The Aestheticism of Posthuman Body in Science Fiction Movies

YAPING LU

Abstract: Most science fiction movies(sci-fi movies) are focused on the imaginations of forms of future human beings and their living conditions, mainly including genetically modified people, cyborg, human cloning and artificial intelligence, thus shaping countless rich and creative posthuman landscapes. On the one hand, the aestheticism of posthuman body created in sci-fi movies is not only witnessing the carnival of new medium technologies as 3D, 4D, VP, AR and MR, but also illustrating the anxiety of humanism and the ideology and political demands hidden behind those various bodies. On the other hand, the images of posthuman bodies in sci-fi movies are not only predicting human beings' possible ways of future existence, but also indicating certain cultural events reflecting current issue of gender power, human subjectivity, technology hegemony, etc. By exploring the aestheticism of posthuman body in sci-fi movies, this article is trying to clarify what mechanism and strategy is applied and how ideological and political transmission is achieved in sci-fi movies, therefore providing useful thinking on current human condition from the perspective of literary study.

Keywords: aestheticism, posthuman body, sci-fi movies

Introduction

Since the Enlightenment era and the Industrial Revolution, technology has altered human beings' living conditions irreversibly. The emergence of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, quantum information technology, biotechnology, etc., has inspired the creation of hundreds of sci-fi movies depicting the relationship between humans and posthuman bodies, which can be analyzed from multiple perspectives. In the context of the human body being the source of artistic imagination, sci-fi movies break the boundaries of body technology and draw a grand future where all kinds of images as human beings, robots, replicas, human clones, cyborgs, etc., coexist. However, technology is, in Heidegger's words, "not an instrument", it is a way of understanding the world; it is "not a human activity", but develops beyond human control; it is "the highest danger", risking us to only see the world trough technological thinking (Heidegger 1977, 3-35). Therefore, in the era when technology has rewritten the traditional existence of human beings and their social practices, conventional thinking of body aestheticism has also been challenged. By focusing on the posthuman bodies in sci-fi movies as *Ghost in the Shell*(2017), *The Matrix*(1999, 2003, 2003, 2021), *Replicas*(2018) etc., this article participates in the discussion of the specific connotations of the aestheticism of posthuman body based on the images and narratives in sci-fi movies, aims to interrogate current ontological disposition of human beings and explore the anxiety of humanism related to subjectivity, gender hierarchy, embodiment and disembodiment and man-computer symbiosis.

1. The Disintegration of Human Subjectivity

Human subjectivity is one of the main focuses of body aestheticism in ontological philosophy, which is involved with the question of "who am I"? To answer this question, one has to clarify and

confirm the relationship between oneself and the other and the outer world. While, in posthuman era, highly influenced by Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*(1968), one of the turning points of body aestheticism is the disintegration of human subjectivity, which is trying to subvert the anthropocentric views of human beings themselves .

Originated in ancient Greek, the idea of subjectivity first takes shape in Aristotle's "being", which has the characteristic of independent existence or ultimate-subject of prediction, having no necessary relation to human beings. It is not until Renaissance that human beings' subjectivity casts the shadow and sees the light. To put it another way, man sees himself of a purposeful universe of divine origin. The belief that human beings are "the soul of universe and the paragon of animals" significantly frees people's mind.

Correlatively, by denying and suspecting, Descartes claims, "I think, therefore I am", which refers to self-suspecting and emphasizes self-consciousness(reason), thus establishing the significance of "I think" and laying the foundation for the philosophy of subjectivity. Since then everything outside the subject is being defined as object and subject becomes the measure of all things. The capacity of man's rationality is enlarged to the degree that they can gain an absolute, objective divinely ordered rational scheme of things.

