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Transgressing Binaries: Gender Narratives and Liminality

in Jeanette Winterson's *Frankissstein*

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“In the space between chaos and shape there was another chance”

— Jeanette Winterson

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Disclaimer

This thesis explores different gender identities and narratives that have been constructed in the last two centuries and now become deconstructed due to linguistic and cultural change (inclusive language, visibility of LGBTQ+ rights, #metoo movement) within media, but also within literature, particularly in Winterson's *Frankissstein*. This means that a few remarks are necessary for understanding gendered language and inclusive terminology that is used in my further analysis.

Considering the current studies within *Intersectional Feminism*, the non-binary inclusive pronouns "they/them" will be used to analyse the character of Ry Shelly who is presented as non-binary character.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Disclaimer	ii
Table of Contents	iii
1. Introduction	1
2. Thinking in Binaries: An Overview of Gender Constructed Category	2
2.1. Historical Background: Patriarchal Thinking in the 19 th Century	2
2.2. Cultural Narratives and Gender	4
2.3. Butler: <i>Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity</i> (1990)	6
2.4. 21 st Century: Expressive Gender Identity and Liminal Space	8
3. Spatial Liminality – (De-)Constructing Gender Identities in <i>Frankissstein</i>	10
3.1. Transgressing the 19 th Century Grand Narrative of Patriarchy	10
4. (De-)Constructing Gender Identities in <i>Frankissstein</i>	11
4.1. Literary Space: Plot Structure in <i>Frankissstein</i>	12
4.2. Intertextual Space and Binary Gender Identities	13
4.3. <i>Take it Easy</i> (1972) – Patriarchal Mainstream and Gender Narrative	14
4.4. Transgressing Spatial Time: Past and Present	16
4.5. Literary Space and Gender Narrative	17
4.6. Private Space.....	17
4.6.1. Domesticity and Gender Identity	17
4.6.2. Intimate Space: Mary and Percy Shelley	26
4.7. Public Space.....	29
4.7.1. Technological Space and Gender Identities	29
4.7.2. The Cloakroom	46
4.7.3. The Bar	48
4.8. In-Between Space	50
4.8.1. Fluid Gender Identity: Water Symbolic	50
4.8.2. Victor’s Office: Manchester.....	54
4.8.3. Victor’s Secret Lab: The Tunnels	55
4.8.4. Mental Institution: Bedlam.....	57
5. Conclusion	60
Works Cited	63
Selbstständigkeitserklärung	67

1. Introduction

Doubleness is nearer to the truth for me. *Frankkissstein* – (Winterson 119)

Jeanette Winterson's adaptive novel *Frankkissstein* (2019) advocates for gender fluidity, which furthermore locates the story within a postmodernist discussion. Since Winterson uses postmodernism as a tool in terms of fragmentation, intertextuality, and the merging of several meta-levels into one plot, her notion of romantic love, also subtitled as "a love story" incorporates physical and mental ambivalence. This means that liminal space becomes highly significant because heteronormative thinking is not only disrupted, but "othered" in relation to queerness of homosexuality. Hence, this thesis will analyse this postmodernist novel in depth under the concepts of gender identity, narrative, and liminal space. Furthermore, Winterson uses the postmodernist tool of intertextuality to emphasise language and that expressing identity through language and fiction links the past to the present and is able to shape the future. This strategy and the fluidity of time calls for a new notion of temporality which can be held by the fictional frame. Multiple narratives about gender identity open a liminal space for development and fluidity, meaning that several identities can exist simultaneously. This means that gender identity is not performative, but expressive, and can shift in different settings. Thus, this thesis will discuss several debates about identity, language and particularly Winterson's female, male, and non-binary characters whose bodies are embedded in a patriarchal matrix. The ability to challenge the constructed gender ideas is possible due to Winterson's refusal to accept a final definition in binaries. She rather opens a liminal space in which characters can be "double" or be both: Feminine and masculine simultaneously.

Winterson not only takes on Shelley's novel and re-writes it, she transgresses perceptions of body and gender binaries, as well as fixed identities. Winterson addresses the existential debate about human existence: what are the boundaries of body and being and are humans tied to it? By creating a protagonist whose body incorporates both: fluid gender identity and bodily features of both male and female, the novel shifts attention from the traditional binary discourse to a transgressive one. Non-binary protagonist Ry Shelley lives in a patriarchal embedded culture in which their gender is produced due to its attributed social roles, appearance, and sexual orientation. However, their self-expression of non-binary identity challenges those external attributed norms and explores liminal spaces of identity. This self-expression depicts the struggle between incompleteness and wholeness of their body, using the postmodern concept of fragmentation on a both a formal and a content level. Fragmentation makes it

possible to open a spatial liminality of in-between that deconstructs the tradition of romance quest for love, for example the relationship between Ry and Victor. Ry as non-binary character challenges the ideology about a traditional modernist dominance relationship between masculine and feminine gender identity that is shown through the intertwined plot about the relationship between Mary Shelley and Percy Shelley.

Through the template of this plot, Winterson examines the various options for human interaction and relationship and highlights the need for liberating female bodies from the masculine dominant discourse and what is nowadays called “the male gaze”. She places the binary concepts of masculine and feminine into a liminal literary space in which the act of becoming and shifting between the two dichotomies is possible. Femininity and masculinity can be re-written and become fluid within fictional liminality. In order to form meaningful relationships and find love, the characters have to explore their own self-limits of body and gender identity, which happens non only internally, but also externally through communicative interactions with one another. Moreover, the role of the current debate about gendered language, the role of language within reality and fiction becomes focussed. Winterson argues in favour of hybrid identities and uses the liminal space within fiction as space of becoming as well as space of possible debates concerning the futuristic development of AI, transhumanism and technological induced sexual pleasure.

2. Thinking in Binaries: An Overview of Gender Constructed Category

Since narratives are culturally and historically part of different types of discourses, the first part of the chapter will specify the definition of “gender narratives” and how literary and cultural narratives are formed. The second part will focus on cultural and historical beliefs in the 19th century; it particularly will explore the gender narrative during Mary Shelley’s time in British society which consisted of restrictive binary thinking, specifically in social roles of the male and female population. The relationship between male and female thus was singled out as only being allowed within the realm of heterosexuality. The third part, moreover, will analyse how patriarchal narratives and fixed notions of gender become the dominant discourse and thus possess the power within the social frame.

2.1. Historical Background: Patriarchal Thinking in the 19th Century

Ellen Moers coined the term “Female Gothic” in 1976 to particularly highlight how female novelists of the 18th and 19th century, such as Mary Shelley, used their coded narratives as spatial instruments to express their fears of domestic prisons and female sexuality. Not only

did Shelley instrumentalise her narratives, but also her mother Mary Wollstonecraft wrote a ground-breaking feminist work, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) that critically addressed the inequality of women's rights considering the separate spheres of education, politics, job professions and mainly to make their choices in life. The immobility of women in professional and private spaces were caused by the very strict socio-cultural norms that were very restrictive for women of the 19th century. Particularly during the prudish Victorian Age, Hughes states that

...men and women's roles became more sharply defined than at any time in history. In earlier centuries it had been usual for women to work alongside husbands and brothers in the family business. Living 'over the shop' made it easy for women to help out by serving customers or keeping accounts while also attending to their domestic duties. As the 19th century progressed men increasingly commuted to their place of work – the factory, shop or office. Wives, daughters and sisters were left at home all day to oversee the domestic duties that were increasingly carried out by servants. (K. Hughes)

Thus, the Victorian Age ideology of "separated spheres" started to conceptualise gendered spheres, which means that spheres were separated by the assumption that certain type of duties only belong to male or female citizens. This also means, that the innate genital organs also determine the gender within society. Sex and gender therefore form two interwoven categories that lead to an overall unit. One's own gender is determined from birth; it is not possible to choose one's own gender on the basis of social conventions. Hughes explains this ideological thinking as "rested on a definition of the 'natural' characteristics of women and men. Women were considered physically weaker yet morally superior to men, which meant that they were best suited to the domestic sphere" (K. Hughes). However, not only did social norms restrict women to the domestic sphere, they also prevented them from participating in what was seen as the "male exclusive" educational sector. Hughes refers to branding women who seemingly were too much engaged in intellectual pursuits as "blue-stockings" which was "the name given to women who had devoted themselves too enthusiastically to intellectual pursuits. Blue-stockings were considered unfeminine and off-putting in the way that they attempted to usurp men's 'natural' intellectual superiority (K. Hughes). Hence, it was rather appropriated for well-educated young women "to soften her erudition with a graceful and feminine manner" (K. Hughes). LeBlanc calls the enforcement of heterosexual structures upon women in the 19th century a "confining standards of dress and behaviour for women...and a deliberate stifling of women's creative potential, through reinforcement of "marriage and motherhood" as the only acceptable mode of self-definition" (291). Consequently, self-definition, identity and thus also chosen gender was embedded in a cultural limited frame of possibilities.

These hierarchal and male-dominated structures furthermore meant that women had less rights and political power due to lack of representation. The argument that Wollstonecraft hence used was a comparison between the heated debate about the Abolition of the Slave Trade and the stance of women in society: “I call women slaves, I mean in a political and civil sense; for, indirectly they obtain too much power, and are debased by their exertions to obtain illicit sway” (Wollstonecraft 178-79).

Additionally, the cultural and social restrictive gender roles, male and female, were also influencing research in fields of medicine and science. Liggins comments on medical procedure in the 19th Century as closely connected to the body or investigating the body and thus being prohibited “practices which involved looking at dead bodies [and] were classified as potentially perverse” (129). Furthermore, she continues that “observing the body and writing about it in meticulous detail became a hallmark of the era, as bodies on display in hospitals, morgues, dissecting theaters, on the gallows and in the medical textbook testified to the significance of the physical structure of men and women to social development” (129). Liggins also states, similarly to LeBlanc’s argument, that “binary models of difference prioritize men as healthy and intellectual, whereas women were “dominated by the involuntary periodicity of the reproductive system” (130) The strict mentality of thinking in hierarchical binaries only offered women such as Wollstonecraft or Shelley a voice within the literary frame. Hence, literature became an empowering tool for female voices to reclaim literary space.

2.2. Cultural Narratives and Gender

Nünning argues that in taking the tools of narratology and analysing cultural narrative fictions, it is possible “to contextualize literary fictions by situating them within the broader spectrum of discourses that constitute a given culture” (Nünning 356). Nünning refers to a cultural dominant discourse, which in social theory is related to issues of power and domination. Hence, culture is formed by discourse which consists of narratives and thus also becomes part of the literary world. Narratives that are embedded in cultural settings hence provide an insight into cultural discourses such as gender discourses at a specific point in time. This is of high importance because gender discourses and their constructive manner are challenged by postmodern texts such as *Frankissstein*. This means that traditional sexual and gender binaries are sought to be re-written and solved through a fluid liminal space. Winterson uses social and physical space in her plot as constructed spaces in which she challenges gender perceptions. The perception of binaries is something that is influenced by language and social power structures, as seen in Foucault. In a Foucauldian sense, discourse is usually defined as the

relation between language and reality, which also relates to the gender discourse. Additionally, discourses re-enforce existing social power structures since they influence and shape language and vice versa. Thus, power and discourse can be seen as a cyclical symbiosis. This symbiotic foundation directly links the gender discourse to language. In his Essay *The History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction* (1976) Foucault explains that the body and sexuality are cultural constructs and do not refer to natural phenomena. This further means, that sex and gender are distinct terms and need to be considered as follows:

Sex as the preferred term for biological forms, and gender limited to its meanings involving behavioral, cultural, and psychological traits. In this dichotomy, the terms male and female relate only to biological forms (sex), while the terms masculine/masculinity, feminine/femininity, woman/girl, and man/boy relate only to psychological and sociocultural traits (gender). (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “Definition of GENDER”)

This complements the argument that not only do sex and gender form binary positions, they also form their relation through binaries. While male/female distinctive features refer to the biological form of sex, masculine/feminine categories apply to the aspects of gender and gender identities. Feeney et al. thus define the term “cis” or “cisgender” as a reference to “a person whose gender identity is the same as their assigned sex” (85). This means that a person’s gender aligns with their assigned sex, however, “cis” is not an inclusive term for all gender identities. Contrasting to a cis gender identity is “trans” or “transgender”, which relates to “a person whose gender identity differs from their assigned sex” (85). The importance hereof is that gender identity is a self-identifying process of becoming. Thus, gender identities are individually formed and not fixed categories. The lines and boundaries between different gender identities are blurry and fluid.

Feeney et al. define “gender identity” in their glossary as follows: “How a person self-identifies their gender, which may include man, woman, genderqueer, or other gender identities. A person’s understanding of their gender identity can begin as early as age 2” (85). Feeney et al. further suggest the term “gender expression” for conveying their gender identity through appearance, affect, behaviour, and activities (85). Another significant definition that needs to be addressed is the term “gender non-conforming”, to which Feeney et al. explain that the term describes “a person whose behavior or appearance does not follow prevailing cultural and social expectations about what is appropriate to their assigned gender (and thus assigned sex)” (85) and conclude that people who define their gender outside of restrictive binaries can be referred to as “gender nonconforming or genderqueer” (85). Westbrook and Schilt equivalently state that “many people use genitalia (biological criteria) to determine another person's gender in

(hetero)sexual and sexualized interactions” (34). This means that appearance and certain bodily features lead to stereotypical categorisations of gender. The aspect of assuming a certain gender then is part of a heteronormative system that normalises social expectations about heterosexuality and add to the idea of fixed gender binaries.

2.3. Butler: *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990)

One important author that questioned these strict binaries was Judith Butler, whose theory about gender connects to the ideas of poststructuralist dominant power structures. In reference to Foucault’s idea about power production, Butler remarks that “juridical systems of power produce the subjects they subsequently represent” (2). She goes on to explain how language and politics add to a problematic process of emancipation due to its system:

...the juridical formation of language and politics that represent women as "the subject" of feminism is itself a discursive formation and effect of a given version of representational politics. And the feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation. (2)

According to Butler, this system does not provide women a way to emancipate their own identity since their gender is still produced in an embedded patriarchal frame within society: “they are produced and restrained by the very structures of power [and discourse] through which emancipation is sought” (2). The cultural production of a restrictive binary gender narrative, thus, is imbalanced and unequal since it is dominated by patriarchal discourse. Butler then raises the following questions to seek a transgressive space for gender identities: “What happens to the subject and the stability of gender categories when the epistemic regime of presumptive heterosexuality is unmasked as that which produces and reifies these ostensible categories of ontology?” (8). Butler continues to state that both binaries, masculine and feminine “are thus instituted through prohibitive laws that produce culturally intelligible genders, but only through the production of an unconscious sexuality that reemerges in the domain of the imaginary” (8). Since she argues that gender and gender narratives originate in a space of construction, which furthermore also means that

the construction of a coherent sexual identity along the disjunctive axis of the feminine/masculine is bound to fail; the disruptions of this coherence through the inadvertent reemergence of the repressed reveal not only that "identity" is constructed, but that the prohibition that constructs identity is inefficacious. (28)

The behavioural pattern of the binary genders of masculine/feminine are socially sanctioned if they are not following a constructed norm. Cultural configurations about masculine/feminine

are therefore bound to the framework of binaries. Butler speaks about “unity” of gender which is an effect that is based upon identity main-streamed into a system of heteronormativity (30). The formation of the heteronormative system is rooted within a binary gender narrative. As stated earlier, narratives are formed through language, which means that literature becomes a very significant tool for challenging constructed conventional binary gender categories and deconstruct them.

By depicting a fictional world that interrogates science and patriarchal structure, it becomes very evident that in *Frankenstein* Shelley tried to shine a light on the exclusion of women, not only spatial-wise in certain physical locations, but also on a mental level considering language, narrative and thus discourse. This can be seen among the characters which are depicted, it does not include a strong independent female character. Elizabeth Lavenza, for example, is an orphan that is raised by Victor Frankenstein and later becomes his love interest. From a postmodern perspective this shows a behavioural pattern of grooming which is one underlying structural power of a patriarchal society. Elizabeth is dependent on Victor and raised as an extended self of his. Interestingly, because she is denied a self-chosen identity and determined by the male dominant discourse. Furthermore, this leads to her death which metaphorically signifies a negation of the female gender in a scientific and progressive space of the early 19th century. Thus, literary space is the tool for feminist critique of science itself, as can be seen in Mellor’s analysis of *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters* (1988). Particularly because Victor’s work of creation is done without any female body who gives birth to the creature. This means that the exclusion of female reproductiveness also provides a lack of nurturing and mothering linked directly as part of the female gender identity as explicitly mentioned by Darwin. The removal of a mother figure creates a male dominated narrative in which the act of creation is exclusively linked to patriarchal structures, however, it also reduces the creature to a mere object. This later on leads to the creature feeling abandoned, not having a nurtured education and thus no language to communicate. These factors are usually highly influenced by a parental mother who provide love and care for their child. Due to common social conventions about stereotypical binary gender roles, Victor is unable to step out of his masculine scientific bound identity into a nurturing feminine one. It becomes very clear that as soon as the creature becomes alive it does not have human features nor can it mate or reproduce with another being since it is a singled out species. Therefore, it wishes for a female companion which Victor denies him as well.

Education and language as shown in Foucault thus form a productive system of strictly binary genders, excluding characters such as the creature which exist in a space of in-between.

Winterson challenges this notion of gender narrative since it is constructed by social structures, which means those narratives can be challenged by and within literature. As seen by Shelley's huge success, literature provides an insight into a mindset of a narrative voice that has been written by a female but produces mostly male characters. Literary texts thus have the power to challenge, transform or re-write certain gender narratives that are outdated and bound to a specific period in time, as *Frankissstein* does. Winterson takes on Shelley's creation and changes the place and time to show that literature and thus language in a postmodern context are an infinite play of signifiers. This leads to the transgression of "some 'real' meaning *external* to language" (Sfekas 1). Thus, literature becomes a liminal space itself in which gender identities can be produced and exist simultaneously.

