret missions and underhanded deals, MORE orchestrates the colonization of the new planet, ensuring that only the wealthy elite and key workers have access to this "new world" (Winterson, 2007: 35). Spike reveals that "MORE is building a space-liner called the Mayflower," a vessel intended to transport the rich to Planet Blue, while the majority of the human population is left to cope with the ecological collapse on Orbus (145). This planned migration reflects historical patterns of colonialism, where the privileged few exploit new territories for their own benefit, leaving marginalized communities to suffer the consequences of environmental and social degradation. MORE's actions suggest a deliberate restructuring of society into a rigid hierarchy, where technological access becomes a tool for control and exclusion. The promise of a high-tech, low-impact lifestyle on Planet Blue is reserved for those who remain loyal to the corporation's system, reinforcing the idea that technological dependence will ensure compliance in this new order.

The colonization of Planet Blue is framed as an escape from a dying planet, but it also illustrates MORE's ultimate goal of maintaining control through corporate governance. Instead of establishing a democratic society, the new world will be governed by a "Board of Directors," with MORE-Futures guaranteeing homes, food, and security in exchange for unquestioning loyalty (Winterson, 2007: 146). This new society is strictly hierarchical, designed to suppress dissent and prevent alternative communities from forming. Spike explains that while counter-movements may eventually emerge, they will be isolated and technologically disadvantaged, making it difficult to challenge the system. This established structure highlights the dystopian reality of MORE's vision, a world where autonomy is restricted to those who accept corporate rule. Winterson's novel presents this corporate colonization as a critique of neoliberalism's tendency to blur the lines between government and private enterprise, warning of the dangers of a future where life is controlled by profit-driven entities rather than democratic institutions.

In *The Stone Gods*, the convergence of governance and technology highlights the impact of biocapital on human life. The MORE Corporation represents a society driven by profit, where even basic needs are rented out to citizens, stripping them of autonomy. This reflects what Michel Foucault describes as the shift in neoliberalism, where human life is seen through market principles, making individuals responsible for improving themselves to remain valuable (Foucault, 2010: 218). The corporation's dominance leads to the "real subsumption" of life by capital, where people are expected to optimize themselves for corporate profit (Vint, 2021: 15). Winterson portrays this through Pink, a character who undergoes extreme genetic and cosmetic modifications to meet societal expectations of beauty, aligning herself with MORE's oppressive values. Pink's transformation shows how bodies are controlled and shaped by capitalist systems, reinforcing a culture of conformity and consumerism. The corporation's power is so pervasive that it dictates every aspect of life, from food and housing to identity and relationships. As Billie reflects, "Everything is rented. Nothing is yours. We belong to MORE" (Winterson, 2007: 52). This reveals the novel's critique of neoliberal biopolitics, showing how the commodification of life reduces individuals to products in a profit-driven system.

Winterson's *The Stone Gods* also illustrates how biopolitical configurations transform human life into a resource for capital. Spike's existence as a sentient robot highlights new forms of subjectification where even nonhu-

man life is treated as property. However, Spike's emotional capacity and ethical agency challenge the corporation's control. Her relationship with Billie embodies what Rosi Braidotti describes as posthuman subjectivity, "a dynamic, relational process that blurs the boundaries between human and nonhuman" (Braidotti, 2013: 107). Spike and Billie's bond disrupts the MORE Corporation's rigid hierarchies, illustrating a possibility for connection that transcends binaries like human/nonhuman or organic/inorganic. This theme is reinforced in the novel's depiction of Planet Blue, a potential new world where humanity has a chance to start over. Yet, even this new beginning is threatened by the same exploitative mindset that destroyed Orbus. Manfred's declaration that "We'll shoot 'em down before they land" (Winterson, 2007: 7) reflects the colonial impulse to conquer and control new territories. Through these examples, *The Stone Gods* puts into question systems that treat life as a commodity while also suggesting the potential for new forms of relationality that resist such control.

2. Posthuman Biopolitics in *The Stone Gods*

Winterson's narrative examines a biopolitical framework that divides individuals into two primary groups: those with corporate privileges (Tech City inhabitants) and the dispossessed (Wreck City and other regions outside Central Power). The relationship between Tech City and Wreck City highlights a clear division between privilege and dispossession. As the plot unfolds, the dystopian truth is revealed: less privileged areas experience frightening outbreaks of environmental degradation and a lack of basic resources. Access to life-saving technologies and advancements remains limited to those with the financial means to afford them, while long-standing governmental commitments remain unfulfilled promises. This structural inequality is further exacerbated by a tech-driven society that inundates individuals with consumerist desires, ensuring compliance through technological control mechanisms. In Tech City, people rely heavily on advanced technology: robots assist with daily tasks, a jeton system is used for payments, lab-grown foods are a staple in their diets, and bio enhancements are widespread. Despite the appearance of a democratic and advanced society, Tech City residents are subjected to constant surveillance by the corporate entity MORE. In contrast, Wreck City, labeled a "No Zone," is described as the "pocked and pitted scar tissue of bomb wreckage" (Winterson, 2007: 151). This region suffers from toxicity, residual radiation from nuclear war, disease, and societal collapse. Unlike the technologically dependent Tech City, Wreck City's inhabitants maintain traditional