Later, Kant and Hegel have enriched the connotations of Descartes' subjectivity even further. Kant puts forward the concepts of theoretical rationality, practical rationality, aesthetic judgement, etc. What he emphases is that human person has the capacity of rationality for self-government and the moral worth that derives from it. While the focus of Hegel's subjectivity is absolute spirit which refers that spirit is not only as pure rational consciousness to construct self-cognition, but also the source of universe, regarding spiritual substance as the basis of everything. Therefore, to a large extent, the rapid expansion of subjectivity has led to the crisis of modern subjectivity and the emergence of anthropocentrism, arguing that human subjectivity is an irreducible creative source of meaning and value.

In a word, thanks to philosophers like Descartes, Kant, Hegel, etc., who have made great efforts in establishing a solid foundation for human beings' anthropocentric understanding of themselves, the core issue of human subjectivity of rationality, synthesis, determinism and essentialism has dominated social psychology for most of the past century. In other word, human subjectivity has been privileged above all the other lifeforms.

However, the emergence of new body, cyborg, has highly disorganized Cartesian universalism of subjectivity, dissipating the boundary between subject and object and subverting traditional comprehension of subjectivity. Created by scientists Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline in 1960 in an article *Cyborgs and Space*, cyborg is a compound word of cybernetics and organism, which means a combination of both biomechatronic and organic body parts. Cyborg is "a hybrid of machine and organism"(Haraway 1990, 149), written by Dona Haraway in *Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*(1985). In the book, she first dissects the interconnectedness of human and technology. In Haraway's case, humanity has become so woven in with technology that it is hard to tell the boundaries between human, animal and technology, thus leading to hybrids and more complexities.

Drawing on Foucault, we can better understand the disintegration of human subjectivity. In the 1960s, Foucault ventures to proclaim that, "man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end" (Foucault 1970, 387) that our ontological understanding of human beings has been deconstructed. Foucault astoundingly puts forward that the concept of human beings is not transcendent but constructed by history and society.

> No philosophy, no political or moral option, no empirical science of any kind, no observation of the human body, no analysis of sensation, imagination and the passions, had ever encountered, in the 17th or 18th centuries, anything like man: for man did not exist (any more than life, language or labor) (*The Order of Things* 344).

In Foucault's system of philosophy, he made clear of the relationship between power and body, and power and knowledge, i.e. he asserts that subjectivity is constructed in knowledge and certainty is only possessed by knowledge; knowledge and power are inseparable in that power gives forth to knowledge and knowledge embodies power. To certain extent, human beings would be disintegrated if new system of knowledge and power emerged, which is foreseen by the development of artificial intelligence and biological technology.

On the one hand, by proposing counter-enlightenment(disintegrative) ideas of human subjectivity, philosophers like Foucault and Haraway have offered an alternative way to view ourselves, which has been illustrated in sci-fi movies. On the other hand, based on the standpoints of the counter-enlightenment philosophers, we are able to have an insight into the sci-fi movies that the disintegration of human subjectivity is achieved by cyborgs trough two ways, the "technicalization" of human beings and the "consciousnization" of technology.

For one thing, the sci-fi movie, *Ghost in the Shell* echoes the philosophical thinking of the "technicalization" of human beings. As has been discussed that the ontological thinking of human subjectivity believes that human beings are created by God with divine image, which gives them a special dignity among all the works of creation. However, in *Ghost in the Shell*, thanks to the development of technology, human beings can create themselves with their own hands. Having had a terrible accident befell her, the heroine Motoko Kusanagi is rescued by Megatech, a company specializing in the production of high-tech cyborg. To be more specific, Megatech uses a fully prosthetic body to house her cyber brain, thus giving her a second life. Being a brand-new creation of her own kind, Motoko, to some extent, disintegrates what enlightenment philosophers' belief that human beings are God's divine creation.