While in *Frankenstein* fragmentation is related to dichotomies such as human vs. non-human, member vs. non-member of society, heterosexuality is the only socially acceptable metaphorical frame for the characters to shift through. Winterson challenges this performative gender construct and moves beyond those binaries, using de-centredness and fragmentation as a tool to escape from these conventions. For Ry and Mary the space of in-betweenness or co-existence is of high importance since their gender identities transgresses the boundaries set around the Victorian times. The possibility of walking through the mindset of first person narrative voices within a literary frame furthermore provides the readership with an insight into an internal thought process and identity development of the characters.

2.4. 21st Century: Expressive Gender Identity and Liminal Space

Throughout the last couple of years and particularly with the #Metoo movement and highlighting the importance of intersectional feminism, it becomes apparent that bodies and gender are not inseparable and that "doing gender" rather changed into "being gender" as part of a more inclusive term, particularly because "trans-gender" and "cis-gender" exist and refer to a part of identity. Although the discussion of gender language assumes that language influences discourse and maintains social systems that need to become more inclusive, language and literature offer a special transgressive space that allows them to be expressive. Expressing a gender identity also challenges gender perception from an external focus meaning other people might misread certain stereotypical features and interpret them within a binary constructed category. For the purpose of this paper, I suggest considering gender as self-expression of true self that takes place whenever a person consciously decides to signify their gender over language, clothing, art, or literature. This further means that expression of gender does not necessarily have to be restricted to language, it is a non-verbal message as well. Gender

is an identity that transgresses the bodily boundaries and should be seen as fluid, also spatial-wise. Here, the concept of liminality corresponds to gender identity since it means the state of being in-between, for example in-between masculinity and femininity.

The term “liminality” has been first used by Arnold van Gennep in his *Rites de Passage* (1909) to describe spiritual spaces or realms during ritual rites. Within the context of queer and gender studies, liminality refers to the state of in between genders, also referred to as gender fluidity: “Individuals who change gender rules and refuse to conform in socially prescribed ways of gender expression often fall somewhere between female or male. In other words, they enter a liminal space” (Dentice and Dietert 70). Transgressing binaries and transgressing the concepts of female/male gender offers a liminal space in which fluid shifts can occur. Dentice and Dieter further define liminality as something that appears

before/during gender identity transition. In some cases, transitional liminality may result in a personal transformation that is helped along by ritual processes and the formation of supportive communities. In other cases, more permanent, socially imposed liminality may produce insecurity and/or vulnerability; especially for individuals who exhibit ambiguity in their gender presentation and may or may not be transsexual. (70)

Thus, liminal space considering gender identity is a transitional, transformative and transgressive space not only within a social frame, but also within an individual space within the self of a human being. This is what Dentice and Dietert describe as “the art of becoming” (90). Instead of a fixed gender identity, Richardson argues that in a scenario in which lesbians have long-term relationships with transmen “the messiness of these sexual and gender identity boundaries” (M. Richardson 374) becomes apparent. Richardson further argues that “these are the kinds of complications...that confront us, and they remind us that categories are messy and continually changing...” (374). Therefore, identity and self are non-restrictive and transgressive categories which highly depend on individual experience and expression. Taking into account that “self” means “the union of elements (such as body, emotions, thoughts, and sensations) that constitute the individuality and identity of a person” (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “Definition of SELF”) it becomes apparent that the self consists of more elements, including physical and abstract emotions. Not only are the elements hybrid and can include one another, but the boundaries of these elements are also fluid. The in-between spaces or liminal spaces between these elements provides an insight and significance that would otherwise be filtered out completely. Moreover, the liminal space offers a metalevel of transformation for character development during the plot.

3. Spatial Liminality – (De-)Constructing Gender Identities in *Frankissstein*

Frankkissstein explores the boundaries of gender identity construction while using the particularly postmodern tools of intertextuality, liminality, and meta narrative to show the social constructed concepts of gender and identity. In the following subchapter, the establishment of constructed gender identities within a patriarchal frame of the 19th century tradition will be analysed to demonstrate from chapter 4 onwards that those constructions are challenged and subverted within the plot of *Frankissstein*.

3.1. Transgressing the 19th Century Grand Narrative of Patriarchy

When asked about having a tie to the 19th century traditional novel, Jeanette Winterson responds in an interview with Catherine Bush in 1993: “Only insomuch as you have to destroy it” (Bush and Winterson, “Jeanette Winterson” 56). The notion of transgressing singularity when it comes to narratives can be seen in the plot structure of *Frankkissstein*.

Shelley’s characters are portrayed in a very much heteronormative and gender binary relation. The male characters such as Victor Frankenstein, William Frankenstein, Henry Clerval, Robert Walton and the Blind Man of the DeLacey family are well-educated, belong to family structures and have access to travelling and movement, which means spatial transgression of boundaries. On the contrary, female figures such as Elizabeth Lavenza are immobile and narrated through the first person narrator Victor Frankenstein or his creation. The latter is assumed to be of male gender since he is wishing for a female companion. The gender binaries in Shelley’s *Frankenstein* are still very much present since each character is defined through dualities: Father – Son/Creature (Victor – Monster), Husband – wife (Victor – Elizabeth), Father – Son (Blind Man – Felix). These dualities form a fixed cultural system in which the characters only possess so much room for manoeuvre.

The grand narrative of patriarchal thought and binary thinking becomes quite apparent as well as the Rousseaux notion about “l’homme naturell”, Rousseau outlines the development of inequality as the opposite of equality within a natural state of man. He argues that the state of nature has been destroyed and corrupted by culture and socialisation. For him, this equality is to be found far away from society in nature, which he regards as the only source of truth. Hence, as soon as humans enter society or conform to a certain set of constructed rules, humanity becomes corrupted in a sense that society establishes hierarchy. Front states that “to become a subject recognized in the social arena, one must move within the boundaries of heterosexual matrix, complying with reiteration of a set of permissible ways of behaviour, the code of dressing and the way of moving which are already infused with social meanings” (19).

Society thus has been very restrictive with how subjects can move within its frame, roles have been imposed onto female and male bodies. Before the pill and the sexual revolution in the late 1960s, the female body has been closely tied to the concept of motherhood, carer, and nurturer in contrast male social roles. This hierarchy also has supported the construct of the dominant patriarchal system of the 19th century. Foucault's notion in *Discipline and Power* supports this interpretation since he argues that "the power of the Norm" (Foucault 184) produces a homogenous norm (184), or further a patriarchal form. This means that individuals are trained to obey a certain set of rules produced by the power within a system. The norm, which in terms of gender and sexuality can be referred to as "heteronormative", surveilles subjects within a social context to produce, what Foucault calls "docile bodies" (294). The perception of a male or female body and how it is produced within social structures is thus highly dependent on manipulation through the disciplinary execution of power. The grand narrative of patriarchy thus can be linked directly to a dominant male discourse that is exclusive and heteronormative. So how can it be disrupted? Winterson challenges these fixed gender roles and power systems in stating that within literature

it's important to push the form further. So with all the preoccupations of modernism, which are my preoccupations, and the glorious realities of the 19th century, I hope to bring together a different kind of fiction, certainly a fiction that makes space within it for the female voice in all its complexity. (Bush and Winterson, "Jeanette Winterson" 56)

Complexity here refers to the concept of transgressing a binary category, which means that female voices are not only related to gender concepts such as being singularly feminine. Winterson argues for the grey zone that is liminality. Femininity and masculinity are not the only categories for narrative voices, in her earlier work *Written on the Body* (1992) she establishes a genderless, nameless narrator. Thus, Winterson breaks through the patriarchal shaped binary rules that can still be found in Shelley's *Frankenstein*, in which Victor and/or the monster motivate and narrate the plot as primarily male characters. In *Frankissstein* these structures are challenged due to the fragmented and disrupted plot, not only demonstrating how gender roles are socially constructed, but also how to transgress and outgrow them. The following chapters will examine the liminal spaces characters will enter into and what this means for their gender binaries and identity.

4. (De-)Constructing Gender Identities in *Frankissstein*

Gender Identities can be constructed and deconstructed through several different variables. One possibility is through the dominant discourse which consists of layers such as

cultural embedded heteronormativity, which is formed through narratives and thus language. Since the patriarchal structures within society are also significantly linked to the power of language, gender identity is dependent on the external factor of social norms and narratives. Language itself forms narratives that build up mindsets, also through political agenda in which some minorities of gender identities are not represented at all. Mindsets develop as a result of interaction of humans as members of society, including thinking, cultural traditions, ceremonies, behaviour and language. This means that people as members of societies and being embedded in a socio-cultural frame are part of a hierarchical divide that is primarily driven by the dominant discourse. Social change thus has to occur in the head space of humans, the focus has to be shifted in a mental and physical space which form a dialectical relationship with social structures such as gender identities. Social production happens through power and dominant discourse as argued by Foucault, is also discussed by Lefebvre in pointing out that social production and thus gender identity happens through space.

In literature, space is formed through geographical locations and furthermore through mental space. Particularly in novels, the narrative voice walks the readership through the depicted fictional world, which means that perceptions of characters are directed in a certain way or are restrictive. Thus, literary space is also a construct in order to form gender identities since it produces fictional spaces through narrative. It becomes a progressive transformative process in literature that requires a reader's attention. Shifts of attention in *Frankissstein* mean shifts of space as well. Winterson uses binary positions of space such as external vs. internal space or domestic vs. natural space and disrupts them through unexpected events in the plot. She plays with preformed ideas, traditions, stereotypes of spaces and time and thus challenges the reader to become more aware of the binary categories they are thinking in.

4.1. Literary Space: Plot Structure in *Frankissstein*

Literary space such as fictional texts in general provides a specific communication system between text and readership which allows the latter to experience a fictional reality with their mind. In *Frankissstein* the structure of the plot including two different first person narrators also allows the reader to move within two different mindsets. This spatial possibility offers the reader to experience self-identity due to the shared thoughts of the narrators. In a Platonic sense this means that reality is created by the mind and furthermore reality is challenged and altered within the frames of cognitive processes such as cultural mindset. The internal headspace opened up by the two narrators allows the reader to move along within the mental thought processes of Ry and Mary. This provides the reader with a possibility that

fictional characters lack since they cannot enter the headspace of other characters. They perceive the other characters through verbal communication only which bears the disadvantage of limited knowledge. Thus, first person narratives offer the closest chance to a core truth of self of the characters.

Furthermore, Winterson chooses a plot during which the culturally constructed binary gender narratives, which have been established through the heteronormative and dominant discourse, become apparent. Hence, literature serves as a tool for challenging culturally shaped narratives; Butler and Foucault have shown that gender is performed in interactions and constructed through dominant discourse.

This means that most importantly gender is done on a level of language, non-verbal and verbal, and also heavily relies on the cultural setting in which it is performed. This is problematic in so far as the dominant discourse is accepted without being challenged. This means that it determines which standard is to be applied. A social mainstream thus is produced by mostly heteronormative narratives, which means the construct of binary heterosexual identities become the dominant paradigm. The exclusion of minorities who are not identifying themselves according to the norms of the dominant discourse, creates a need for the notion of fluidity and liminal space. The demand for a rather complex gender identity can be seen in *Frankissstein*. The spatial and temporal shifts offer liminal space for deconstructing fixed gender labels, as well as concepts about identity, and sexuality.

Front argues that a new notion of temporality is needed in Winterson's work due to the fact that space in Winterson's novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* (1985) transgresses the dichotomies of masculinity and femininity (13). This becomes also apparent in *Frankissstein* since Winterson merges the past and the present into one fluid plot. Front furthermore addresses the symbolism of fluidity that goes hand in hand with the new notion of temporality: "Winterson creates dissonant chronotropic frameworks, repudiating linear temporality and spatiality...The fluidity of time and water resonate in timeless floating subjectivity, characters, cities, love along with shifting postmodern world, gender and sexualities" (13). Thus, spaces become significant through not only the narrative voice, but also through the characters that move through them.

4.2. Intertextual Space and Binary Gender Identities

The plot for *Frankissstein* begins with a 1972 song lyric as the first epigraph of several others appearing in between the unnamed chapters. Not only do they structure the beginning and ending of each chapter, they furthermore include intertextual references to various other texts of all eras and genres. With the first epigraph of the novel being a lyrical part from an

Eagles song, namely *Take it Easy* (1972) Winterson sets up a literary liminal space in which clues of irony set the tone for the whole plot. Knežević explains the function of irony and its technique in a postmodern context as follows

...irony is not a new postmodern technique, but continues and often intensifies the ironic literary technique of the previous periods. Since it questions the surface intentions of the work, it is not surprising that, in the postmodern era, with its denial of absolute knowledge and the accompanying idea of multiple truths (231)

Thus, irony itself can open up a layer of liminal space that can hold several possible “truths” or “fragments”. Winterson’s novel *Frankissstein* offers a plot in which a female and non-binary narrator tell the story, which means that within a postmodern framework, the dual concepts of wholeness and fragmentation appear. In a postmodern frame, fragments point to the liminal space of in-between, the “not yet” or “becoming”. However, they are not ranked hierarchically, which means that in *Frankissstein* the focus does not lay on the grand narrative of patriarchy, but rather on the micronarrative of non-binary gender, language, body, and an identity. Fragmentation then becomes an important tool to make room for liminal space in which several, sometimes also paradox ideas, can be held. Moreover, Lindenmeyer argues that in *Written on the Body* Winterson also disrupts the notion of a coherent body as well as the relation between two binary bodies, which also applies to *Frankissstein*: “The notion of a coherent body relating to another coherent body (in a male/female couple, via sexual difference and complementarity) is broken up into many surfaces which are able to ‘dock’ and bond with other surfaces in a transitory union” (52).

For establishing a transitory union between sexual difference and complementary, Winterson divides the text on a formal level using individual intertextual quotes between chapters. These are atypical non-philosophical remarks and further a mixture of classical literature, and quotes from media-effective interviews. In the following, it will be explained how the song of the Eagles is not only to be understood ironically, but that it also opens up the plot as a criticism of the grand narrative of patriarchy.

4.3. *Take it Easy* (1972) – Patriarchal Mainstream and Gender Narrative

Although the 1970s embraced the idea of free love and expression, this was not inclusive for women. While sex, drugs, and Rock’n’roll built a slogan for a stereotype of masculinity, women were upheld to a certain level of naivety, ideal beauty and particularly flawlessness. The creator of the film series *Killing Us Softly: Advertising’s Image of Women* Jean Kilbourne analyses the negative beauty stereotype of female gender roles:

The sex symbol stereotype portrayed an image of ideal beauty that was based on an unattainable flawlessness — an image that still exists in advertising, Kilbourne said. “When you are surrounded by images of young, beautiful women and told that what is most important about women is how we look and that that’s where our value comes from, then really the only way to be considered valuable is to be beautiful. And that means in this culture to be young. (qtd. in Anglely)

These constructed identities concerning gender were also part of approving the pursuit of underage girls or groupies. This specific phenomenon can be seen in the opening lyrics of the Eagles song, used by Winterson as an epigraph.

The Eagles are an all male band that was quite famous in the 1970s music era. The song lyrics are about a male narrative I who is dreaming about the easy quest of love. He runs around town, “try’n to loosen my load” (Eagles, Browne and Frey) in the first verse which can signify a very phallic metaphor of having an orgasm. He furthermore dreams about seven women who all turn the narrator down. However, in Verse 2 he then lurs around the corner in Arizona (Eagles, Browne and Frey), which later in the plot is the centre for the transhumanist technology of Cryonics. The behaviour of “luring” is not only found within a frame of lyrics, luring and preying on women had become a huge socio-political issue in the United States when serial killers such as Ted Bundy observed and picked up women for sexually abusing and killing them. Thus, the lyrics of the Eagles carry a very creepy atmosphere due to the choice of wording and metaphors used. In Chorus 1, “Lighten up while you still can” (Eagles, Browne and Frey) refers to women who are not smiling or aesthetically pleasing men, in the eyes of the narrator they take life to serious and should just “take it easy” and eventually be an easy target for his (sexual) entertainment. The narrator even says “don’t even try to understand” (Eagles, Browne and Frey) which implies to simply follow his lead and his sexual agenda without worrying about anything else.

Equally important to the verses mentioned above, the narrator shifts the terminology from “women” to the diminutive terms “girl” and “baby” showing how he stereotypically objectifies a female person to pleasure him. Although Winterson only picks the first part of Chorus 2 “we may lose and we may win, though we never be here again” (Eagles, Browne and Frey), the song actually continues with “so open up, I’m climbing in, so take it easy” (Eagles, Browne and Frey). While the first part implies a convincing argument as why the girl should enjoy the moment and not worry or “take it easy”, the second part becomes rather explicit: Using the metaphor of a car to relate to a female body. The narrative voice commands the girl to “open up” so he can “climb in” which very much adds to the creepy and predatory undertone the song includes in contrast to the rather cheerful and hippie rhythm. Additionally, the

predatory lyrics also depict a moment of fantasising and fetishizing a girl. There is no verbal answer of the girl to the narrators' thoughts and even the words "Come on, baby, don't say maybe" (Eagles, Browne and Frey) explicitly speak on behalf of the girl in Chorus 2. There is no indication that her reply or her consent is even asked for.

The intertextual reference to a 1970s song indicates that although the feminist movement of the 1960s/70s had already started it was only concerned with working professions and not so much with gender representation or social mentality towards female bodies. The female body was still sexualised by mainstream culture; *Take it Easy* is one of the most significant songs being put in the Rock'n'roll Hall of Fame. Winterson uses this lyrical epigraph to demonstrate how mainstream misogyny still has been a few decades ago in popular songs. Furthermore, it also shows how binary thinking was very much presented in a light-hearted musical way, so it becomes enjoyable. The first person narrative voice assumes the gender of the women he talks about, he constructs his own reality around her physical appearance, it is an external interpretation that does not include female autonomy.