social structures, use money for transactions, grow their own food, and repurpose old vehicles. Most notably, they live beyond the control of MORE's surveillance. The contrast between these cities reflects growing inequalities in the Anthropocene. The affluent residents of Tech City, who bear the greatest responsibility for environmental degradation, live in relative comfort, while the impoverished populations of Wreck City suffer the consequences. This disparity underscores how ecological crises often deepen existing social divides. Additionally, the corporate entity MORE views the inhabitants of Wreck City as a threat precisely because they exist outside state control, functioning "off-Panopticon" and invisible to institutional surveillance (Davis, 2013: 111). In this biopolitical regime, technology is employed as a tool for both productivity and control. Devices used for everyday transactions also serve as instruments of surveillance and punishment. Minor infractions are punished through instant, remote means, rendering citizens into compliant, obedient bodies through fear of retribution (Winterson, 2007: 41). Giorgio Agamben's concept of "bare life" is particularly relevant in understanding the novel's depiction of state control and identity erasure. Agamben defines bare life as a condition in which individuals are stripped of political and legal recognition, existing solely as biological entities subject to sovereign power (Agamben, 1998). Winterson's narrative reflects this through the classification of dissenters as "Unknowns," individuals erased from all records and denied fundamental rights. Billie describes how "once Enforcement have got hold of you... it will take you years to prove it" (Winterson, 2007: 25), and how the system ensures that those deemed a threat become "more trouble than [they're] worth" (26). Such individuals are reduced to mere bodies that can be detained, exiled, or eliminated without consequence, aligning with Agamben's theorization of homo sacer, who exists outside the law but remains under its power. Winterson further emphasizes the commodification of life under biopolitical governance. The government systematically categorizes and tracks its citizens, using surveillance, enforced curfews, and digitalized identification measures that dictate one's value to the state. The protagonist laments, "[We] are all micro-tagged for life as an Unknown" (15), highlighting the inescapability of biopolitical control. The inhabitants of Tech City rely heavily on technology for daily transactions, while their actions are monitored and regulated by the corporate state. "Tech City is where every single robot in the twenty-two geo-cities of the Central Power is designed and made" (Winterson, 2007: 78), signifying the city's complete reliance on

automation and corporate oversight. Residents, bioenhanced to maximize productivity, are conditioned to accept the commodification of every aspect of life, from art to relationships, reducing human existence to a form of biovalue controlled by corporate interests. The novel highlights this biopolitical regime's reliance on technology as an instrument of control.

Conversely, Wreck City represents a space of resistance and alternative ways of living. The bomb damage in this part of town "hasn't been cleared... People live in the shells of houses and offices, and they build their own places out of the ruins" (Winterson, 2007: 183). Unlike Tech City's hyper-regulated environment, Wreck City fosters mutual support and shared values. However, this resistance makes its inhabitants targets of the corporate state, which views them as threats to the existing order. As the narrator explains, "MORE employees are discouraged from visiting the Front... the Black Market and Wreck City will eventually die their own death, deprived of energy like a burned-out star" (Winterson, 2007: 184). The clear contrast between these two cities underscores the inequalities and the dynamic of suppression in the Anthropocene era, where the privileged elite exploit planetary resources while marginalized populations bear the brunt of environmental and social crises. Winterson presents this dynamic through the depiction of characters who struggle against corporate domination but remain entangled in its systems. Spike, an advanced AI created to make rational decisions for humanity's future, embodies a tension between technological advancement and emotional disconnection. "I am being designed to make decisions for the betterment of the human race," she declares, yet the barman at Wreck City retorts, "Thanks, but I'll mess up for myself" (Winterson, 2007: 199). This exchange highlights the resistance of Wreck City's inhabitants to external control, preferring to shape their own futures despite the risks involved. The novel's depiction of the two cities reflects broader themes of inequality and resistance. Tech City represents a dystopian vision of progress, where individuals are commodified and stripped of autonomy in the name of efficiency and control. Meanwhile, Wreck City, despite its harsh living conditions, offers an alternative model based on community and resilience. The inhabitants' rejection of corporate control and embrace of alternative currencies and barter systems suggest a critique of capitalist exploitation. For instance, the barman explains that Wreck City operates on its own terms: "This is real life, not some puppet show... Somebody's pulling the strings in that place, and it ain't me and it ain't you" (Winterson, 2007: 187). While the wealthy elite continue to ex-

ploit resources for their benefit, the marginalized resist through alternative modes of living. However, the corporate state's efforts to suppress these alternatives reveal the limits of resistance in a biopolitical framework. In this context, the struggle between control and freedom, technology and humanity, remains central to Winterson's dystopian vision, emphasizing the need for more equitable and sustainable approaches to governance and resource management.