Besides, the movie goes further in disintegrating human subjectivity by endowering humans with more power than God. In the movie, to have certain enhanced ability like clairvoyant or quick reaction, almost everyone can have part of his or her own body "augmented" and those who do not have any prosthetic interference are being despised. When Batou loses his eyes at a battle, he has his eyes "augmented", which enables him with better eyesight to see through sealed objects. And Motoko has her whole body "augmented", which enables her with enhanced senses, strength, reflexes, and strong material body, thus turning her into a better fighter. In this sense, human beings themselves not only play the role of God, but also transcend Him. At the same time, man is on longer the measure of all things, or the cream of universe because when non-human existence(cyborg) is regarded as better creation, ontological thinking of human subjectivity will be changed in its nature, and consequently losing its specific carrier.

For another, the exploration and analysis of sci-fi movies enables us to see that it is possible for cyborgs to develop self-thinking and consciousness, i.e. the "consciousnization" of technology, as depicted in *The Matrix*, *Blade Runner*(1982) and etc. The construction of traditional subjectivity is based on reason and regards human consciousness and cognition as the origin of all knowledge. Thus the establishment of human subjectivity is confirmed. Among all the qualities of human being, self-consciousness is the most essential one, which defines human beings as advanced species in accordance with the doctrine of traditional subjectivity. While the root of human subjectivity is being destroyed in that consciousness can exist outside of human body and human consciousness can be manipulated and implanted in posthuman bodies in sci-fi movies.

In *Ghost in the Shell*, Major Motoko undergoes a profound humanist crisis suspecting the real existence of her self-consciousness after she discovers that she is not unique. "What if a cyber brain could possibly generate its own ghost? Create a soul all by itself? And if it did, just what would be the importance of being human, then?" These questions reflect the Major's confusion of the existence of subjectivity and thinking of the meaning of being a human. Initially, the Major believes that "self" is spiritual existence based on individual's organic body, emotion and memory. But after discovering another cyborg same as herself and a bus driver with implanted memory, she starts to ponder over what Batou says, "every person has his own ghost." She claims that,

> Just as there are many parts needed to make a human a human, there's a remarkable number of things needed to make an individual what they are… All of that goes into making me what I am, giving rise to consciousness that I call me. And simultaneously confining me within set limits.

In this sense, Motoko's physical body does exist as an ontological presence that defines her identity, but as an ensemble of body parts that provide an organic living system. Furthermore, she begins to question whether cyber brain has its own ghost, when she finds that the puppets have their own consciousness as well.

The movie *Blade Runner* also pushes the boundaries of what is considered "real" personhood. Replicants as Deckard, Roy and Racheal are synthetic humans with consciousness, thought and emotion, which are even more developed than human beings. In this sense, they are basically the same as human beings. This way of thinking prompts them to struggle to achieve what "real" human beings can achieve as living longer and love.

Therefore, when the development of technology frees consciousness from human brains, the foundation of self-existence is becoming unstable, thus the basis of traditional body aestheticism. By analyzing sci-fi movies, we come to realize that one of the major changes of body aestheticism in posthuman era is that it resonates the dismantle of humanist subject at the prospect of post-human society and represents human being's cultural anxieties and fears about the loss of coherent subjectivity.

2. The Subversion of Traditional Gender Role

By analyzing the sic-fi movies, we come to learn that the second turning point of the aestheticism of posthuman body is the subversion of traditional gender role. From ancient society to modern world, binary ideas like men/women, weakness/strength, self/other, etc., have been coded in the terms of human ideology, explaining the social realities and phenomena for centuries. Human beings' binary thinking logic not only helps build the gender boundary between men and women, but also distinguishes that women are sentimental, weak and submissive, while men are rational, strong and domineering. Specifically, an analysis of fictional representations of posthuman bodies provides us more details about the binary idea of gender role and ideal sites to examine what Althusser calls "real conditions of existence"(Althusser 123). As a pioneer in studying gender issues of cyborg, Haraway states that cyborg is a hybrid which erases various boundaries as human beings and animals, organism and machine, men and women, etc., and transcends the existing identity of race, class and gender. By analyzing the posthuman bodies in sci-fi movies, we find that the subversion of traditional gender role is mainly achieved in two ways, one is the ambiguity of biological sex, the other is the elimination of social gender.