This gender construct also opens up the critique as to why we think in binaries. Moreover, lyrics as being part of a literary discourse also have to face the issue that they live for eternity. They capture specific gender ideas and mentalities during a specific period in time and also depict how constructed those are. The plot then progresses into the temporal past of Shelley's socio-political times during which people and particularly women as a minority were left behind or excluded from society.

4.4. Transgressing Spatial Time: Past and Present

By interweaving the novel's binary plots, Winterson challenges the categorisation of gender because there is not a clear distinction between male and female. Both plots shift between past and present which are also not clear oppositional categories, but rather have to be defined as constructs of time. Furthermore, different periods of time offer a literary insight into different mindsets that are represented through both narrators, Ry and Mary. They can also be interpreted as mirrored versions of different historical re-contextualisation: Mary's gender identity is still bound to a predominately patriarchal society categorising people into the binary gender. By letting the reader wander through Mary's mind, those constructed ideas are disrupted by the second narrator Ry who lets the readership experience a social fictional world in nowadays Britain in which those gender binaries are to be disrupted.

4.5. Literary Space and Gender Narrative

The following 27 chapters are also strongly reminiscent of a menstrual cycle due to their number, but the number of menstruating days for biological born female people is usually 28. This suggests that Winterson intentionally reduces this particular number to show that women are not tied to their biological sex. The missing space offers a liminality for self-identification. Furthermore, it adds to the argument within the intersectional feminist discourse, in which menstruation is not an indicator for gender binary identities. It rather acknowledges that menstruation itself is non-binary, which means that female gender identities also include also includes transsexual and non-binary as more specific gender categories. The chosen frame of the chapters thus depicts a fictional liminal space for progression and adding to the discussion of fluid identities. Winterson also uses the metaphor of a cycle to show that there is not beginning and end for creating a gender identity, it shifts through phases and can transgress culturally and socially embedded gender constructs. Fluidity is shown through the two narrators which lead through the plot and also transgress time and space. Although it seems as if the two narrators are oppositional, they are both fragments of one and the same gender discourse depicting again the liminal space in which gender identities develop and progress.

Physical space also symbolically represents a body in which identity and gender can develop or be shaped. Physical space includes not only public or private buildings, it also refers to locations in which cultural meaning can be formed. Architecture offers textual readings, not only because they are embedded in a literary framework and thus language, they also offer another metalevel of analysis because they represent physical locations in which the characters move through. The second part also closely relates to identity and how it is not shaped by internal processes such as cognitive ones, but additionally through the external surroundings. Thus, the following chapters will analyse the fluidity of public, private, and in-between spaces and the gender identities of the characters who move and interact within those spaces.

4.6. Private Space

4.6.1. Domesticity and Gender Identity

From the very structural fixed gender binaries described in the epigraph of the Eagles, the plot shifts not only to the past, it also becomes fluid from its opening line “Reality is water-soluble” (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 1). This means that reality has the ability to dissolve itself or shift into another form of fluid. Hence, reality is not a stable and fixed factor that is the same for every individual. It dissolves its shape and form and re-forms new aspects, much like the water metaphor it is embedded in. The first person narrator, describes a moment of a week’s

rain (1) and states that due to the rain “Every solid thing had dissolved into its watery equivalent” (1). According to Front water imagery such as lakes, rivers, or rain create a new notion of temporality, shifting beyond the dichotomies (13). Particularly Lake Geneva as first spatial setting in the plot offers in itself the notion of in-between since its geographical location is shared by the borders of France and Switzerland. Front continues explaining that

the fluidity of time and water resonate in timeless floating subjectivity, characters, cities, love along with shifting postmodern world, genders and sexualities. [...] The strategy, together with multiple narration, opens up the possibility to illustrate the plurality of selves within the subject. (13)

The narrator’s identity remains ambiguous, the mentioning of “my dress” (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 1) only hints at assuming that the narrator can be considered female. Clothing for both men and women is culturally defined, it can be read and interpreted as linguistic sign and thus also used as a non-verbal expression. Gendered appearance thus is closely linked to being constructed, furthermore, it is tied to sex characteristics and body ideals. The character even questions what the use of “sodden clothes” (1) is and of “covered buttons so swollen in their buttonholes that I had to be cut out of my dress yesterday” (1). Clothing thus is a complementary social role-playing between two fixed binary genders and further is using the social space as an execution for power relations. Depicting Shelley as naked and leaving the domestic sphere to wander around in nature depicts a journey of a character, that is restricted in a social setting and moves into another spatial realm in order to ground themselves. Letting go of the clothes and its gendered expression, the character of Shelley transforms into a self outside of binary systems. Female bodies are read as a signifier of her own identity in a social system, which Shelley escapes here and wanders naked on the rooftop of the house. Shelley even states that

I reflected that without language, or before language, the mind cannot comfort itself. And yet it is the language of our thoughts that torture us more than any excess or deprivation of nature....What would it be, to be a being without language – not an animal, but something nearer to myself? (2)

Shelley refuses to be defined as the ideal well-behaved woman. She transgresses the domestic sphere and simultaneously explores her own train of thought. Here, language as a factor that produces a system of fixed rules, also has the ability to either control the discourse, but also shape it.

The space of in-between social restrictive London and the wide mountains as well as in between the borders of Switzerland and France allow the character to move in a liminal self-expressed space and unfold their thoughts and wishes:

In London I was not so content as I am here on the lake and in the Alps, where there is solitude for the mind. London is perpetual; a constant streaming present hurrying towards a receding future. Here, time is neither so crammed nor so scarce, I fancy, anything might happen, anything is possible. (3)

Transgression happens within the character's mind since it is a liminal space in which the first narrative voice of Shelley can express their whole being and chosen goals independently from social restriction of binaries. Significantly important is the physical space here, self-expression happens within her mindset, which can be seen with by the use of the intertextual reference to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act III, Scene 2 in which the interchangeability of binary male and female characters happen. Lysander, Demetrius, Helena and Hermia switch their roles and become the other person; only if they fulfil their role and truly become mature and accepting of the other, they can exit the liminal space of the forest. This means that they have to have a certain type of transformation to experience growth and transgression. This is the moment in the plot in which Shelley climbs the roof and envisions her creature: "Then I see it. I think I see it. What do I seem to see?" (4). Moving up in a physical space and simultaneously being in her own thoughts, this moment seems to just belong to Mary. In her mind she can explore beyond social boundaries, however, visualising a creature or a being might cause her doubting herself as stated in the quote above. Although Mary sees something, she cannot believe what she saw or if it is "seemingly" true. Exploring her fictional realm of mind and also wandering around in the physical world add another meta-level to the plot. Mary's mind is free from the limited social space that she is stuck in. Additionally, her being naked, adds to a sense of freeing her body from social restraints. Comparing to her moving from the liminal space in her own mind back to a social space, she behaves completely different. As soon as she encounters her husband Percy Shelley, it becomes clear that she switches back to her socially gendered role of being a wife: "So I left him at seventeen and these two years have been life to me" (5). Her gender identity is bound to her social role, again formed in a binary. Intertextually, Shakespeare's Sonnet 53 is cited by Percy: "What is your substance, whereof are you made? / That millions of strange shadows on you tend" (5). This sonnet is particularly concerned with the belief that all things are divided into "substance" and a "shadow" meaning that the perception of something is not real or the core truth. Truth is something between, a liminal space of seemings and hidden shadows.

This intertextual reference adds to the metalevel that is opened through references, meaning that not only is the linearity of the plot disrupted, but furthermore, also the relationship between Mary and Percy is. Although both form the unit of husband and wife fulfilling their

stereotypical and traditional gender roles, in this scene only Mary is naked, and Percy is not. Furthermore, there are no quotation marks to indicate direct speech between the characters. This clearly shows that the reader is embedded in a sort of stream of consciousness, so Mary's thoughts flow into a conversation and the other way round. Since direct speech and thoughts are not separated, they become a fluid entity. Moreover they do not differ between the two binaries of masculine or feminine, they just exist simultaneously in one another. The formal level does add another meta layer to the content, a liminal space in which the content and the gender binaries can be challenged. The formal omission leads to the fact that a leeway is opened up making it ambiguous which character speaks. This challenges the reader to read precisely and gives him a detective and active role in the progression of the plot. The imbalance in clothing also depicts a binary patriarchal dominated system, in which females are depicted as vulnerable and impulsive. Winterson comments on the topic of marriage and her characters as follows

Outside her marriage there would be nothing to hold her, nothing to shape her. The space she found would be outer space. Space without gravity or weight, where bit by bit the self disintegrates." The male body appears meaningful in itself whereas the female one is perceived meaningless unless a man is mentioned; a woman is unthinkable without a man then, her body gains meaning under the influence of values imposed on it by the dominant culture. She organises her life around her husband and his needs, passively approving of her fate. (qtd. in Front 31)

Thus, Mary's liminal headspace is the closest the reader can get to her identity, as soon as her husband enters the physical space, her gender identity is bound by social-institutionalised binaries masculine, feminine and also by the binary husband – wife. "My husband adores Byron. Each day they take a boat out on the lake, to talk about poetry and liberty, whilst I avoid Claire, who can talk about nothing" (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 6). Here, the binaries of domestic space and outdoor space are also separated from the gender-influenced social roles, while Lord Byron and Percy Shelley carry deep conversations on the lake, Mary is bound to the house and excluded from this male dominated space. The water symbolic here is also a very powerful one since water signifies an infinite flow and a fluidity that in this case is dominated by male characters.

Interestingly, the water symbolic is reversed in the conversation Mary has with her husband, Lord Byron, Claire and Polidori. She initiates the conversation using the biblical myth of Noah and the Ark as intertextual reference in order to ask "this is our Ark, I said, peopled here, afloat, waiting for the waters to abate. What do you imagine they talked about, on the Ark, said Byron, shut in with the hot stink animal? Did they believe that the entire earth sat in a

watery envelope, like the foetus in the womb?” (7). While Mary’s serious educational statement hints at the ark as symbol for the earth and men’s fragile existence as mere guest status on earth. Lord Byron responds to her statement with a very derogatory response by pointing out the stench of the animals. He also compares the earth to the body of a woman who carries a foetus. He thus reads the earth as a feminine object that serves only for reproduction. This very sexist statement leads to a discussion between the men and Mary during which the patriarchal structures and gender binaries become very apparent: “Polidori interrupted excitedly (he is a great one for interrupting excitedly). In medical school we had a row of such foetuses....But Polidori is a doctor, not a mother. He sees things differently” (7-8). Polidori is interrupting Mary and also starts to explain the female body and its reproductive functions to her. This is what the current LGBTQ+ discourse refers to as “mansplaining”, an act that according to the dictionary means “when a man talks condescendingly to someone (especially a woman) about something he has incomplete knowledge of, with the mistaken assumption that he knows more about it than the person he's talking to does” (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “Mansplaining”).

The power structures of the binary social gender roles come forth here, particularly as Polidori and the other male characters argue with no clear understanding between sex and gender. This is due to the cultural and historical context in which they and their gender identities are formed. The irony, which is used here, points at a gendered space, which also means an abstract space of intellectual conversation:

Male children are conscious earlier than female children, said Byron. I asked him what caused him to think so. He replied, The male principle is readier and more active than the female principle. This we observe in life. We observe that men subjugate women, I said. I have a daughter of my own, said Byron. She is docile and passive. (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 8)

The communication between Mary and the male characters is imbalanced in numbers, but also in not taking her statements serious. Lord Byron uses the argument that biological development is different in female and male embryos and therefore males would develop more intelligently and consciously sooner. In addition, Lord Byron defines his own male gender according to having a daughter. He claims her body and gender as knowledge and thus as proof of his own unbiased identity, which clearly depicts his patriarchal colonist thinking. His male gender is produced through the binary position of his daughter, to which Mary tries to reason with him, stating that “Ada is but six months old! What child, male or female, does more sleep and suck when it is born? That is not their sex; it is their biology” (8). Thus, Mary’s word choice implies

that she differs between gender (sex) and biology (biological sex), trying to transgress Lord Byron's static thinking in binaries and his foremost hierarchical point of view.

On the contrary, Percy Shelley is not to be completely static with his gender expression of being male, he reacts in defence of Mary "Shelley saw my hurt and discomfort. When I read your mother's book [Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the rights of Woman*], said Shelley, looking at Byron, not at me, I was convinced by her" (9). This reaction shows that he is able to shift his mindset through the emotional connection and love for Mary. He is emotionally intelligent and able to try and put Lord Byron in his place since he does not do the same. Furthermore, Lord Byron comments on a very pessimistic outlook of the revolution and mankind responding that "The human race seeks its own death. We hasten towards what we fear most" (10). Lord Byron's character is laid out according to his status ("Byron is rich, netting £10,000 a year from his estates, yet spends only for his own pleasure. He may live as he pleases" (58)). For him, heroic deeds are a virtue, furthermore he presents himself as particularly masculine, because these qualities are clearly to be attributed to the male gender in the early 19th century. Furthermore, Lord Byron also profits himself from the patriarchal system and his social stance. However, he does not argue objectively and rhetorically superior to Mary, but he makes use of the patriarchal structures by verbally rising above Mary and attacking through his social rank. He even states that "yet death is heroic...and life is not" (11) clearly depicting his misogynistic way of thinking, he thinks in binaries (life – death) and metaphorically he also refers to the reproductive function of women's bodies (life) and the willingness of an honourable death of men (death). He does not move in a grey zone of liminal space with his identity, he strongly represents himself within the system of binaries. Moreover, Lord Byron does not depict examples for his opinion, Mary is undermining her argument with example and personal experience. This shows a reversed role of an educated mind and also provides Mary with male attributes in this conversation, which becomes apparent particularly in her reply "I said, It is men who seek death. If a single one of you carried a life in his womb for nine months, only to see that child perish as a baby, or on infancy, or through want, disease, or , thereafter, war, you would not seek death in the way that you do" (11). Significantly, it has to be pointed out that even though Mary tries to walk the male characters through her mindset and share her thoughts and truths of life, Polidori and Lord Byron are not able to follow her in this realm. Further this means that they are stuck in their fixed social gender roles, in contrast to the reader, who has a lead in information and experiences this conversation on a metalevel of irony.

Polidori, Shelley, and Byron then continue the conversation on a level of competition, during which they come up with story-writing, also asking Mary what she has to contribute:

“Mary? What say you? (Byron smiled at me.) *What say I?* But the gentlemen were pouring more wine” (11). However, again, Mary’s response is not waited for, nor does it seem to interest the gentlemen since they devote their whole attention towards the wine. Again, the stylistic device of irony opens a level for the reader to see the deconstruction of the binary gender roles. While Mary’s thoughts can be experienced, she is verbally excluded from the conversation, as well as outnumbered by the male characters. Her thoughts and thus her social gender identity depend upon the approval of the men she is in the room with. However, the male characters rather focus on an object (wine) than her contribution, thus this behaviour testifies to how the patriarchal structures are reproduced and so Mary's thoughts and transgressive new space are not given any attention at all.

Claire, as another female character, mutes herself and internalises her social female gender role and becomes somehow invisible in the plot due to lack of representation. She does not offer an insight into her character on a verbal level since she does not talk much, however her inactiveness becomes quite apparent in the relationship with Lord Byron in which he treats her with utter disrespect. He opens the window and let the rain drop onto Claire (56-57), which is also a very sexual moment, objectifying her while she is doing tapestry. Her female identity however is furthermore underlined with her holding the needle, a phallic symbol for a penis, which she does not use to defend herself against Lord Byron. Using the needle for her defence might also not be possible since it would imply homosexual tendencies which were quite frowned upon in Victorian times. Both characters also move through a female embedded domesticity, in which Claire then thus keeps up the performative femininity, moving to another chair and becoming silent again. Contrastingly, Mary and her whole gender identity is forced upon her, she is actively muted by the other male characters. To this, Ardener speaks of the “wild zone” for women that are purely “fictitious”:

Ardener designates women “a muted group” and claims that the boundaries of women’s reality and culture overlap with the prevailing group but it does not compromise them totally. He examines the “wild zone” of women's culture spatially, experimentally and physically....Considering the wild zone metaphysically, it has no counterpart in the male space for all male consciousness is encompassed by the dominant structure and therefore attainable by language or construed by it; therefore in this sense, the “wild” is always fictitious. (qtd. in Front 33)

Therefore, Mary can only enter the “wild zone” or what is commonly referred to the liminal space in her mindset. When she recounts her relationship with her parents, she is able to produce her own identity outside of social structures.

Mary further characterises her father as someone who was bound by social roles of what was culturally assumed about his male gender, a focus on education and not being connected emotionally. Latter was seen as a typical attribute to the female gender and hence frowned upon for male citizens of society: “He did this by lavishing on my mind what he could not give to my heart. He is not a cold man; he is a man” (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 12). Addressing him as “man”, Mary describes what the social expectations of the male gender were as well, he seemed incapable of connecting her through anything other than through her mind and educating her. Moreover, the two can thus only meet eye to eye within the liminal space of her mindset. This again depicts the problematic of binaries, whereas the male character is able to colonise or enter the mental space of the female, it is done through hierarchical power relations. It is not linked to progression as for understanding the female space nor for expanding the male characters’ patriarchal thinking.

Later down the plot, Percy and Mary Shelley discuss the qualities of what makes us human, and more specifically how reality is formed through narratives: “*Humankind cannot bear very much reality. That is why we invent stories, I said. And what if we are the story we invent? said Shelley*” (55). Winterson uses the literary space to create a narrative, in which Shelley’s mindset can be understood by the reader. It is an enhancement in itself that is already sufficient to challenge reader’s perspectives. Thus, text in itself can be considered transformative and transgressive. The plot complicates the distinction between fiction and real life, since on a meta-level the early 19th century characters mirror real historical people. Simultaneously, the fictional characters of the two plots, Ry and Mary Shelley as well as Polidori and Polly D., Lord Byron and Ron Lord, Claire and Claire, also mirror one another. These different perspectives in time and also some shifts in gender identities (Polidori – Polly D.) are guidelines for the reader that the text provides to create meaning because gender identities of characters are formed through narratives.