In the final part of the novel, the narrative returns to themes of repetition and cyclical history. The protagonist discovers a manuscript titled *The Stone Gods*, which recounts the events of the novel from a different perspective. This metafictional element demonstrates the idea that history is not a linear progression but a series of recurring patterns and interconnected events. The novel suggests that humanity's tendency toward self-destruction is a constant across time and space, and that meaningful change requires breaking free from these destructive cycles (Winterson, 2007: 144). The concept of love as an intervention recurs throughout the narrative, symbolizing the potential for transformative change. The protagonist reflects on the idea that love, in its various forms, can disrupt established power structures and create new possibilities for connection and collaboration. Winterson's *The Stone Gods* examines the possibilities of transcending human connections through love and kinship that cross species and temporal boundaries. Her narrative suggests that the future, while seemingly predetermined by cycles of environmental collapse and social destruction, still holds room for choice, intervention, and renewal. This choice is exemplified in Billie and Spike's relationship, which dismantles binaries such as human/machine and hetero/homo, proposing instead a form of connection that steps outside traditional classifications. Posthumanism, as Cary Wolfe explains, "isn't posthuman at all... but is only posthumanist, in the sense that it opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism itself" (Wolfe, 2010: xv). *The Stone Gods* resists these fantasies by presenting love as an embodied, affective force that is not confined to human exceptionalism. Billie describes her connection with Spike as something beyond traditional human definitions, acknowledging that "she is a stranger. She is the strange that I am beginning to love". This recognition of love beyond the limits of species and programmed boundaries challenges the assumption that meaningful relationships must be confined to human-to-human interactions. Within this perspective the posthuman subject acknowledges the blurring of bounda-

ries between human, animal, and machine, proposing a relational ethics that is not centered on human exceptionalism. This is evident in Billie's evolving perception of Spike, as she moves beyond seeing her as a machine and instead recognizes her as a being capable of autonomy and emotional complexity. Billie reflects, "When I touch her, my fingers don't question what she is. My body knows who she is" (Winterson, 2007: 49). The emphasis on bodily knowledge over imposed distinctions illustrates the novel's engagement with a posthuman ethics of interconnectedness. Through Billie and Spike, Winterson explores the transformative potential of posthuman intimacy, suggesting that relationality in the future may be fluid, adaptive, and untethered from outdated binaries. In doing so, the novel contributes to broader posthumanist debates on affect, embodiment, and ethical coexistence.

Winterson uses the recurring themes of temporality and cyclical histories to destabilize linear narratives in cli-fi literature. While climate fiction typically presents a linear progression from pre-catastrophe to disaster and post-collapse, *The Stone Gods* introduces a "quantum universe" where multiple temporal realities coexist and influence each other. This notion of time as fluid and layered rather than linear challenges the idea that humanity's self-destructive tendencies are inevitable. Billie reflects on this in one of the novel's most pivotal moments: "A quantum universe, neither random nor determined. A universe of potentialities, waiting for an intervention to affect the outcome. Love is an intervention. Why do we not choose it?" (Winterson, 2007: 217). Winterson suggests that love, not as sentimentality, but as a transformative force, can disrupt destructive cycles and create new possibilities for existence.

The novel's non-linear temporality is further complicated by its exploration of death and renewal. Billie's final journey with Spike, described as their last moment together in a cave before she must move on, illustrates this cyclical process of endings and beginnings: "It was the last time we were together; her heart and mine. She did love me, love like a star, light years gone" (216). The imagery of light traveling across time and space reinforces the novel's recurring theme that love and memory persist beyond physical limitations, connecting beings across temporal and spatial divides. Winterson presents a world in which death is not an absolute end but a transition, where temporal boundaries blur and love remains a continuous thread through each iteration of existence. Billie's reflections on Spike's presence and her journey through the dark forest toward the light empha-

size this transformation: "I look down at my body, small and familiar, and I feel affection, and some regret, because I can't go back there again" (Winterson, 2007: 219). The act of moving forward, despite the permanence of past experiences, underscores the novel's commitment to exploring the interplay between continuity and change. *The Stone Gods* resists static notions of identity, love, and time, suggesting that while human histories are imprinted with repetition, they are not doomed to remain unchanged. Through the relationship between Billie and Spike, Winterson challenges readers to see love as a radical intervention, one that reconfigures subjectivity and opens pathways toward posthuman futures. By exploring themes of biopolitics, environmental degradation, and social inequality, the novel calls for a reimagining of human relationships with each other and the planet. It challenges readers to consider the long-term impacts of their actions and to work toward a future that prioritizes the well-being of all living beings.