Let's still take cyborgs for instance. Generally speaking, gender ambiguity of cyborgs in posthuman sci-fi movies is first manifested in biological dimension known as "highly sexualized cyborg" and "two sexes combined in one cyborg". The former means that the characters in sci-fi movies have typical male and female physical characteristics, i.e. males have strong muscles as Murphy in *RoboCop*(1987), T-800 and T-1000 in *The Terminator*(1984) and females have wide hips and a distinctive bosom as Rachael in *Blade Runner* and T-X in *The Terminator*. Although having super-power, male cyborgs have their bodies "castrated" because what makes them strong is not their biological body but cyborg technology. However, the powerful cyborg bodies are not indestructible. When injured, they are forced to reveal their inner mechanical limbs, thus presenting a "Body-without-Organs"(BwO) in Gilles Deleuze and Flix Guattari's words. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the BwO refuses to accept the organization of the organism as stratum, as centralized, hierarchical, and patterned(Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 158). In this sense, it is likely to regard cyborgs as a collection of "desiring-machines" which perform specific functions.

While "two sexes combined in one cyborg" signifies that male and female dual characteristics are combined in one cyborg, i.e. the cyborg is a male as well as a female. Let's still take *Ghost in the Shell* for instance. At the end of the movie, leaping on the back of the spider tank, Major Motoko attempts

to rip off the door on the tank's control panel. Audience witnesses several images with strong comparison, female image with wide hips and a distinctive bosom/male image with bulging muscles; torn tissue of organic skin/inorganic machinery and circuit devices. As we have seen, Major's body transcends the traditional archetypes of men and women. she is a woman, a man as well as a machine. In other words, the movie subverts the traditional boundary of gender, i.e. the hybridity breaks through the boundary between human and machine, male and female, which dismantles the binarism and categorical ways of thinking that have served the history of western culture.

Another example is Trinity in *The Matrix*, when she is with Neo whom she is in love with, the audience witnesses a tender and sexy female image; when she is fighting against the agent, she is a warrior with male valor and force. Female characters like them in sci–fi movies reverse traditional gender roles and transcend all the gendered body archetypes. They are also termed as "FemaleMan" by Haraway because they have the characteristics of both man and woman, which enables them to work with men sometimes exceed men. In a word, these cyborgs with combined male and female characteristics eliminate traditional dichotomies of gender and subvert gender boundaries that have dominated our ideology for a long time.

When Gayle Rubin created the phrase "sex/gender system", she reveals that, "(gender) is the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity, and in which these transformed sexual needs are satisfied"(Rubin 2006). She distinguishes gender from sex by emphasizing that, "gender is a socially imposed division of the sexes"(Rubin 2006). Rubin reveals that patriarchal thinking establishes women as being weak, hysterical and submissive to men. Another feminist, Shulamith Firestone, added that women's oppression was acted out through control over women's physical difference of reproduction function. She argues that we should invest in advanced technology in order to free women from childbirth. In sci–fi movies, Firestone's wish is accomplished by the emergence of replicants, which can be seen in *Blade Runner 2049*(2017). The movie tells us that replicants Racheal and Deckard have a child named Ana. But she is facing a severe danger because replicants' ability to reproduce biologically gives rise to human beings'(men's) fear of being replaced by women in other fields when the physical differences between men and women are less prominent. Celebrated also by Haraway, she asserts that postgendered subjects truly liberate women from patriarchy ideology, or in other words, eliminate social gender.

Furthermore, since replicants have subverted the physical differences between men and women, the metaphorical stereotypes of sexual difference as social identity and division of work is becoming unstable. In other words, it provides a challenge to anthropocentrism as well as phallogocentrism and promotes feminist movement, which is regarded as the myth of women's liberation or cyborg feminism by Haraway. As has been noticed that sci–fi movies at the early period of time had been men's movie, because on the one hand, the main characters in the movies are mostly male, appearing on the stage as superman, hero and savior, while female characters are restricted to be victims, tools even slaves. On the other hand, although female characters in the movies are given special charms, they are "Other" under male gaze, whose main purpose is to feed the sexual interest or agenda of the male characters and to reiterate feminine stereotypes.