The binary narrative between “human” and “soul” and its philosophical and medical narrative becomes very apparent in the mentioning of Doctor Lawrence who states that “Life, Doctor Lawrence argued, is based in Nature. There is no ‘super-added’ force such as the soul. Human beings are bone, muscle, tissue, blood, etc., and nothing more” (56). This statement, however, is met with an outcry of the other characters (56) who ask whether there was “No difference between a man and an oyster? Man is nothing more than an orang-utan or an ape, with ‘ample cerebral hemispheres’?” (56). Within medical history, it becomes very obvious that the gender narrative has been a predominantly binary dominated one, as Marsh states “Traditional ideas of the body, whereby women were regarded as smaller versions of men, and

'turned outside in' (i.e. with internal rather than external sexual organs) were gradually superseded by a binary concept of sexual determinism, in which difference governed all aspects of physiology, health and social behaviour" (Marsh). Marsh further goes on to explain that "the body was also defined as a closed system of energy, physical, mental and reproductive expenditure were held to be in competition" (Marsh). In *Frankissstein* Polidori, a male doctor, also depicts a very sexual inappropriate behaviour towards Mary by saying "We shall all be dead soon enough...thus we cannot live as others would wish us to live, but only for our own desires. He looked at me, his hand on his crotch" (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 56-57). Polidori clearly represents male entitlement embedded in patriarchal structure. He clearly defines his own gender identity over his sexual organ and demonstrate his social bound patriarchal superiority over Mary here. Furthermore, sexual desire seems to be closely connected to a male gender role; Polidori speaks about living "for our own desires" (56) speaking in a collective term about male desire. Moreover, Polidori's movement between his legs are clearly an active mockery of Mary, turning her into the passive female character. Thus, this scene clearly depicts power binaries between the characters. Particularly with Mary's response asking, "is there not more to life than what we desire?" (57), trying to shift the patriarchal stance away from fixed definitions about bodies and sexual desires and more into a transgressive and fluid space. However, Polidori does not move along with her, he rather says that he would rather be a vampyre than a corpse (55), meaning his desires for blood and flesh are more important to him than moral or ethical implications. Living off of other humans and drinking their blood, furthermore, suggests that Polidori is not afraid to put his physical needs before others. Moreover, he states that "none finds satisfaction in death" (57). However, vampyres cannot exist without drinking blood of others, so they still have to feed their hunger while being dead creatures. So, Polidori's binary thinking here, human vs. non-human, also does not solve the problems coming along with immortality.

Mary's mind becomes more transgressive when she shifts from space of the living room with the three male characters towards her own room (58): "My own mind, though, was elsewhere. Since I had thought of my story I had been preoccupied by it" (58) and "my mind was in a kind of eclipse" (58). The only way Mary possesses to let her thoughts unfold freely is in private spaces when is dealing with them on her own. Her actual intelligence comes to light when she is alone in space so transgression can occur fluidly in her head. She contemplates working conditions and states that "humans must live in misery to be the mind of the machines" (59) since humans do not feed machines information for educational purposes, they turned machines into slave devices serving economic purposes. The binaries between human and

machine are blurred in Mary's mind since machines in the 19th century are dependent on being programmed and used by humans still.

4.6.2. Intimate Space: Mary and Percy Shelley

A different insight into a gender fluid space provides the shared moments between Percy and Mary Shelley independently from their group dynamic. These moments prove that both characters step into a space that allows for equal partnership when they are in a private setting. Contrastingly to the banter of Lord Byron and Polidori who do not take Mary's opinion seriously, Mary shares an educational space without gender binary restrictions when she is alone with Percy: "Shelley is improving my Greek and Latin. We lie on the bed, him naked, his hand on my back, the book on the pillow. He kisses my neck as we manage new vocabulary. Often, we break off for love. I love his body" (60). Intimacy here is created through sexual act. These scenes depict how performative gender identities are and how narratives can be challenged through space. In a very strict patriarchal and heterosexual setting, Mary's thoughts are purposefully made fun of or dismissed by Polidori and Lord Byron. Moreover, Mary and Percy engage in intellectual discussions with one another, during which Mary underlines that they are reading together (59). Mary and Percy both create an independent space of communicative interaction and education, thus, they are both teacher and learner which transgresses fixed notions of gender binaries. This can also be seen in the intertextual reference of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (59), which on a meta-level adds an additional meaning to this scene: Pygmalion is an artist who falls in love with one of his carved statues:

Through the good offices of the goddess, the youth took on female form – a double transformation from lifeless to life and from male to female. Pygmalion married her. It must be, said Shelley, that Shakespeare had such a picture in his mind at the close of *The Winter's Tale*, when the statue of Hermione comes to life. She steps down. She embraces her husband, Leontes, the tyrant. Through his crimes, Time itself had turned to stone, and now, in her movement, Time itself flows again. That which is lost is found. (60)

This myth does not only refer to the physical place of Italy, but also to the narrative upon which modern day literature is founded upon, namely Greek and Roman mythology. Bringing the past mythical narratives into the present blurs the lines between past and present in a literary space. Franková argues that Winterson within her literary works "shifts the Modernist time circle towards a spiral and much in agreement with the postmodern, which favours synchrony over diachrony, blurs the distinction between the internal stream of consciousness and the external time measured by the clock" (65). Thus, the intimate moments between Mary and Percy are described by direct speech in their conversation and additionally to this the reader explores

Mary's thoughts and mindset through her first person narrative. This means that fictional past events are experienced through present time narration, which brings Mary Shelley as a character into life. Percy particularly mentions that Shakespeare has taken on Ovid's *Metamorphosis* in *The Winter's tale*:

It must be, said Shelley, that Shakespeare had such a picture in his mind at the close of *The Winter's Tale*, when the statue of Hermione comes to life. She steps down. She embraces her husband, Leontes, the tyrant. Through his crimes, Time itself had turned to stone, and now, in her movement, Time itself flows again. That which is lost is found. Yes, I said. The second of warmth. (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 60)

Leontes who believes that generally all women are deceptive and promiscuous depicts a stereotypical male character. He furthermore keeps bearing a crude and misogynistic attitude which is the root for his jealousy. Interestingly, he is proven wrong in the end and it is his doing that leads to Hermione's transformation into stone. Foreshadowing in this private setting is the later complications that Mary has to endure in her relationship with Percy. Metaphorically, Mary is also turning into stone when Percy stops communicating with her about her lost children. It is not possible for Percy to step out of his patriarchal male gender identity and try to understand Mary's pain. It is also not possible for him to enter Mary's mindset or even to understand a pregnancy without communication. He is not biologically able to do this and is therefore denied this experience.

Leaving her domestic home to be with Percy, Mary enters a sphere of post-revolutionary France. In this space and time, women still have not received equal rights in terms of citizenship: "While women obtained new civil rights (inheritance, divorce), the status of citizen was reserved only for adult French men" (Hauch). Concluding, women were quite active in approaching a new identity but the patriarchal system would not let them to actually implement this on a legal level. The struggle of female identity is also to be seen in *Frankissstein*; Mary has left her home in order to be with Percy, only to realise that she has a complete biased and utopian belief system about France: "We thought to find like minds and open hearts" (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 64) and "our travels were not easy. We had no clothes. Paris was dirty and expensive. The food gave us cramps and foul smells. Shelley lived off bread and wine" (64). A reason for her disappointment and shattered illusionary dreams are her substitutional actions. She escapes her father as domineering male figure, only to subject herself to Percy wife. Mary is thus only shifting from one patriarchal system into another, always being depending on a male provider. Unfortunately, Percy has to lend money to be able to provide for their living (63) to which Mary's thoughts are ironic: "Buoyed up by our wealth, we decided to

travel, and set off into the country, seeking simplicity and the natural man that Rousseau had written about” (63). Rousseau’s idea was indeed built upon the binary ideas of civilisation vs. nature, Mary ridicules this concept for the reason that Rousseau speaks of “L’homme naturell”, the man who has not yet come into contact with society or civilization. However, both Mary and Claire and Percy are part of a society and thus already “corrupted” and further confirming Butler’s point of view. Namely that gender binaries are socially constructed, but also not easy to escape since they happen in a patriarchal power system.

Later down the plot it appears to be a shift in the marriage between Percy and Mary. As soon as Mary does not build her identity around her husband, but rather uses her mental space to freely explore a fictional area of creating something in-between “human” and “non-human”. Her creature is made out of dead human body parts, but not been born naturally by a female body (128). Instead of relying on Percy to share an intimate education together, Mary focusses on her own interests stating that “my mind is wandering to the novels I have lately read” (130). This underlines Winterson’s pursuit of highlighting the importance of language and literature and how they shape the gender discourse. Mary’s mind is shaped through her interest in politics, art and literature. In the literary frame, she can enter a liminal space in which non-binary identities such as her monster can exist. Percy even states that “for your story is more than the story of one man: there are two who live in each other” (130) and “you are father and mother to this tale. What will you name *your* creation?” (131). Thus, Mary can be read as a non-binary creator of her own literary piece, but also as her story having a life of its own (140). Thus, immortality is achieved through literature already, as Mary explains: “My story is circular. It has a beginning. It has a middle. It has an end. Yet it does not run as a Roman road from a journey’s start unto its destination. I am, at present, uncertain of the destination. I am sure that the meaning, if there is one, lies in the centre” (140). This is why Winterson questions the technological advancements and developments since literature has always been a liminal space to explore morals, ideas, and concepts of in-between. Inclusive language and telling stories from perspective of characters that belong to minorities or escape categorical thinking has been present from the origins of mythology, for example Hermaphroditus in Greek mythology. Mary as a female character relating to a historic figure is also similarly written into the plot by Winterson and fulfils the function of re-writing female characters. Even Mary states that “it is women who bring knowledge into the world quite as much as men do. Eve ate the apple. Pandora opened the box. Had they not done so humankind is what?” (133). Gender narrative from the very beginning has never been unequivocally based on heteronormative relationships. Usually female characters such as Pandora or Eve have been deemed as destructive or

threatening to humankind because of their actions and their knowledge. Thus, this intertextual reference supports the claim that gender identities have always been fluid, particularly in a cultural and literary context.

4.7. Public Space

4.7.1. Technological Space and Gender Identities

The second chapter formally begins with an intertextual reference as well. This not only structures the plot, and transgresses the linearity of a plot, but it also introduces the next chapter, as the chapters do not possess any headings or titles. Furthermore, the reference provides the next chapter with another meta-level of meaning. It initiates the second plot of Ry Shelley with the words: “Story: a series of connected events, real or imagined. Imagined or real. Imagined And Real” (23). Here, literary imagination and reality become two abstract terms that are very significant in the on-going plot, shifting the attention of the reader towards the binaries of imagination and reality. However, imagination and reality are not two separated dichotomies, they rather form a fluid relationship. Reisman argues that Winterson in *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* blurs the lines between imaginative and real:

Winterson complicates the "truths" of each setting, disrupts the binary imperative, and reveals the spaces where change can occur. The biblical, fantasy, and personal narratives are the sites in *Oranges* where the nature of wall-like belief systems are scrutinized and where meaning and identity are affirmed, contested, and then either reaffirmed or deconstructed. (11–12)

This also applies to *Frankissstein*, not only do the narrators live in different temporal spaces, but the next chapter, with Ry Shelley as second narrator, depicts a very personal insight into a transgender person and their gender identity. It is their mindset that walks the reader through the process of finding their identity, a personal narrative that allows to demonstrate how belief systems internally can be challenged through external social binaries and boundaries. Self and reality then are constructed through “stories [which] are the spaces in which the power to define oneself and one's reality is up for negotiation and interpretation. Whether the narrative's power is ultimately reaffirmed or disrupted, these remain sites of instability” (Reisman 11–12).

The space in which the second narrator, Ry Shelley, is moving through is an enclosed building in Memphis, Tennessee, describing it as follows: “I’m looking through a shimmer of heat at buildings whose solid certainties vibrate like sound waves” (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 25). Here, it becomes quite apparent that the heat of Arizona turns static material of a building into a bendable one. Buildings are formed by physical and solid walls, in contrast to gender

fluid space they are not fluid or permeable in their state of aggregation. However, even buildings can bend or collapse if they encounter heat or pressure, meaning that the perception of reality is based on dichotomies such as static/bendable. If buildings are read as social places, they possess two functions, one is protection of what is inside, the other is physical limitation since buildings can be read similarly as bodies as restrictive. The dominant patriarchal discourse is reinforced through semantic readings of buildings and social spaces. Metaphorically this means that objects which seemingly are static, such as cultural traditions or paradigms considering identity and gender also shift if there are heated debates about how they are perceived. This spatial symbolic also offers an insight into the reality in which Ry perceive the world as fluid and transgressive. Furthermore, Ry enters a public space in which a technological conference called global Tec-X-Po on Robotics is held. Technology has been widely dominated by the narrative of the patriarchal discourse and excluded other genders. Winterson particularly uses this setting to demonstrate how certain spaces, in this case technological professions, are gendered and thus constructed.

Winterson uses this way of thinking in opposites to point out how humans tend to think in categories, also known as categorical thinking, which means that naturally humans try to structure the social world to create a better understanding of it. Hence, binary thinking (dialectic) according to Hegelian tradition seeks the non-solving of two opposite terms. Dichotomies such as static/fluid tend to have connotations with positive or negative poles, which means that categorical binary thinking allows the human brain to make quick decisions. However, cognitive distortions are biased perspectives on reality. This means that binary thinking is problematic for several reasons, one is that it excludes the grey areas of in-between, but furthermore it creates a mental static space in which not a lot of thinking happens at all. This can be experienced through the character of Claire. During her first encounter with non-binary character Ry, Claire asks for their name and calls them “Mr Shelley” (25) when Ry actually corrects her stating that they prefer “Dr Shelley” (25). Their mutual miscomprehension is based on the fact that Claire’s binary thinking categorises Ry as being of male gender. She assumes that “Ry” is short for “Ryan”: “Claire – excuse me – my name – not Ryan, just Ry. I apologise, Dr Shelley, I am not familiar with English names...” (26). However, Claire seems to be unable to read the social clues that Ry is trying to provide her with. This conversational space thus is shaped by Claire’s categorical binary thinking and her assumptions which are first embossed by the dominant discourse.

It becomes very apparent when Ry comments that “Naming is power, I say to her” (26). Naming and language offer an insight into a verbal system that also creates gender identities

within a social context. Referring to the nameless creature in Shelley's *Frankenstein* both lack of education and lack of language lead to the creature feeling excluded from social groups. Identity is structured and formed through language within a community or a distinct social group. This becomes also apparent when Mary Shelley in *Frankissstein* states that when her father got remarried, her stepsister "Jane" switched her name to "Claire": "She brought with her a daughter called Jane, who soon became the ardent pupil of my dead mother's writings, and in time changed her name to Claire; I did not disapprove of this. Why should she not remake herself? What is identity but what we name it?" (62).

Strikingly, in the second plot Claire is not the one re-naming herself, but Mary/Ry who chooses an abbreviation according to their non-binary identity. Also the moment when Mary in *Frankissstein* is running from home, she is verbally claimed by Percy who was "whispering my name" (62). It becomes very obvious how deeply rooted Mary is within the frame of heterosexual and patriarchal embedded gender discourse when she leaves a note to her father claiming that "I could not break his heart without telling him I was breaking his heart. We live by language" (62). Moreover, Mary is legally and morally bound to her father as the domineering male figure. Since he has also not agreed to Mary's relationship, she is performing a rebellious act of not conforming to the female gender identity. She transgresses her boundaries while running away and making choices for herself, which adds to the notion that she is moving between spaces in a liminal realm of identity.

Generally, linguistic exclusion from the dominant discourse also imbalances the power relation between the majority and the minority of a society. Thus, Ry corrects Claire to point out how language is not only a means of communication but naming or referring to another person in certain chosen phrases also adds to constructing social identities. Claire's response to Ry telling her that naming and language carries power, she responds with a reference to the creational myth in the bible: "It sure is. Adam's task in the Garden of Eden. Yes, indeed, to name everything after its kind. Sexbot ... Pardon me, sir? Do you think Adam would have thought of that? Dog, cat, snake, fig tree, sexbot?" (26-27). Significantly, Ry also includes sexbots in the conversation about creation. Sexbots are manmade, but also, they offer a freedom of choice in the sexual fields of self-determination. Contrastingly, Claire is shocked by this enumeration, it also shows her identification with traditional roles of binaries rooted in the Christian faith. Furthermore, her religious identity is also determined by a patriarchal discourse and thus closely linked to her gender identity. Religious and technological space have already clashed as binary opposites throughout history due to the premises of tradition and the male dominant figures such as Jesus Christ that religion is founded on. Contrasting to this, technology

always has challenged those pre-existing ideas and rooted for a progressive change. This dialogue shines light to the problematic that the scripture of the bible and its interpretation is part of the patriarchal discourse. In Christian practice purity promises and lack of sexual education both sought to not only control female bodies, but also sexual reproduction and certain ideas about male and female body were directly linked to binary identities. This is based upon the belief that a woman's body was formed from Adam's rib; religious discourse is strongly dominated by patriarchal ruling structures. These lead to the fact that binary thinking set grounds for heterosexual read bodies and gender identities. This static thinking regarding social role distribution is reflected in Claire, whose opinions and self-presentation fulfil a typical female gender stereotype. Her type of behaviour is called "Hyperfemininity" meaning that exaggerated behaviour of what is commonly seen as 'feminine' is performed, including naïve, accepting and soft responses. This can particularly be seen in Claire's response to Ry asking her if she ever has been to Egypt: "Have you been to Egypt? No, but I have been to Vegas. Very lifelike. Very Egypt" (29). So Claire's knowledge about space and locations seems to be limited since she compares the imitated copy of Egyptian space and culture, namely Las Vegas, with the origins of ancient traditions in Egypt. She portrays a stereotypical feminine character that is very gullible and not well-educated. Front argues about female characters who try to affect and inspire people to join the church (40) that "the church thus provides an opportunity for women to be recognized and valued outside the private sphere. Yet, although they act independently of the men within the society, they act in service of the patriarchal ideology and are subordinated to male figures, such as God and the pastor" (41).