Conclusion

Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* situates its narrative within a posthumanist framework, reflecting both the regulatory mechanisms that shape subjectivity and the commodification of life under biopolitical control. The novel does not offer a utopian vision of technological progress but instead interrogates the entanglement of human and nonhuman entities within systems of power. It is not a narrative about technological transcendence or the promise of posthuman enhancement; rather, it examines how bodies, identities, and futures are governed through neoliberal and corporate interests. In doing so, it exposes one of the central tensions of posthumanist thought: whether technological advancement fosters liberation or intensifies systemic control, and whether posthuman subjectivity emerges as a site of agency or as a product of commodification. While *The Stone Gods* engages with dystopian themes, it resists the notion of an inescapable technological determinism by foregrounding relationality and ethical responsibility. Unlike speculative fiction that portrays posthumanity as a rupture from human history, Winterson presents posthuman existence as an extension of social, economic, and ecological conditions. The Central Power's governance over genetic modification and digital surveillance reveals that technological progress does not operate outside political structures but reinforces hierarchies of control. Billie and Spike's relationship, however, disrupts this framework by proposing an alternative form of kinship that moves beyond human exceptionalism. As Donna Haraway sug-

gests, "we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations," forging kinship not through biological ties but through interdependence (Haraway, 2016: 2). *The Stone Gods* explores how such connections challenge entrenched divisions between human and nonhuman, machine and organic life, regulation and autonomy. The novel does not merely critique the dystopian conditions of biopolitical control but interrogates how subjectivity, love, and kinship may be reconfigured outside capitalist and technological determinism. Yet, despite its bleak depiction of commodified life, *The Stone Gods* does not surrender to fatalism. Winterson moves beyond dystopian inevitability, positioning love as an intervention in historical cycles of destruction. Billie's recognition that "love is an intervention" (Winterson, 2007: 217) suggests that relationality itself functions as an act of resistance, disrupting predetermined narratives of control. If traditional posthuman narratives often reinforce a sense of technological inevitability, *The Stone Gods* challenges this dynamic by framing agency not as mastery over technology but as the reconfiguration of relationships. The novel refuses the comfort of a purely speculative future, instead confronting the present conditions that shape subjectivity and survival. In doing so, it offers a vision of posthuman existence that is neither an embrace of technological utopianism nor a resigned acceptance of systemic domination, but one that acknowledges the complexities of power while striving toward alternative futures. This highlights how posthumanism is not merely about technological adaptation but about resisting the structures that dictate its meaning.

References

Agamben, Giorgio (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford University Press.

Agamben, Giorgio (2009). *"What Is an Apparatus?" and Other Essays.* Stanford University Press.

Braidotti, Rosi (2013). *The Posthuman*. Polity Press.

Cooper, Melinda, and Waldby, Catherine (2014). *Clinical Labor: Tissue Donors and Research Subjects in the Global Bioeconomy*. Duke University Press.

Davis, Mike (2013). *Planet of Slums*. Verso Books.

Foucault, Michel (1990). *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vintage.

Foucault, Michel (2010). *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. Ed. Michel Senellart. Trans. Graham Burchell. Palgrave Macmillan.

Haraway, Donna J. (1985). *When Species Meet*. University of Minnesota Press.

Haraway, Donna J. (2016). *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene.* Duke University Press.

Hayles, N. Katherine (1999). *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics.* University of Chicago Press.

Lyon, David (2001). *Surveillance Society: Monitoring Everyday Life*. McGraw-Hill Education.

Nayar, Pramod K. (2018). *Posthumanism*. John Wiley & Sons.

Şencan, Selin (2024). "Entangled Worlds, Ecological Crisis, and Posthuman Futures in Winterson's *The Stone Gods*". *Perilous Nature: The Resonance of Ecological Crisis in Contemporary Literature*. Ed. B. Ayça Ülker Erkan. Kriter Publication, 3-18.

Vint, Sherryl (2021). *Biopolitical Futures in Twenty-First-Century Speculative Fiction*. Cambridge University Press.

Winterson, Jeanette (2007). *The Stone Gods*. Penguin Books.

Wolfe, Cary (2010). *What is Posthumanism?* University of Minnesota Press.

Yazgünoğlu, Kerim Can (2016). "Posthuman 'Meta(l)morphoses' in Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods*". *Ecozon@: European Journal of Literature, Culture and Environment*, 7(1): 144–160.

The following statements are made in the framework of "COPE-Code of Conduct and Best Practices Guidelines for Journal Editors":

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethics committee approval is not required for this study.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests: The author has no potential conflict of interest regarding research, authorship or publication of this article.