As for female posthuman bodies in movies, they are also mainly "feminized" roles of inferiority, but what is unusual is that some of them do realize that they are being objectified for the pleasure of men. Pris in *Blade Runner* who is a "basic pleasure model" is created to provide entertainment for men. But her appearance is showing non–female charm with tousled hair, glazed skin like silica gel. Especially when saved by Sebastian, she deliberately smears herself with white powder, brushes black ink around her eyes and reveals her machine body to refuse to be a sexualized object of male desire. Talented with athletic and martial feats, she achieves her preliminary challenge against phallogocentrism by fighting against Deckard when haunted by him.

Rachael in *Blade Runner* is another example who gains female consciousness and subjectivity. She is a replicant with implanted memory, given elegant style and delicate look. Meanwhile, she is being

portrayed as an "Other" character who needs to be saved. In spite of this, however, when she realizes that Deckard is in danger fighting against Leon, she shots Leon without hesitation. Furthermore, by choosing to live a new life with Deckard as a replicant, she challenges the paradigm that women should be dominated by men because they are not smart enough. Such characters in posthuman sci-fi movies invite us to see that we should "cancel out" the significance of everybody's sexual specificity, which resonates with Stacy Alaimo's concept of "trans-corporeality" aiming to give more attention to the underprivileged entities.

Additionally, due to the development of feminist movement in real life, female posthuman bodies in sci-fi movies yield such a reading that women are not submissive characters attached to men, but appear as main characters like heroines and warriors, revealing female posthumans' unique charm. By analyzing such sci-fi movies with similar narratives, i.e. female leading characters are endowed with divine commissions to fight against evil power and achieve a happy ending with their super-power. Motoko in *Ghost in the Shell* is a female cyborg with robust body and superpower as well as a major of public security, a leading force in attacking criminal activities and carrying out justice. In doing so, the film reflects the Mayor's outstanding ability of observation and judgement, which outshines other male cyborgs. Simultaneously, Alita in *Alita: Battle Angel*(2019) is another posthuman heroine who becomes a battle angel in fighting against the bully and helping the weak in order to improve the harsh life of the citizens in Iron City and oppose the violence of the sky city of Zalem. The last scene of the Motorball tournament in the movie when Alita raises her sword to the sky city and calls for action further proves that she is qualified to be a revolutionary leader.

Both Motoko and Alita come to know and accept their new selves in the process of fighting for justice. As the leading power against the evil, they highlight the spirit of independence, boldness and decisiveness, corresponding to Haraway's 'FemaleMan'. While Priz and Racheal appear to challenge traditional gender system at preliminary stage, Alita and Motoko transcend the paradigm of and limits on female body and eliminate the dichotomy of gender in a larger sense. In other words, posthuman bodies serve as representational figures of dismantling gender boundaries and structures of oppression and create a utopian aesthetic space devoid of gender inequity.

3. The Reflection on Embodiment and Disembodiment

Basically, the stating point of traditional body aestheticism is focused on natural body which is the material carrier of human mind as well as material tool for human will. But as the French philosopher Merleau-Ponty emphasized that there is no distinct separation between body and mind, which is why human beings constantly invest their desires and need in their bodies, and also why body has always been the center of posthuman discourse. In addition, being the main issue of embodiment and disembodiment, the processing of body has been established and discussed in philosophical tradition. Embodiment is emphasized on the importance of human body in activities. While disembodiment is used by transhuman to escape the limit of material body in cyberspace functioning as information without flesh. In this regard, sci-fi movies provide us with various images of embodiment and disembodiment and prompt us to think: will posthuman body develop and replace human beings or can material entity only exist in practical activities?