Another interesting factor that points at Claire's naivety is that she is actually working in a technological linked profession without expressing knowledge about technology much: "I am a venue expert, not a host, so I am not expected to have detailed knowledge of the events here" (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 30) as well as her describing the most important task of her job: "I am not even supposed to be here, said Claire. I'm emergency support. I am on release from the World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest" (31). The irony that's underlying Claire's statements clearly indicate that she feels misplaced and also portrays herself as again hyperfeminine using the stereotypical domain of the kitchen and cooking to perform her binary female gender. However, since Claire is also working in a technological embedded profession, she also reacts very irritated when Ry asks her about *Frankenstein*:

[The novel *Frankenstein* -] It's why we are here today. (There was a look of confusion on Claire's face as I said this, so I explained.) I don't mean existentially Why We Are Here Today – I mean why the Tec-X-Po is here. In Memphis. It's the kind of thing organisers like; a tie-in between a city and an idea. (27)

Here, contrasting to Claire's reaction, Ry brings forth the argument that literature, particularly the novel of *Frankenstein*, provides a literary mental space that causes shifts in mental space as well. Shelley gave birth to a creational novel that challenged religion and technology and how far the boundaries of human creation can be pushed. Ry points out the ties between pop-culture, music, and also technology. They are all part of the dominant discourse and thus shape the cultural memory, particularly the rebellious 70s. Memphis used to be the centre of popular figures such as Elvis and Martin Luther King (29). Ideas and cityscapes are thus closely connected and form meaning through one another. Similarly to how literature can shape cityscapes or vice versa through the literary frame. This means narratives form fictional realities, but they are also cultural realities in which mindsets or *Imagined Communities*, according to Anderson (1983), are formed. Therefore, identity and particularly gender identity are formed within literary and physical space.

It becomes very clear that there are metaphorical and physical places that are 'in-between' liminal spaces. Although Claire is not aware of her position, since she is also a religious Christian, she automatically is in the liminal space of in-between external technological space and inner Christian belief. Interestingly, while Ry questions things and also takes the leading role in conversation, Claire shows with her answers and no counter-question how static her identity is on a verbal level. The non-marking of direct speech and who of the two characters are actually speaking adds to the notion that binary categories of addresser and addressee also can be challenged within literary space. The plot also takes on another arguable notion within the gender debate, namely whether creatures such as robots, particularly sexbots encourage gender stereotypes such as gender binaries:

I can explain a few things. I know a few things about – (not love) – robotics. I am a Christian, Dr Shelley. There is nothing in the Bible against robots. It says in the Bible that thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image. That is one of the Ten Commandments. Is a robot a graven image, Claire? It's a ballpark likeness of a God-given human. A likeness that comes to life? I wouldn't call it life. We're fooling ourselves if we call a robot alive. Only God can create life. (32)

Here, Claire argues that robots are not mentioned in the bible, but on the other hand she compares them to God's creation of humans. In her opinion, robots are "a ballpark likeness of a God-given human" (32) meaning that they imitate humans and are outside of the gender binary system, thus also excluded from any social or legal system. Considering gender identities this means that Claire perceives robots as "non-human" and thus not being allowed to enter any categorical system of binary identity. This however raises the question whether robots are another minority that is left out of the gender discourse since every identity they own is human-

made and externally defined. The perception of their identity thus relies on the human de-coding their appearance which again points out that appearance is oftentimes misleading when it comes to a self-assigned gender identity. Furthermore, biblical values such as gender binaries have constructed Western culture, but since the Enlightenment period there has been a constant conflict between technology and Christian religion. These two seemingly dichotomies do not have to exclude one another, they are also both offering a space of in-between, since both are based upon the matter of values and ideas. Particularly values are of high importance in fields such as in ethics, philosophy, and cognitive psychology. An example would be Ry's question about Adam also including a sexbot in his list of beings or their remark towards splitting the soul and leading more lives simultaneously:

My mind idled around the difference between desire for life without end and desire for more than one life, that is, more than one life, but lived simultaneously. I could be me and me too. If I could make copies of myself – upload my mind and 3D-print my body, then one Ry could be in Graceland, another Ry at the shrine of Martin Luther King, a third Ry busking the Blues in Beale Street. Later, all my selves could meet, share the day, and reassemble into the original self I like to believe is me. (30)

Contrasting to Claire's very static self-belief, Ry's perspective shines a new light onto the human species and human identity. While in *Frankenstein* the re-animation of dead bodies ends up as Victor's creation of the other, here, the other is just becoming part of the self. Fragmentation of selves living simultaneously bears the advantage that bodies and appearance become less relevant, whereas gender identity and self become more focused. Thus, gender identity could be fragmented through copies of selves, as Ry phrases it, but also would not be tied to a body and its features of a certain type of biological sex. So moving through the technological space offers a constant state of becoming which adds to Ry's fluid identity. Furthermore, they state that

You been there yet? Not yet. You been to Graceland though? Not yet. Beale Street? Home of the Memphis Blues? Not yet. You got a lotta Not Yets in your life, Dr Shelley. She's right. I am liminal, cuspung, in between, emerging, undecided, transitional, experimental, a start-up (or is it an upstart?) in my own life. (29)

Physical spaces such as public and historic ones, as mentioned above, are linked to an expressive self and gender identity. Memphis' significance particularly within American history is tied with slavery and cotton production. Therefore, Ry and Claire are in a physical setting that formerly has fuelled the divide between the Black and the White communities, also dichotomies which were dominated by the political discourse. It becomes very obvious that the political dominant discourse is embedded in the patriarchy since Claire only mentions male figures linked to the city. The negation of certain minorities shows how constructed social ideas

about identity and self-expression are. Claire is still adding to the patriarchal narrative by not mentioning female figures, Ry also just realises that the technological space is already inhabited by male characters: “There’s a large screen showing an interview between Elon Musk and Ray Kurzweil” (35).

The biased space is also an indicator of how thinking in binaries is very much present in media, public space, and professions. An important character for depicting the bias of media involvement is Polly D. Polly D. intertextually refers to Polidori, a doctor in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, however here, not only the gender of the character is reversed from male to female, Polly D. is also a journalist. The name Polly also commonly is used for parrots, adding another meaning to the character which not only adds to the overall ironic undertone in *Frankissstein*, but furthermore bears a critique for biased tabloid press. Since the parrot symbolic hints at the repetitiveness of words and only imitating human language, it furthermore signifies the power of language and how certain narratives can be created if repeated often enough. Thus, tabloids and media have a massive influence in the perception and construction of gender narratives. Concerning gendered spaces, Steiner in her article *Gender and Journalism* points out that particularly concerning the publisher executives of women’s magazines were men and that separate gendered spheres were quite common within the sector of journalism:

In the 18th, 19th and first half of the 20th century, most women’s magazines in the United States and Europe were initially published and/or edited by men. But men reporters had little interest in covering domestic life, fashion, beauty, household tips, or society news; men had little interest in writing for women. At a time when the notion of separate spheres still held sway, important news (“real news”) had to do with men’s interests and experiences. (Steiner)

It becomes very apparent that topics within journalism are also constructed around gender binaries. Thus, the construct is disrupted by the character of Polly who instead of starting the conversation based on stereotypical perceived female ideas about fashion, shifts the whole subject into a sexual domain. This is very atypical, particularly since Claire, Ry and Polly are strangers to one another within a public sphere. By stating that Polly is “looking for Intelligent Vibrators. Where are they?” (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 33) she disrupts the debate about religion and technology and turns the whole conversation into a parodic element. This can also be seen in the way Polly introduces herself: “Your name, miss? Polly D. Just the initial D. I am on the list. We don’t have a list, ma’am. The VIP list. I work for *Vanity Fair*” (34). Interestingly, Polly refers to her last name as “initial D.” (34), which in colloquial English is an abbreviation for “dick”. Polly thus also defines herself over male-related terminology and brings in a dominant sexual energy, however, her first name can also relate to the expression of “poly” as in “polyamorous”. Hence, Polly can also be read as a non-binary character, shifting between

patriarchal structures and her own gender expression by talking about Teledildonics (34). Polly as possessing a seemingly female gender, also shifts her actions towards patriarchal behavioral patterns. Dixon et al. provide an insight into digital or technological space in general stating that there is a gender divide between female and male gender due to social structures when it comes to picking an interest in technology:

These digital gaps may exacerbate existent inequalities between social groups because new technologies provide opportunities to access information, a necessary tool for participating in a democratic society, as well as access to trade, education, job opportunities, health care information, and information about government programs. (992)

Furthermore, Polly D. as a figure symbolically points out a 21st century problem, namely the problem of the power of media. Media re-produces dominant patriarchal structures, as can be seen in Murtiningsih et al. who state that “[media] are always representing reality according to selected filters. Media is constructing reality” (144) and thus a leading factor in portraying gender stereotypes and fuelling a binary gender narrative. Ry comments on the problematic of sexual exploitation and unsolicited sexual content on the media as such:

...eighty per cent of internet traffic is pornography. The first non-biological life forms [such as sexbots] sharing our homes won't be waiters with tomato-recognition issues, or cute little ETs for the kids. Let's start at the very beginning: a very good place to start. Sex. (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 35)

This raises a very important social issue relating the gender discourse: Sparrow for example talks about the production and use of humanoid robots which are designed to mimic human women and children. This opens a problematic issue, namely that look-alikes of human women and children are for one stereotypically cherishing bodies that are forever young and beautiful. Replicants of those vulnerable minority groups such as sexbots, re-produce non-consensual or coerced patriarchal domination and spread more misogynistic attitudes. Furthermore, as Ry states, other life forms will not become servants of daily tasks or substitutional game partners for children, but due to binary gender narratives within media will become part of a structuralised degradation of human children and adults. Richardson talks about these ethical questions and inquires: “Is it possible to transfer human constructs of gender, class, race or sexuality to a robot or nonhuman? Anthropologically speaking the answer is yes. This theme has been replaced in a discussion of robots as slaves” (K. Richardson 290).

Thus, it becomes quite concerning that instead of using robots in an educational or caring setting, they have become part of the patriarchal exploitation of bodies. Richardson also argues further that men are the main customers of human sex (291) and women are more likely to buy “nonhuman substitutes such as vibrators...that stimulate a discrete part of the body rather

than purchase an adult or child for sex” (291). It is also about the design of robots that “shows a male view of sexually attractive adult female [sexbots] with three points of entry in the body, the mouth, the anus and the vagina” (292). However, these products are very one-sided and support the binary structures within society and economy. The sexbots are therefore also created in a style of binary bodies and do not contain non-binary or transitional body types. They are not created to be inclusive, but rather conform to the male gaze.

Sexbots are a representation of underlying social gender constructs and gender narrative. Another example within this chapter is Ron Lord, who re-enforces the performativity of toxic masculinity. Similarly to Claire he adapts to socially set constructed binary gender identities, even more so because he himself presents his own gender identity accordingly to a heterosexual male stereotype. Ry perceives him as a “guy waving two cell phones and wearing a headset” (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 35) and proceeds to further describes him as someone who has got “the body and built of a nightclub bouncer: broad chest, overweight, short legs, thick arms” (35). The first impression of Ron Lord in a technological space is quite negative. When entering the conversation, he not only makes a very misogynistic joke (“It’s a long way from Three Cocks” (35), he furthermore fails to address Ry in a non-binary manner (“Ryan” (35)). Through direct speech, Ron presents himself within a constructed frame of binary gender identity. He fails to ask Ry for their correct name and because he assumes that Ry is short for Ryan and thus also linguistically perceives them as being of male gender. This truly depicts again the issue of perception of another character’s gender since names and appearance cannot conclusively lead to a binary identity. Moreover, Ron misinterprets Ry’s social space within the patriarchal dominant discourse. This means that he keeps making misogynistic jokes such as “Three Cocks I think big, Ryan” (35 f.), what commonly is known as “Locker room talk” in recent years referring to the behaviour that is associated with men and their behaviour amongst themselves. Thus, Ron is also very static considering gender constructed space since he only shifts between binaries and creates a bond with Ry over his misconception of Ry’s gender. Moreover, Ron uses a word pun considering the name of a city in Wales (“Three Cocks”) and its ambiguous meaning that signifies a male penis. Hence, he tries to perform a constructed masculine behavioural pattern and portrays himself as a typical dominant macho act. Also, he disguises his very biased opinion about a binary gender identity through joking. Ironically, the village Three Cocks in Wales is an actual space that has roughly 100 inhabitants, so Ron’s actually talks about a smaller size than attempted. Typically, locker room talk excludes a mixed gender audience and rather re-enforces patriarchal power structures of the dominant discourse. Here, the space in which it happens, however, is not an enclosed changing room, but

a public space in which Ron expresses his biased opinion about gender binary identity. Public space seems to be not a culturally diverse and foremost safe space, even in the 21st century, when there is a possibility to be openly misogynistic and narrow-minded. Further down the plot this will also be seen in the attempted rape scene that almost happens to Ry. Violent behaviour towards minorities of the LGBTQIA+ community starts on a linguistic level.

Ron is a perfect example for a character that talks in a specific register about his sexbot. He uses economic vocabulary to describe his sexbot, such as “commercial variety” (36), “I love her, but she’s archive now” (36) and “she is a part of my franchise range” (36). The manner in which he phrases his words depicts a world view upon female gender that is based upon a 1950s stereotypical well-behaved housewife: “And what if you’re the kind of bloke that only wants a bot when the wife is away? Women aren’t at home all the time like they used to be. I don’t blame them; women aren’t goldfish. They’ve evolved. But, like my mum says, emancipation can be a problem for a man” (38). This kind of performative femininity includes a subordinate role that includes being patient, willing to serve their husband as well as being a great housewife in the domestic sphere. Additionally, his female products mimic the appearance and looks of porn-stars, supporting Sparrow’s claim about nourishing the ground so that sexist role models can continue to exist. Furthermore, Ron describes his first doll as follows: “I put her together with one screwdriver and the instruction video. Really, it’s Lego for adults” (36). Therefore, he creates a narrative in which the female doll is not the agent, but the passive object. He also talks very much about technicalities and how to put together the doll without any emotional reaction to her. He even compares her to constructing Lego as children do, which metaphorically signifies that he is the creator of the doll, piecing together each part to form a whole. Without his agency there would be no female end product, which shows his hubris. This creation process, however, differs from the one of Shelley’s Victor Frankenstein since Ron puts together objects and not dead body parts, which again underlines the power hierarchy that not only transgresses a human body, it furthermore highlights the issue of dichotomies between human vs. non-human. The female sex doll does not have free will not does she have the ability to be mortal or to age and change her appearance. Thus, Ron’s description and how he treats his female sexbot is held by a very high beauty standard which could also represent the narrative of the beauty industry within Western societies: “... complete with two holes, user-ready, and F-cup moulded tits. I am working on a model with detachable tits, for variety...” (47). Furthermore, Ron describes her legs and the shape as “Slightly longer than they would be if she was human” (37), which implies that her appearance is the most significant factor for him. On a meta level, however, Ron describes a sex slave and also represents what is commonly known

as 'male gaze'. This means that female gender identities are linked to the notion that they are representative sexual objects for the pleasure of a heterosexual male observer. This becomes quite apparent when Ron talks about the franchise of sex dolls: "Sexbots: buy her and own her – like I did – bring her in for a service once or twice a year, depending on wear and tear" (38). This depicts a stereotypical view upon the female gender and its constructed beauty standard; Ron sees his sexbot as a service object that is easily replaceable and also teachable under the patriarchal discourse: "They don't have a big vocabulary, no; you watch porn, don't you, so you know it's not exactly a language-lab? But we're on it – men do like to communicate. It's not just 'Hello, Big Boy'" (39). Thus, much like the creature of Shelley's character Victor Frankenstein, the lack of language de-humanises both: Victor's and Ron's creature. They cannot fully become citizens and members of society because their identity does not derive from a human body. Furthermore, Ron's example also just demonstrates how powerful language can be and that it can cause a very imbalanced communication system. He states that "men do like to communicate", whereas the female sexbots cannot do so on her own. So she is dependent on language that is fed to her, again using what Ron calls "voice response" (41). This means she responds to a certain verbal prompt caused by the user, which turn her into a passive object that adapts to external stimuli. Furthermore, Ron depicts a strictly heteronormative view of the female gender, the bodies and the function of the dolls are only related to stereotypes of the female gender. This is particularly seen in the development of vocabulary of the sex doll: "Deluxe has a big vocabulary. About 200 words. Deluxe will listen to what you want to talk about – football, politics or whatever. She waits till you're finished, of course, no interrupting (...)" (45-46.). Ron's product name of the female sex dolls again uses language to attract male consumers. Furthermore, it becomes once again quite apparent that his perception of gender narrative is a strictly binary one: He links topics such as football and politics with masculinity, while waiting and no interrupting is linked to femininity. Ron enforces a constructed realm in which binary dichotomies also have another significance on a meta-level: Namely that male and female gender narratives also signify passiveness and activeness. Thus constructed binary gender narratives are built through language, so the character of Ron using speaking time and choice of words in favour of a binary gender narrative re-produces patriarchal social structures. In doing so, he creates an imbalanced power structure between himself and Ry, who he constantly misgenders. Moreover, Ron refuses to name his sex bots (41), which means that in not naming them, they are denied an interconnectedness with others and simply remain on the level of servant. Much like the creature in *Frankenstein* those sexbots are left with no clear identity, the absence of a proper name leaves a categorical linguistic space. The lack of name,

thus, also refers to the lack of language use leading to an exclusion from social communities. Furthermore, Ron refers to his sexdolls as “Volcano”, “Autumn” or “Cheri” (42) and also calls them “night-bird” or “bird” (42) which is a very derogatory term for prostitutes.

Ron’s openly misogynistic view in a public technological space also correlates with the socio-political problem of racism. While talking to Ry he explains that his Black sister-in-law has told him not to do an “Economy black woman” (42) to which he replies, “And I love women, I do, and I thought, yeah, show respect” (42). In their recent studies about racism and sexism Sanchez et al. have found out that prejudice between both attitudes co-occur because of the common patriarchal embedded belief that some groups of people are superior to others: “In fact, social dominance orientation is more strongly linked to sexism and anti-Black attitudes than other prejudiced-related personality traits and ideologies” (Sanchez et al. 446).

Social dominance happens as a result of wanting to maintain a patriarchal structure. Even though Ron states that his clients are not all “old men” (Winterson 47), he continues by stating that they are of “all ages and stages, Ryan; sex is a democracy” (47). However, democratic space is shared by various groups who have equal rights. Ron is only speaking about the male gaze of female bodies and implies that there is a female obligation to engage in heterosexual activities, whereas he completely negates the possibility of homosexual or non-binary identities. Particularly him calling sex a democracy (47) signifies that Western societies who are built upon democratic values are still linking biological sex to gender and a preferred heterosexual identity. Language and literary space shape those mindsets but can also challenge them. Although Ron insists that his products offer and sell “fantasy life, not real life” (46), unfortunately, thinking in the dichotomies of real and fantasy are not as easily distinguishable. Since his sex dolls are however still imitating real life interactions and need to be programmed in order to be perceived as “female”. Thus, fantasy, as Ron describes it, is not the only thing he is selling, he also sells a patriarchal embedded beauty standard for female bodies. Significantly, Ron reproduces stereotypical heterosexual relationships onto human – sex doll relationships. Thus, Ron is a perfect example for stereotypical beliefs about superiority of masculinity over femininity. His remarks also underline the view on female gender identity as commercially attractive. This links directly to Butler’s argument, namely that women cannot build their own gender identity independently from the patriarchal system because they are still perceived and interpreted by men. Ron describes his dolls as something that serve mainly his sexual pleasure and entertainment, particularly because they also have an orgasm at the same time as their owner: “You can have a party, pass her around, play a hand of cards in between without worrying about her going flat” (43). Moreover, Ron never mentions consent or ethical issues,

he brushes off even the very debatable production of look-alike children (44) as something that is not his standard (44). He is part of the profiting patriarchal discourse and even ironically admits that “as a woman, even though I’m not” (45) he can never understand another gender identity nor challenge his mindset because he does not know what it means to be born female, identifying as female or simply living in a biological female body. Compellingly, since Ry is the first person narrative of this plot, Ron’s rants are perceived through a non-binary narrative figure. Thus, Ron’s direct speech and Ry’s negation of commenting on it, shakes the power imbalance. Ron now appears as over-sharing and overly justifying his business, showing what an insecure character he is who has to use hyper masculinity to mask these underlying issues.

Additionally, the location in which Ry and Ron have this conversation in, not only the technological fair, but also the city of Memphis frame Ron’s mindset. On a meta-level Memphis symbolically stands for patriarchal conservative and inflexible binary gender narrative and has shaped the anti-fluid gender identities within the LGBTQ community. Memphis also provides an insight into intense debates not only in the US, but across the Western democracies. The Tennessee Equality Project states that the state of Tennessee is one of the inflexible states for progress and is favouring anti-LGBTQ legislations (Sanders) such as “The Tennessee Natural Marriage Defense Act” which has been introduced in 2016 and is a Republican bill that “looks to “defend” marriage as “between one man and one woman regardless of any court decision to the contrary” (Aviles). However, Ry is the narrator of this chapter which means walking through a non-binary mindset provides the reader with an advantage. The result is an advanced knowledge over the character Ron, which adds to the ironic undertone. This signifies a liminal space of interpretation which is not accessible for Ron. His misconstruction of gender, such as assuming Ry’s gender is male, thus, becomes very obvious and challenges previous stereotypical binary categories of the reader.

The chapter closes with an intertextual reference to Marc Cohn’s “Walking in Memphis” (1991): “*Walking in Memphis*. I love that song. My favourite line – *There’s a pretty little thing waiting for the King ... They’re all pretty. We’re all kings. What did you say? Does it make real life more difficult?*” (51). This not only refers to Elvis as the King of Pop, Ron also mistakes Ry’s identity as heterosexual male and thus says “we’re all kings” (51). This depicts an essential problem with language, namely that language has binary categories for male and female, such as king and queen. However, formally, intertextual references to popular songs also open up another semantic level to the meta-level of public space, specifically to Memphis. It also implies that there is always a plurality of meaning, much similar to the gender narratives which are fluid and productive.

Apart from the city, the technological sphere as a male dominated space, is again established through Victor Stein's speech. Additionally to the public space, the chapter opens another layer of meta-level with a reference to Max Planck: "This mind is the matrix of all matter. Max Planck" (69). Thus, the chapter starts off with a historic male figure who had an incredible impact in scientific research. This quotation depicts a theory in which the mind is the origin of all that exists. This adds to the essential questions of whether our conscious mind can be uploaded to an alternative device out of a human body and if bodily free humans could also be free of gender binary identities. Contrastingly to the quotation of Planck's, the chapter's initial sentence in italics states "*Reality cannot bear very much of humankind*" (71). This quotation is a reversed one and refers back to T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* "Humankind cannot bear very much reality" (qtd. in Winterson, "Jeanette Winerson on the consoling power of poetry as a TS Eliot festival opens in London"). Eliot draws attention to the problematic of authenticity and self-identity. It is very difficult to acknowledge and come to terms with who we are in a sense that being human is very difficult to grasp. Notably, it is also a hint at how humans consider themselves to be a superior species, but cannot "bear very much reality", or in a Wintersonian twist: Maybe it is "reality" or metaphorically the world and the earth who cannot bear humankind as much. Furthermore, considering that Winterson prefers gender as a fluid approach, reality and shifts of perspectives need to fall under that premise as well. Another point that Front also discusses is that reality is volatile and shiftable for each and every individual, thus what can be seen in *Art & Lies* as well, "the book postulates that art surpasses time in a continuum of past and present, in other words, the past literary tradition is brought into the present, and, subsequently, they interact with each other" (196). Thus, time itself offers a space of fluidity since it is constructed formally as an intertextual reference.

Victor Stein appears as being part of a new transgressive science, however, his hubris is shown much like Victor Frankenstein through his actions ("He's a Gospel Channel scientist. But who will be saved?" (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 73). In this public setting, interestingly, not only are the binaries constructed through a domineering male scientific space, also the binaries of Religion and science clash here. Ry describes Victor as a "Gospel Channel scientist" (73) which makes him a preacher for his own interests. Contrastingly to Ron Lord, Victor Stein appears as a well-renowned public figure with a huge follower base:

Victor Stein has a big following on Facebook and Twitter. His TED talk has netted six million views. He's on a mission, that's certain. Some people wonder: whose side are you on? He'd say there are no sides – that binaries belong to our carbon-based past. The future is not biology – it's AI. (72)

While Ron represents a character that profits from commercial sales because his dolls adapt to patriarchal set binaries and a predominant male clientele, Victor sells a charming perception of a good-looking male character (“Women adore him. Men admire him. He knows how to play a room” (73)). Thus, Victor’s appearance is described as both appealing to the male and the female gaze. Furthermore, Ry’s attraction to Victor is also quite obvious by their observation about his body and dressing style: “I’m watching him as he talks. I love watching him. He has that sex-mix of soul-saving and erudition. His body is lean and keen. His hair is abundant enough for vitality, grey enough for gravitas. Straight jaw, blue eyes, crisp shirt, tailored trousers tapered at the bottom, handmade shoes” (73). Compared to Ron, Victor appears as dressed professionally and well-articulated, however, in his speech he shows that he also shares internalised binary and even misogynistic views:

The nearby world of AI will be a world where the physical limits of our bodies will be irrelevant. Robots will manage much of what humans manage today. Intelligence – perhaps even consciousness – will no longer be dependent on a body. We will learn to share the planet with non-biological life forms created by us. We will colonise space. (73)

Victor’s identity here is closely linked to the superior idea of imperialism and furthermore male domination. Humanity has mostly turned other peoples into slaves due to wars and conquests. In economic terms, the slave trade has benefitted Great Britain as well as the USA by outsourcing manual labour. Thus, substituting cheap labour with robots would simply transfer the moral issues of exploitation and maltreatment to another artificial species. Particularly, since Vitor points out that AI could gain consciousness. This means that robots would become part of human civilisation and the extreme class differences between the binaries of rich and poor humans would be shifted to rich humans and poor robots. Thus, professional space would be ruled by superior humans and robots would cover the base for this new social system. It is quite problematic since this idea of conscious robots would feed into the concept of hierarchical specism and it would also repeat the historic cycle of cruel enslavement.

Victor’s idea of outsourcing spatially, namely to outer space, and “colonise space” (73) also links back to the problem that is rooted in a patriarchal system and the belief that humans are the most intelligent species on planet earth. Furthermore, claiming other spaces also shifted the gender narrative towards a patriarchal heteronormative one, as can be seen in Morgensen: “Gender and sexuality are intrinsic to the colonisation of indigenous peoples and the promulgation of European modernity by settlers” (3). Another point is the moon landing, which on the one hand declares the moon as American, but even more important than male takeover

of a new place. Colonial rule thus, according to Morgensen, “comes into being by mobilising gendered and sexual power” (5).

This exact thought is discussed between Victor and a woman during his speech. Strikingly, the woman is not named, thus she becomes one part that stands for a whole female community (Synecdoche). This anonymity however also bears the problem of insignificance, she cannot form a personal human connection with Victor since from the beginning he sees her as female threat who interrupts his speech by asking, “*Will women be the first casualties of obsolescence in your brave new world?*” (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 74) to which Victor replies that “AI need not replicate outmoded gender prejudices. If there is no biological male or female, then — “ (74). The conversation here is of high significance because it is not only taking place in a public setting, but furthermore Victor is challenged in a binary setting. While he is deeply convinced that his thoughts and research is benefitting the greater good, the female voice, written in italics, reminds him of what happened to women as being the ones always being erased from the discourse. The woman is interrupting him, showing a dominance in leading the conversation: “But the woman interrupts him – he hates that, but he contains his irritation. *What about sexbots? Pulsing vaginas that never say no?*” (74). This clearly shows that Victor, much like Ron, has an internalised anger towards women voicing an independent opinion clashing to his. His further explanation also shows how deeply he thinks in binaries: “There is a substantial difference between low-to-medium grade robotics that deploy narrow-goal outcomes – and I would include a pulsating vagina in that – even if she can call you Big Boy in eight languages ... (Laughter.)” (75). Victor, much like Ron, responds with a sexist joke that degrades the woman's statements and questions, portraying him as a male character that is feeling superior and, in his right, to be verbally disrespectful. It adds to the problematic of how language supports the gender binary discourse and how women's verbal opinions are downplayed. The technological space as biased and male dominated space is threatened by female criticism, as the woman points out “Amazon had to stop using machines to sift through job application CVs because the machines chose men over women time after time. There is nothing neutral about AI” (76). AI seems to be biased because it is programmed to think in binary categories, thus it is not more intelligent than the human species. The human species, in this case male scientists such as Victor, feed the algorithm:

Professor Stein, you are the acceptable face of AI, but in fact the race to create what you call true artificial intelligence is a race run by autistic-spectrum white boys with poor emotional intelligence and frat-dorm social skills. In what way will their brave new world be gender neutral – or anything neutral? (76)

The woman takes on Butler's stance and also the socio-cultural history of humankind, namely that progress has been always rooted in a male dominated system: "White boys with poor emotional intelligence" (76). How can gender become neutral if the determining dominant group is heterosexual males who create the AI? (76). Victor answers that by being defensive and not acknowledging that he is in fact part of a patriarchal structural system that benefits from binaries: "Yes, there are problems – but it is my view that such problems are temporary, and not systemic" (76). Victor is incapable of understanding the female perspective, since it does not only take a cognitive understanding for systemic suppression, he is excluded from the emotional experience itself because he belongs to the dominant male embedded gender discourse. His moment of mansplaining things to the woman is described by Rs as "Let me start by repeating what I said at the beginning of my lecture (in other words, weren't you listening, goldfish brain?)" (78), which again depicts a futuristic vision in which women are still not included in a gender discourse. Thus, Victor's argument is refuted, his posthuman utopia in which there will be no labels (79) is flawed precisely because humans write the algorithm. The human brain thinks cognitively in categories and that would be exactly the content that AI would be fed with. This would not be solved by AI becoming conscious at some point. Subsequently, this would mean that it would become a new uncontrollable species, which may even escape the linguistic boundaries and develop its own language: "Because we humans will only programme the future once. After that, the intelligence we create will manage itself" (80). Ry even explains that "he sees robots as an intermediate species that will help humanity adjust to its coming role. The nature of that role is unclear" (81). Victor Stein, just like Victor Frankenstein, lacks foresight and the accurate prediction of the effects of artificial progress.

At the end of Victor's speech, it becomes apparent once again that the technological space is male dominated when Ry states that "We can admire the portraits of Isaac Newton, Hook, Boyle, Franklin, Darwin, Faraday, Watson and Crick (apologies to Rosalind Franklin – the woman who supplied Watson and Crick with the vital X-rays they needed to unravel the structure of DNA)" (81). The exclusion of women and non-binary people in cultural and historic events, which are also public spheres, becomes obvious once again. Furthermore, Ron also misgenders "Ry" for "Ryan" another time (83) and even after Ry corrects him to use the correct terms, he continues ignorantly to address them wrongly "You look like a bloke, says Ron. Not a serious bloke, but a bloke. I wouldn't have given you that interview at the Sexpo if you was a girl. I'm trans, I say again" (84). Furthermore, it becomes very striking that since Ron and Victor both profit from being part of the dominant discourse in the same professions, Victor does not take Ry's side, but is very careful and lenient with Ron. The origin of this behavior can

be found exactly in the gender binary narrative. Ry's exclusion from the group of men becomes very apparent when Victor, Ron and Ry talk about the wants and needs of men: "That's what men want. Not all men, says Victor. It's not what I want, I say, and Ron looks at me with even more doubt and even more dismay ... Listen, Ryan, or Mary, or whatever your name is, I'm not being personal, but have you got a dick?" (85). Ron in particular sees no difference between sex and gender, for him the appearance is directly linked to gender identity. He even excludes Ry directly on a verbal level: "So you're not a bloke really. So what blokes want – well, it's not about you, is it?" (85) and also continues to question whether or not they are a real doctor (cf. 86), even calling Ry "Doctor Dolittle" (90) as a very derogatory disguised joke. Thus, the very casual misogyny and ignorance of binary thinking becomes obvious through the character of Ron.

4.7.2. The Cloakroom

While a cloakroom usually serves as a public functional space, its function is reversed here. Thus Winterson underlines her strong point that spaces are socially constructed because they are signed certain functions for certain type of people. Usually cloakrooms are part of bigger public buildings such as fairs, halls, and theatres addressing a specific audience that is interested in cultural, economic, or in this case technological progress. During the tech fair, a sex-doll named Claire starts to go off in the cloakroom because she is programmed incorrectly (90):

Ron shoulders his way through the crowd like he's his own bouncer at his own nightclub. He picks up the bag, lays it on the cloakroom counter and unzips it. Out comes a sex-doll, folded in half. Her denim jacket has CLAIRE written on it in sequins. DADDY! says Claire. I don't know how she got set off, says Ron. She's controlled by an app. (90)

Strikingly, Claire is wrapped up in a zip bag, which is usually used for dead bodies to be brought to a funeral home. This again signifies that sex dolls are inanimate objects and just mimic human bodies. Furthermore, Claire, the sex doll, is one that is named through her clothing, she is also assigned a female name. This stands in contrast to Ron's view on the sex dolls; however, it provides this sex doll with an identity. It can also be argued that due to her voice going off, she voices some kind of programme loudly and thus depicts a moment of resistance. Although not consciously doing this, the malfunctioning of Claire is embarrassing Ron who is defining his masculinity due to his sex dolls.

While Claire is not working properly and shouting inappropriate sex phrases at him, such as "SPLIT ME! says Claire" (91) and "OPEN MY LEGS, DADDY! WIDER!" (90), Ron tries to switch her off via his app: "Can somebody grab Claire while I sort out my fuckin'

phone? Ron thrusts Claire at one of the women standing near by” (91). Ron also states that Claire is now in “Bedroom Mode” (91) and should be put into “Visitor Mode” (91).

This moment represents not only a heteronormative relationship between user and doll, but it furthermore depicts an underlying issue: Sex and sexual practices are still not part of a public gender discourse. In the parallel plot, Claire also goes off on Lord Byron when he states that “man is the apex of creation...Poetry is the apex of Man” (136) and Claire’s response is mocking him via repetition and also misunderstanding the word ‘apex’: “Ape ape ape ape ape ape ... Claire had gone mad. She darted about the room chanting APE” (136). Through this very sarcastic undertone, Claire subconsciously reminds Lord Byron about the origin of mankind and that humans are not the most intelligent species. Furthermore, this verbal mockery of Byron emasculates his argument, dismantles his categorical thinking once again. By poetic discourse, Byron again means only male authors in binary structures (“man” (136)).