Traditional philosophy holds the view that mind and body are inseparable and the former is superior to the latter. While the digital turn has shuffled the status of body, putting it to a higher degree than mind. Following Merleau- Ponty, "our bodily experience of movement is not particular case of knowledge; it provides us with a way of access to the world and object, with a 'praktognosia'(practical knowledge), which has to be recognized as original and perhaps as primary"(Merleau-Ponty 2005, 162) In this sense, body is not simply an object or subject, but an entity of perception and communication, which echoes in the movie, *Surrogates*(2009). This movie foresees the possible consequences of over reliance on technology and refusing personal communication. In the near future, scientists invent remotely controlled androids, "surrogates", which enable

everyone to live ideally at home. Human operators authorize their "surrogates" to work outside and communicate with others. However, when the main character, Tom, chooses to let the virus permanently paralyze surrogates worldwide, those highly homebound human beings have to step out of their homes, feeling confused and afraid, but also refreshed like a new born baby. As the line goes in the movie, "you can try to escape by living through a puppet through a machine, but deep down inside you know you're living a lie." The essence of human beings' indulgence on surrogates is that they are chasing unrealistic safety instead of real existence, which is an annihilation to the materiality, sociality and practicality of human beings.

Although in virtual world people can project their mind onto their virtual body, their material body still can feel and understand activities, exerting a great importance in their consciousness in virtual world. Disembodiment in virtual world does not mean that the importance of one's imbodied consciousness is fading. In *Ready Player One*(2018), created by James Halliday and Ogden Morrow of Gregarious Games, OASIS is a virtual reality entertainment universe where people can escape the complicated real world and enjoy freedom. But only when dying does Holliday realize that all the fantasies in OASIS is unrealistic, and only in the real world can one enjoy a peaceful dinner and a warm embrace with his or her loved ones. Same as *Inception*(2010), extractors have to take drugs to help them take control of their dreams or be kicked from a height to be awake from a dream. In this regard, such movies invite us to believe that although people can receive more comforts in virtual space, perceptible body in real life is more important.

While, disembodiment means entirely removing the limit of material body from mind, thus making body redundant flesh. Philosophically, the problem of disembodiment dates back to mind and body dualism from the beginning of philosophy: Plato divides the world into the perceptual world and the rational world; the former understands the world by sensory experience like seeing, hearing, smelling and touching; while the latter emphasizes the rational ability of mind. In the context of posthuman, disembodiment is assumed as "superhuman" condition, which signifies that posthuman beings' minds are improved to the level higher than the present human beings'. More importantly, consciousness can be unloaded and downloaded and exist in cyberspace as a certain information. In the movie *Transcendence*(2014), when Will's material body dies, his wife uploads his consciousness into a quantum computer and connects it to the internet, leading it to grow in capacity and knowledge. Same as the ubiquitous Lucy in the movie *Lucy*(2014), whose brain capacity reaches 100% and promptly disappears, moving into the space continuum where she is everywhere; and Jobe Smith who enters Virtual Space Industries mainframe and becomes a digital being by abandoning his physical body in *The Lawnmower Man*(1992). In doing so, Jobe hopes to be existed as disembodied superhuman and control all computer systems of the world.

In this sense, the disembodied super-humanism as Will, Lucy and Jobe implies a bode fantasy of the development and application of computer science and artificial intelligence, holding that posthumans will be omnipotent by having their intelligence and computing speed largely improved. But the theoretical basis of this ideal vision is the omnipotence of technology, which entirely surrenders material body to technology, thus falling into technophilism. In this sense, this full affirmation of technology seems to deny the role of an almighty God on the surface, but in essence it hopes that human beings themselves will play this role under the blessing of technology. Disembodiment implies what Nietzsche calls "the will of power" with strong anthropocentrism and utopian color. For Katherine Hayles, super-humanism will not succeed in achieving immortality, because it is merely another absolutism or "new digital Cartesianism" in Megan Boler's words.