Bringing an incident with the sexdolls into a public sphere, Winterson challenges the dichotomies between private and public sphere. The Cloakroom becomes a liminal and fluid space in which stereotypical perceptions about gender identities are challenged. This can be specifically seen in the reaction of the audience (“*Embarrassed giggles, horrors, OMGs, Yikes, This cannot be for real, Yuck, Cool, Let me see that!*” (91)) which formally is highlighted in italics. The public reaction, thus, is torn between shame, horror, and entertainment referring to the effect of sensationalism. While for Ron this situation is part of his professions and therefore quite normal for him, others are confronted with a sex doll for the very first time. While the woman who holds the sex doll exclaims “Oh my God!” (91) and is clearly overwhelmed, the boys start to feel aroused by the whole scene. Thus, Claire also hints at the problem of isolation, which is a spatial intimacy issue within human relationships. A person using a sex doll is looking for sexual pleasure without interactive intimacy, as can be seen in the reaction of boys: “Some of the boys are enjoying this; I can tell from the rise in their jeans” (92). Ry also mentions how the group of audience is shaped into two binary groups: male and female (cf. 93). Interestingly, it becomes very apparent that the male group dominates the social setting since “the men [are] laughing and joking with Ron” (93) whereas “the women [are] talking to each other in low voices and despair or disbelief” (93). The different reactions of the two gender identities both reveal an underlying issue, namely that sexism and gender discrimination is deeply rooted in social setting, to which Bano states that “research has also revealed that tolerance for sexist jokes only increases the acceptance of gender discriminatory norms in society. It’s difficult to confront sexism in real life when it’s disguised as a joke” (Bano). Although Victor is not actively engaging in joining Ron and the other male audience to turn the

whole situation into a joke, he is also not publicly condemning the male reactions, such as “what’s this bracket in her back? asks one of the guys, examining Claire. That’s an optional extra, says Ron. She can be wall-mounted. Like a trophy on the wall? says one of the women. No! says Ron. So that you can fuck her standing up” (92). It becomes very apparent that the nameless women view the sex doll as a “trophy” (92) that can be hanged on a wall, much like the trophy of hunting an animal. As an inhumane, inanimate object that is presented to others as achievement. Contrasting to this, Ron’s response shows the male gaze, in which the sex doll is just becomes a practical tool for different sex positions, such as “fuck her [while] standing up” (92). Therefore, Victor as well as Ron are defining their own identity through male peer groups and also think in binaries. Victor even states “I agree, says Victor. Women are harder to please” (93) and “Victor shrugs. This is the coming world. When people have nothing to do all day they will have time for a lot more sex” (92). It becomes also very apparent that both Victor and Ron are unable to put themselves into the shoes of the other female audience members who watch the praising behaviour of the male audience towards the sex talk of the sex doll. Since this scene also is non-consensual when Ron puts the sex doll in the hands of a woman, it also dehumanises her. It is what Ry later states about themselves “I am a human being” (29) which not only them, but also the female part of the audience member is not considered to be. It is what Bano refers to as “deeper social issue” (Bano), namely that “the problem is not with the software applications, it’s with the data. Data which comes from people” (Bano). In this case, again, data that is chosen by the male dominant group in order to please the male customer, it is excluding minorities such as women, non-binary and/or trans-people. The chapter also closes with Claire being put back into the bag: “Ron returned with his Adidas bag full of Claire. I raise my (big) hand to signal goodbye. Going, going, gone” (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 94). The last sentence even closing the scene with an alliteration, which refers to an idiom when an auction ends, again depicting the female identity of the sex doll as economic profiting. Moreover, this scene again depicts a performative act of gender in a Butlerian sense, thus it the reactions of the audience are constructed due to socio-cultural gender roles.

4.7.3. The Bar

A foreshadowing element of the bar becoming a quite misogynistic place is the initial reference to the Eagles song again: “A pretty girl wearing a TAKE IT EASY shirt” (229). One it refers once again to a very stereotypical depiction of femininity and beauty, but furthermore it also depicts how constructed gender binaries are to be linked to public spaces like bars. Although the bar is a quite busy and public space, Ry experiences an almost rape situation. It

is fairly common within patriarchal societies such as Western societies for women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community to be sexually assaulted or raped, to which the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey stated that “47% of transgender people are sexually assaulted at some point in their lifetime” (HRC). Due to the fact that gender identities often take place via visual performance or expression, people who are in transition are often very vulnerable to be assaulted. Spaces such as public bathrooms provide an issue that is addressed through Ry’s non-binary gender identity, namely that toilet stalls are separated into binaries. Male and female toilets have been separated and thus make it exclusive for binary gender identities:

The familiar signage silhouettes of male and female that mark our public bathrooms reduce gender identity down to our bodies and clothing. Not only do they reinforce outdated gender stereotypes, they erase non-binary people. More seriously, these symbols present trans and gender-diverse people within a climate of violence, interrogation and surveillance based upon their bodies, when really, all anyone wants to do is use a toilet. (Castricum)

This problem becomes visible when Ry decides to leave the group of Ron and Claire and seeks the restroom in the bar. At the urinal is an “older, heavy” (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 241) guy whom Ry describes as “unsteady on his feet” (241). He is probably drunk and aggressive, also shouting at Ry “YOU THINK I’M A FAGGOT?” (241) and “WHAT’S SO PRECIOUS ABOUT YOUR FUCKIN’ COCK THAT YOU KEEP IT TO YOURSELF?” (241). Due to the loud music and noises from the bar, Ry is alone in this situation. Although they try to verbally keep a distance to the attacker (241), Ry describes that the drunk man “lunged at my crotch” (242) and “pushed me into a stall, slammed the door shut and forced me up against him. He fumbled with his zip and pulled his dick out, wanking himself half-hard” (241 – 42), also calling them a “FUCKIN’ FREAK” (242). Violence becomes a symptom of the patriarchal structures in society. Clearly, the drunk man feels entitled to Ry’s body, objectifying and fetishizing it. Not only is the problem of consent addressed here, but furthermore the verbal “no” is completely ignored. Ry even states that incidents like these are not the first time (243) and that the reason they do not report the sexual assault is that Ry “can’t stand the leers and the jeers and fears of the police. And I can’t stand the assumption that somehow I am the one at fault” (243). The enumeration of rhyming words (“leers”, “jeers”, “fears” (243)) signify that wit or cheerfulness is used to cloak subliminal social problems such as sexual assault or rape. The underlying message here is that there is still victim blaming and no safe space for survivors due to social power structures.

4.8. In-Between Space

In *Frankissstein* there are spaces which cannot be distinguished easily into public or private space, they themselves are in-between or liminal spaces and offer an insight of how constructed binary categories are. Thus, the following chapter will analyse the spaces of in-between, which is not considered to consist of empty categories, it but rather offer a liminal transgression into a state of becoming or flowing.

4.8.1. Fluid Gender Identity: Water Symbolic

A very interesting fluid symbol that is found in *Frankissstein* is water and water-related spaces, such as rivers and lakes. They also provide a space of transformation and being-in-motion, particularly the gender identities and shift of gender narratives of the characters. Fluidity through water symbolic also opens up a liminal space in which binary constructs are challenged or reversed.

A very fluid liminal space is entered when Mary describes her own nakedness: “My skin is covered in beads of clear water as though I have been embroidered with water. There is something fine about my decorated nakedness ... The rain increases steady as a waterfall and me inside it” (3). This pictorial language, however, does not construct a female body and the female identity is only hidden in Mary's name. She uses words like “nudity” and “skin,” both of which are not associated with binary language and could relate to any human body. Furthermore, she uses the “beads of clear water” (3), “embroidered with water” (3) and “the rain...as a waterfall and me inside it” (3) which create an imagery of a piece of art representing the beauty of nature. It also links back to the Rousseauan idea that outside of a constructed social system, the human body is not corrupted. Furthermore, this also connects Butler's stance that gender identities are performative and also bound to a patriarchal system. Graydon states that “Winterson's metaphor of rain is resonant: as rain is formed from recycling the Earth's rivers, lakes, oceans, and seas, human beings are likewise called to reform ourselves by way of recycling that which already exists but is in need of transformation to serve us better” (Graydon). In this setting, Mary can experience her true self, her identity is not bound to the presence of other male characters. She is present in her own body without social restrictions. Moreover, fluidity of water signifies a constant exchange between human and nature. Water is in motion and is part of nature as well as part of the human body, thus Mary simultaneously is part of both: human and nature, transgressing into an in-between space.

Another more complex example is the moment when Mary is in France for the first time, her and Percy are about to be bathing together in the river: “He asked me to bathe naked

with him in the river. I was too shy. Instead I watched his body, white and slender and sculpted” (64). This is one of the first intimate moments between the two characters, in which Mary does not fall under the guardianship of her father. Furthermore, she provides an insight into her inexperienced self, not knowing what to do in this fluid or in-between spatial setting. Also, her focus is not on herself and her own gender identity, but on Percy’s male body. She delivers a very detailed description about Percy whose body is described as “something unworldly about his form. An approximation – as though his body has been put on hastily, so that his spirit might walk in the world” (64). Interestingly, Percy’s body is seen through a female lens, but furthermore his body is determined as something unnatural or even god-like. This description, on the one hand, shows that Mary thinks in binaries such as mundane vs. spiritual or body vs. soul, but she also does not follow him into the water. This choice depicts a self-chosen spatial stance and identity outside of forced patriarchal boundaries. Furthermore, Percy being in the water opens a transgressive moment in which Mary not only does not follow his lead, he also becomes part of nature again. He thus transgresses the very heteronormative rules between him and Mary, turning him into a more vulnerable character because of his nakedness.

Contrastingly, the relationship between Ry and Victor particularly in public space differs from Mary’s experience with Percy. While Mary and Percy share intimate moments first in the plot until the other characters appear, Ry meets Victor in a public sphere that is male dominated. However, Ry as a non-binary narrator escapes the binary categories of male vs. female and by just moving through the technological sphere opens up a liminal space of becoming or in-between. The fluidity of Ry’s identity becomes clear when Victor holds his speech about mind-uploading and future transhumanist tendencies. When talking about humans as not the best possible outcome of species (73) Victor uses Leonardo’s Vitruvian man:

Leonardo’s image animates itself, takes an appearing trilby from an appearing peg and, placing it on the back of its head, turns and walks into an appearing sea. The sound of the waves can be heard clearly. The image of the man walks without pausing until the waters reach his head. All that is left behind is the hat floating calmly on the indifferent sea. (73-74)

One very significant aspect is that Leonardo’s Vitruvian man depicts an exclusively male figure that represents a perfect body type according to a set of mathematical standards set by Vitruvius. The shifts between the two poses seem to be in motion, however, the centre of gravity, which is the navel, is not. The drawing thus provides an illusion of movement, but furthermore it also is included in a meta-space of virtuality in Victor’s presentation. Not only is it a projection of a male body, but it is also animated in this situation. Ry states that it “turns and walks into an appearing sea” (73) and that the audience can also not only visually see a transformation, it can

also be experienced in an acoustic manner since “the waves can be heard clearly” (73). The water symbolic here transforms the Vitruvian man into movement, but at the same time he is not transformed into a female body. Thus, gender identity here remains one sided and embedded in a patriarchal dominant structure. Disappearing into water also directly links to death and rebirth, to which Victor states directly: “I called this lecture *The Future of Humans in a Post-Human World* because artificial intelligence is not sentimental – it is biased towards best possible outcomes” (77) referring to immortality and overcoming human bodies as spaces of limited lifetimes. However, his lecture is built upon the image of a male body and he as a male character is also doing the lecture. The dissolution of bodies, moreover, does not mean that gender binaries are dissolved as well. Victor misses the point of argument that gender constructs are built through language and discourse and therefore part of a cultural mindset. Victor’s very static opinion stands in contrast with the fluid imagery of the Vitruvian man, he is unable to deconstruct the issue of appearance and that cultural mindsets are based upon categorisations. The theme of disappearance is not coherent with transgression since disappearance or dissolving a bodily form just means that the human brain has to be stored in another device. This again underlines Winterson’s main focus, namely, that bodies are not the only human form that have to be challenged, but language and literature already provide a shift in mindset. This can also be seen in a conversation between Ry and Victor:

We could disappear, he said, and start again somewhere, an island, perhaps, go fishing, open a restaurant on the beach, lie in the same hammock and look at the stars. We won’t do that, I said, because you are ambitious. Perhaps I could change, he said. Perhaps I have done enough. Your body will decay and die, I said. You won’t like that. We could die together. It’s unlikely I will live long enough to set myself free. (161-62)

While Victor believes that changing locations will change his identity, Ry points out his static belief system and that no matter where he moves, his “ambitious” (161) character will follow. To put it into other words, Victor challenges the space that he is surrounded by, but he cannot enter the liminal space of Ry’s mindset nor change his own. He is obsessed with technological progress, but completely dismisses the shift in cultural mindsets that has to follow his approach. What adds to the level of irony here is also that Victor not wanting to progress mentally, uses the symbolism of a liminal space, namely an island. The island he wants to be on together with Ry thus forms an “outside space” of heteronormative rules in which a relationship between non-binary and male gender identities seems to be possible for Victor. As a literary character he can free himself from social restrictions and norms and form his independent identity. While being present with Ry in an intimate sphere he cannot enter this liminal space physically, but only mentally.

Furthermore, Victor enters a mental space of female domination since the island he is mentioning refers to the island of Ogygia on which Calypso lives is a liminal space. In mythology, Calypso promises Odysseus immortality if he stays with her on the island. Since Calypso was a nymph and her body was tied to the island. Thus, the location which Victor enters is a fictional mythical one and it is the only space he can be freely together with Ry. His mental space provides the only intimate form of connection because in physical realms such as the tech fair he is unable to escape socially structured binary boundaries. He is not able to overcome his own categorical thinking about heteronormative relationships and accepts Ry's identity and body as who they are. Defining himself in this moment as what Front calls a kind of "new men" means that he uses the feminine metaphor of an island to self-discover a part of his gender identity that in a male dominated scientific world remains hidden:

Winterson's insistence on recurring water imagery seems to be associated with the depiction of femininity in the Western culture as volatile, shapeless and fluctuating entity. The writer takes advantage of the amorphous similarity between women and water to articulate her character's need to define themselves through water, sailing off on the private quest, during which they desire femininity for self-definition, whether they are lesbians or 'new men'. (Front 198 f.)

The Water symbolic also has a highly sexual connotation, particularly between Ry and Victor. When they get stuck in the rain, it becomes clear that the water and the thunder has a certain effect of sexual chemistry between them. Particularly, because the rain soaks not only Victor's body, but also Ry's and reveals their bodily forms:

And then it rained. The Sonoran Desert is one of the wettest deserts in North America. It has two rainy seasons – this was the summer season – heavy and sudden. This won't last long! shouted Victor above the smash of thunder. This is a BWh climate. Dry, arid, hot. I said, Makes no difference how you classify it; we're soaked. And we were. As if buckets of water had been poured over our heads. Victor's blue linen shirt clung to his body. My T-shirt hung loose and dripping. (Winterson 116)

Here, water acts as a transformative element and as an activator of revelation. It reveals what is underneath Ry's and Victor's clothes, causing Ry to feel very conscious about their non-binary bodily form: "I was conscious of his body, a warm, wet animal, next to me. I lifted my T-shirt to rub my eyes, feeling the stream of rain down my stomach. When I looked up, Victor was staring at me" (116). Here, the revelation of bodies hints at the problematic with gender identity and bodily appearance. While Ry wants to keep a body that is neither male nor female, it means that the observer, in this case Victor, is challenged in their binary perception of non-binary bodies. Victor's body aligns with his heterosexual male identity, whereas Ry's is clearly fluid and constantly becoming. It becomes very clear that Victor assumes that Ry was a man due to

the clothes covering their body parts. When both of them are taking a shower after the rain caught them outdoors, they shift into a liminal space with one another. An intimate sphere in which Ry can reveal their identity due to them being naked in front of Victor: “I thought you were a man, he said. I am. Anatomically I am also a woman. Is that how you feel about yourself? Yes. Doubleness is nearer to the truth for me. Victor said, I have never met anyone who is trans. Most people haven’t” (119). The revelation through water and being showered also questions Victor’s binary perception and his posthuman idea of mind-uploading by Ry’s question: “I said, If the body is provisional, interchangeable, even, why does it matter so much what I am?” (157). Ry represents a body that is in-between already, thus challenging the categorisations of bodies and binary body norms already. If a body was interchangeable, as Victor argues, it would be neither unique nor part of the gender identity process. Mind-uploading would provide a process in which gender becomes irrelevant or negated. However, human brains are wired to think in categorisations, uploading them to another device is not the approach to deconstructing those. Water also has a destructive side, which can be seen in Ry’s statement about having sex with Victor: “I want his love to have enough salt in it to float me. I don’t want to be swimming for my life. I want to trust him. I don’t trust him” (153). Ry’s trusting issues here are existent because trust is not a fluid concept. It is either there or it is not and Victor provides Ry with sexual pleasure, however he denies them intimate human connection.

4.8.2. Victor’s Office, Manchester

The actual location of Manchester not only hosts the Manchester AI Community, the University of Manchester also holds a specific research field in AI and Robotics. Ry and Victor share an intimate private moment in Victor’s office while discussing future transhumanist tendencies and mind-uploading. However, the office as professional space blurs the line to the private space since Ry and Victor share a sexual encounter with one another. This signifies that even the professional space is not fixed, but fluid and can transgress into a liminal in-between space.

Thus, Victor’s fictional Manchester also can be referred as “*Reality is now*” (148), the chapter’s intro. While Ry and Victor examine the dead body parts Ry has brought along for further examination, Victor asks “Really, Ry, when you consider the human as a collection of limbs and organs, then what is human? As long as your head is on, pretty much everything else can go, can’t it? And yet you dislike the idea of intelligence not bound to a body” (148). To this, Ry responds “We are our bodies, I said” (148). It becomes very clear that Victor thinks in binaries here, human body parts vs. consciousness. However, it is also striking that he sees main

parts of the body as redundant except for the head and the brain. However, the brain is not the only functioning organ humans need. In order to have a full human experience, the visual attraction is needed since chemical reactions in the brain cause attraction. As the title suggests, a “love story” happens due to the effects of dopamine, and serotonin. They are released within the brain, but the reactions such as dilation of the eyes or a faster heartbeat is a physical experience. Thus, Ry’s statement of “We are our bodies” (148) represents the human experience. It is not quite accurate to think about the body as brain vs. physical body since the brain needs sensory input. Examples for a correlation between brain and physical reaction are a human touch, a visual stimulation or sexual interaction, thus an input from the outside is needed to be processed on a mental level. Thus, Ry characterises Victor as “A man who wants to be without his body. And I am holding his body in my left hand” (153). His sexual experience with Ry does not happen solely on a mental level, which adds to the ironic undertone Winterson uses to again deconstruct the male dominant gender discourse. Furthermore, it becomes very apparent that Victor is not sexually attracted to sex dolls nor his dead body parts, he is attracted to a vision that escapes human boundaries:

And you, Ry, gorgeous boy/girl, whatever you are, you had a sex change. You chose to intervene in your own evolution. You accelerated your portfolio of possibilities. That attracts me. How could it not? You are both exotic and real. The here and now, and a harbinger of the future. (154)

Victor here, much like Victor Frankenstein, chases after an illusion of humanity. Moreover, he calls Ry “exotic” which has been a term used for sexualising and othering colonised spheres such as India. Again, this leads to an objectification and fetishization of bodies that are read in a male context of what is considered sexual pleasure. Like Frankenstein’s creature, Ry however evades the interpretations and definitions of the dominant patriarchal discourse and provides their body and gender identity by giving themselves meaning. Self-naming and self-determination through language are present motifs in the plot.

4.8.3. Victor’s Secret Lab: The Tunnels

Ry is the first character to enter Victor’s secret lab in which he tries to scan Jack Good’s brain in order to achieve immortality for the human species, but also uses electricity to make human hands move (169). His hubris shows again since Greek gods, such as Zeus, were the ones who were not limited by bodies they inhabited:

You are interested in bringing back the dead. You make it sound like a Hammer Horror movie, said Victor. What else is it? I said. What is death? Said Victor. Ask yourself that. Death is organ failure due to disease, injury, trauma or old age. Biological death marks the end of biological life. (186)

During this conversation it becomes apparent how categorical Victor is thinking, for him body and brain are two entities which can easily be separated. However, Victor's secrecy about his experiments underground clearly indicate that that hidden space is also hidden part of his identity. He wants to be a creator or a god-like figure, however, that would also metaphorically mean that he has to come to terms with a side of femininity since a mother gives birth to beings. Furthermore, his attempt of hubris to bring back a conscious human from the dead derives from his former description as good-looking and charming character. Victor's own masculine binary gender identity is built upon his achievements and the praise of others. This can be clearly seen when Victor states that "if we can revive a 'dead' brain, that would be fascinating – for the person who is returned, and for us" (187), thus talking for a whole collective named "us". Ry even calls him "maddening and superior" (186), even his face as slowly disappearing (197). This clearly signifies that Victor's mental state blurs into madness, depicting his obsession with the mind. However, obsession in literature has always led to destruction and loss of self-identity. The character's identity transgresses into their obsession, turning their character trade into chasing just one singular goal. This can be seen in Shakespeare's character King Lear, in Shelley's Victor Frankenstein and in Stephen Kings' Jack Torrent. Interestingly, Victor wants to end human stupidity (199) by accelerating the technological progress. From a cultural perspective, however, change of technology also has to be accompanied with a shift in mindset. Taking time is not part of Victor's approach: "Race, faith, gender, sexuality, those things make me impatient, said Victor. We need to move forward, and faster. I want an end to it all, don't you see? An end to the human, I said. An end to human stupidity, said Victor" (199). Shifting a whole collective identity such as the Western world takes time and moving faster also includes challenging patriarchal structures which Victor is a part of. He never addresses his position within the system, however, which makes him a very ignorant character with his main focus solely onto profit and personal achievements. His lack of intimacy with Ry also mirrors his lack of knowledge about himself and his emotions. Victor is denying himself any access of personal sphere and even wants to calculate love: "The world is naught/nought. I am alone. You are nothing. One love. An infinity of zeros" (197). To this, Winterson states in *the Guardian*: "It's easy to do sex, but it's not easy to do love in whatever formAnd if you can't love, you can't live, no matter how smart you are: things end up being jangly, hollow, and ultimately worthless" (Jeanette Winterson). Hence, Victor is unable to live with his experiments being caught by the public eye of Polly D. and Ry's knowledge about his secret. He vanishes from the surface into the tunnels, causing speculations between Ron ("He might be dead" (329)) and Ry ("I shouted

again: VICTOR. Nothing. Only the boom boom of the water” (329)). Here, again, the water metaphor is used to dissolve the creator. The repetition of onomatopoeic sounds (‘boom’ (329)) resemble the heartbeat and therefore represents Ry’s emotional connection with Victor. It also creates an atmosphere that is both threatening and loving, resembling Ry and Victor’s relationship. Since Victor believes that his identity can be immortalised through his work and a body is not necessarily needed (“to be free from the body completes the human dream” (296)), it is not necessary for him to be present. This also strengthens Winterson’s argument, namely that “the human dream” (296) is already present within a fictional frame. Language can transgress boundaries and is a tool to explore the thoughts, and thus the dreams, from a narrator’s perspective. Furthermore, the water metaphor represents fluidity and provides a liminal space for carrying mystery and paradox stories that can exist simultaneously. It remains unclear if Victor escaped or died. He becomes part of an ‘in-between’ those two dichotomies. His ring, however, stays behind and is found by Ry (339) which opens up the possibility of Victor returning at some point. A few mysteries still stay unresolved by the end of the plot: Did Victor plan for Ry to find the ring? When flooding the tunnels did he mean to kill Ry, Ron, Claire, and Polly D. in it? How long did he plan his disappearance for? These open questions open a liminal space once again and remain unanswered by the plot. Whether Victor survives also represents the question whether patriarchal power structures survive or will disappear in the future.

4.8.4. Mental Institution: Bedlam

The actual space of Bedlam was called “Bethlem Royal Hospital” and was a mental institution in London in which many patients were treated under inhumane conditions. Thus, the name “Bedlam” became a synonym for mayhem or madness, which can be seen in its history: “Bethlem was the only dedicated mental institution in Britain, which automatically made its medical staff the foremost experts in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness” (Chambers). Chambers furthermore explains that this particular location “[had] a number of must-see patients, among them Oliver Cromwell’s melancholic porter Daniel, the politico-religious dissenter Richard Stafford and an assortment of academics, musicians and poets for whom the stress of life had proved too much to bear” (Chambers). Hence, Bedlem provided a space for censoring artistic and poetic voices which tried to escape normative social rules.

Furthermore, a mental institution becomes one due to its social functions. The place itself is shaped by naming it a mental institution and also restricting it to patients who behave in a non-accepted manner within society. In *Frankissstein*, Bedlem represents a liminal space

that is not bound to time, reality, nor a specific narrative voice. It starts with a short description written in bold as an instruction for the readership to start imagining the space: “You find yourself in a long and wide gallery, on either side of which are a large number of little cells where lunatics of every description are shut up” (Winterson, *Frankissstein* 174). It is not mentioned whether Mary or Ry tell this part of the story, the nameless first person narrative voice thus has to be resolved by the reader later in the plot (349). The first time Bedlem is mentioned the chapter starts with the same date, 1818, in which Shelley’s *Frankenstein* was published (175). Furthermore, it starts with a statement that refers to the mind as not only a liminal space, but additionally it is not a singular space. Each and every human has their own mind, which means that “None can know the human mind. No, not if he read every thought man ever wrote” (175). Strikingly, this also refers to a binary system since the addressee “None” is referred to as male pronoun “he” (175). This means that even within a literary frame, not each and every mind can be entered through a narrative voice because not every human has written each of their thoughts down. It is only a certain excerpt the narrator shares with the reader. The nameless narrator opens the liminal space in terms of different tenses among the verbs: “We are” (175) and “We began. How did we begin?” (175), thus, blurring the lines between present and past. The first person narrative voice also states that “we are what we fear” (176-77) representing Bedlem as a literal mental space, in which humans experience fear and terror. It becomes resolved in the conversation with Captain Walton that the narrative voice is Mr Wakefield (346). The name itself offers an in-between space since it plays with the ambiguous meaning of “wake” which either refers to remaining awake (also spiritually) or to watch over someone. Captain Walton brings in a traveller from the north pole (180) describing him as a “savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but a European” (181). Thus, Victor Frankenstein represents the dichotomies between known and unknown, while Walton refers to his identity as “savage inhabitant” (181) he reads his gender identity from visual appearance and assumes he knows where Frankenstein belongs to. The location of the island, however, remains unknown to Walton. Walton recounts that Frankenstein stated that he was on his quest “to seek one who fled from me” (181) to which Mr Wakefield replies: “Is that not a human condition? To seek one who flees? Or to flee from one who seeks us? Today I am the pursuer. Tomorrow I shall be pursued” (182). This conversation thus combines past and present elements and represents the shift in identities, that humans are both feeling and seeking or pursuer and being pursued. Human existence thus shifts between passive and activeness. Winterson in an interview with *Marketplace* even states that “for me, that is the ultimate power that humans have — that we can change the story because we are the story” (Adams and S. Hughes). Hence,

Bedlam as a mental space offers characters of different fictional works such as Captain Walton, Victor Frankenstein, and Mr Wakefield to meet and transgress the story into a postmodern debate of what is real and what is fictional and how much of both can be found in the other. Mr Wakefield even asks, “Is his story the result of his madness or its cause?” (183). It becomes prominent that Victor’s identity is not even self-chosen but imposed upon him, particularly because Victor has no direct speech in the first part of *Bedlam*. This furthermore also mirrors the problematic of no language that the creature also has to face. It means exclusion and passiveness for the character.

In *Bedlam 2* Victor is described as someone who “resembled a being from another place or time. Not in his clothes, nor, as I was soon to discover, in his speech, but in his utter remoteness” (190). Mr Wakefield also finds Victor’s journal while Victor’s state is “stirred but did not wake” (191). In this dream state Wakefield reads Victor’s journal through which he finally voices his stance on creating artificial life. To this, Wakefield comments: “Surely his mind has been darkened by grief? He imagines he searches for life when what he seeks is his own death. Only in death we be reunited with those we have lost” (193). The literary piece of Victor’s diary depicts once more the importance of literature and narrative voices that can be shared through fiction. The plot progresses from finding Victor to his resting spots in *Bedlam* further to *Bedlam 3* in which Mary Shelley appears and has a conversation with her creation. Victor demands for Shelley to “unmake” him (213):

You are Mary Shelley. I am she... Unmake me, he said. The lady gazed at him for some while. He appeared far from mad, but very often the mad have a deep conviction the sane lack. You have appeared in the pages of a novel, she said. You and the monster you created. I am the monster you created, said Victor Frankenstein. I am the thing that cannot die – and cannot die because I have never lived. (213)

This is the exact moment the character of Victor shares that he has become conscious of him being a written character. However, since Victor and Mary are both characters of the plot, they cannot escape it and transgress into the real world. Literary space turns the textual body and their characters into an immortal frame, thus Victor even states “If I leave this body, still I shall return. This form I show to you now is temporary. I exist for all time unless my creator frees me...” (214). It is not possible to free Victor from his written form, he is much bound to the text as Mary. Here a few meta-levels of gender identities clash as well, Mary who appears as the fictional female author who gave birth to both Victor and his creature: “If I am here, then he is there, replied Victor Frankenstein. That you cannot see him means nothing... Believe me, you will see his effects. The monster once made cannot be unmade” (217). Hence, mental and literary space offer a transgression between different gender identities, narratives, and already

capture immortality. The immortal character of literature also becomes apparent on the last page in which Mary assumes she sees Victor in a crowd. He asks her “Read us back to life?” (344) and “Shall we begin again? The human dream” (344). Here, it becomes apparent that literary space offers a never-ending existence of characters and stories can be re-read and re-contextualise in different spaces of time. Thus, temporal transgression is already possible for characters. Furthermore, the human dream, can be lived through the characters. It signifies a state of becoming or over-coming physical boundaries since dreaming is a state of in-between as well.

Victor Stein/Victor Frankenstein, Mary/Ry, the creation/the literary text are mirroring dichotomies of different selves. The boundaries of interaction between them are transgressed due to formal non-marking of direct speech. It remains unclear sometimes who is narrating and who is answering. Male, female, and non-binary characters also mirror one another, Ry even states “I am present and invisible. The riot in my head is unseen. What I am thinking is what I am feeling, are private Bedlams of my own” (339). It becomes apparent that mental space is the closest form of true core identity, in which Ry can be both “present and visible” (339). Contrastingly, “Bedlams of my own” (339) are fearful thoughts that can create an internal mental prison, particularly because there is also no escape from being in a body.

The escape of Victor Frankenstein (303) in Bedlam 4 again shows that fictional textual space is liminal. Everything is possible, although Mr Wakefield questions how it is possible for a man who does not exist to be able to vanish (305). Compared to Victor Stein who vanishes in the tunnels, Victor Frankenstein escapes via written letter form. He re-writes his own story and ending through a letter addressed to Mary Shelley, freeing himself through language.

5. Conclusion

What Butler describes as performative and Foucault argues as part of the dominant patriarchal discourse regarding power shows that in Frankenstein exactly these concepts are used to create a deconstructive space of the liminality on a literary level. Above all, the means of irony and fragments challenge the reader to question his own binary gender categories. Winterson thus pleads for a rethinking in the mindset of postmodern Era, in which the current progress in terms of gender, body, and identity develops transgressively. Transgression thus also is built upon the ideas of different selves or identities which can exist simultaneously. Therefore, postmodern fragmentation of self implies that there is an endless possibility of self-expression in a literary novel.

Frankissstein has set itself the goal of deconstructing certain gender stereotypes through fragmented plot structures and the different narrative voices, Mary as female character and Ry as non-binary one. Winterson's point within her literary text highlights the importance of language and literary space that not only mirrors social constructs and challenges them, it also provides a possibility of shaping social norms through a literary context. Literary texts add to a debate about inclusivity and representativeness within language and discourse.

Currently, AI and technology are still a field that patriarchal structures benefit from. Thus, transgression is not only a literary tool to push boundaries further, it also becomes a tool for political thought and progress. As seen within the analysis of three different spaces, the male characters such as Ron, Ron Lord, Percy Shelley, Polidori and Victor Stein are deeply embedded in socio-cultural dominant patriarchal discourse. Public space such as the technological fair, the cloakroom and the bar still are dominated by misogynistic language and patterns of behaviour by the male characters. Ron not only produces sexbots, he is also very ignorant of progressive innovations such as inclusive language or acknowledging the trans-hybrid identity of Ry. Furthermore, Ron depicts a character that relies on hypermasculine performative behaviour in order to establish his identity. Victor, on the other hand, is not actively engaging with Ron's "locker room talk", but he is also not verbally questioning it. Him and Ron actively profit from the patriarchal system and through male dominated professions, so he has no interest in challenging the system he is part of. It also becomes very apparent that he rather leaves Ry and a potential love interest behind than his own experiment or work. His disappearance also leaves fragmented room for the question whether patriarchal structures can ever be overcome by technology or because technology is also rooted within social structures, it will always be biased.

Contrastingly, private spaces provides a space for intimacy, both for Mary and Percy as well as for Ry and Victor. However, these scenes in the plot are the only ones in which a group dynamic of more male dominated peers is not influential. Mary and Percy as well as Ry and Victor are offered a chance to become equals outside of heteronormative structures. However, both Percy and Victor still bring their patriarchal embedded mindset into the private sphere and are not able to transgress those. Transgression rather happens through the third space, the space of in-between or liminality. Mary's thoughts and Ry's thoughts manage to escape these restrictive binary perspectives as liminal mental spaces in which their core identity is allowed to be fluid. Both narrators are only able to depict their core identities through their mental space because it is the only space that is not accessible for the other characters, nor is this space bound to social constructions. Furthermore, the lines between fiction and reality furthermore become

blurred in the Bedlam Chapters, in which Mary Shelley is able to meet her creation, her fictional character Victor. Since Victor is part of Mary's writing, he also is part of herself. Thus, transgression of time and space here reaches a climax. This highlights the argument that multi-faceted selves are not bound to a specific moment in time, they transgress even reality and fiction. Forming an identity is thus a process of becoming rather than a fixed notion. Mary and her work are inevitable intertwined and is a never-ending story as the human dream begins once again in the end, much as death and life.

The three spaces show that gender determines social, physical and mental spaces, but it can further change the perception of them. Developments of body morphology and mind-uploading are rooted in the patriarchal discourse and are very biased toward a certain stereotypical perception of gender binaries. Thus, literary space becomes the most important tool for Winterson to challenge mental categories and create an awareness of how limited human thinking still is. Therefore, *Frankissstein* argues that transgression has not only to happen technologically, it has to happen in a shift of mindset as well. Social and cultural change requires a non-binary definition of (emotional) intelligence and love through a more inclusive language.

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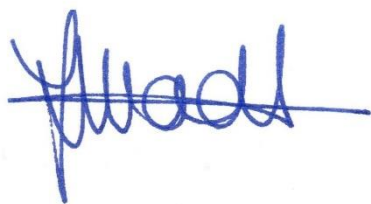
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Leinzell, den 09.12.2021

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wädt', with a horizontal line drawn through the middle of the letters.

Jessica Wädt