Overall, embodied posthumanism is possessed with body which is the object of the material world, as well as mind a unity of consciousness and emotion. While disembodiment shows a desire to connect with others, positing body as non-necessary. Descartes' "I think therefore I am" is then translated into "I connect therefore I am", which is trying to get rid of the sociality and practicality of body. But as Hayles states that body should be regarded as the basis of human beings and not be caste.

4. The Imbalance and Balance of Human and Technology

Most sci-fi movies envision and explore the new living landscape and new social forms of human beings in the era of technology, bringing various possibilities of the development of human beings, machines and animals and discussing the coexisting modes with different objects, be it positive, pessimistic or objective. Correspondingly, what happens to posthuman bodies at the end of different sci-fi movies resonate what people think of new objects and the imbalance and balance of human beings and technology, representing the perspectives of human and those of posthuman respectively, thus another characteristic of the aestheticism of posthuman body.

One possible outcome of the development of technology is the alienation of technology which means that though technology is more and more bounded with human beings and infiltrated into every aspect of social life, human beings are more or less controlled and restricted by fast-evolving technologies. To think that living without a smartphone in contemporary China is impossible, particularly in the pandemic. Everyone has to show his or her health code and travel code to get home, let alone paying with QR code. As Rousseau says in *The Social Contract*, "(m)an was born free, and he is everywhere in chains. Those who think themselves the masters of others are indeed greater slaves than they"(Rousseau 1968, 49). From a functional perspective, technology casts new light on human social life, largely liberating people from manual work and freeing up a great amount of time for them, but aren't human beings slaves to their own freedom either? First, the definition of freedom is not decided by the public, but mostly by the government, the media and the few elites, etc. So when people are chasing the latest electronic products, thinking they are free to buy whatever they want, it is hard to deny that they are not influenced by commercial advertisement. Second, in pursuit of freedom, people inevitably have to give up something, as security and stability in Truman's case in *The Truman Show*(1998). Marx and Engels agrees that, "all our discoveries and progress seem to result in material forces with rational life, while human life turns into dull material forces"(Marx and Engels 1972, 517). This is the state of the imbalance between human beings and technology where people are being enslaved without being conscious of it. Therefore, there is no doubt that some people still regard technology as a threat to them.

From this point on, in sci-fi movies, one simple way to illustrate human beings' fear of posthuman bodies is to depict them as evil powers against human beings' will. As in the movie *Blade Runner*, the replicants are originally created to undertake tough jobs that human beings can't handle or don't want to, but are announced illegal and being hunted after one of them has shot a blade runner. As a result, the rest four replicants are in desperate to fight against the hunter, Deckard, who is created by human beings to retire them. At the last scene of fighting against Deckard, replicant Roy delivers an astonishing monologue before he dies: "I have seen things people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I watched c-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhuser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain." Human beings' obsession with the pursuit of advanced technology and genetic improvement, to a large extent, lead to the imbalance between human beings and posthuman bodies like the replicants in *Blade Runner*, which manifests human beings' fear of being replaced and wiped out by their own creation.

Another example is *Tron: Legacy*(2010) in which the Grid's corrupt ruling program, Clu, is dedicated to taking Flynn's "identity disc" and organizing his own program army to impose his idea of perfection on the human world. But due to the effort of Flynn, Sam and Quorra, Clu is destroyed, making the digital world peaceful again. Other posthuman movies like *Terminator*, *The Matrix*, *Upgrade*(2018) etc., are released with the similar idea, reflecting the consequences of the alienation of technology, i.e. technology is no longer a tool to serve human beings, but an alien force trying to gather power to overthrow human beings' control and dominate the world or the imbalance between human beings and technology. In this case, people's pessimistic view towards technology is vividly illustrated in those sci-fi movies in which tragedies are inevitable.

However, there are still some other people think positively that posthuman bodies are the next step for human evolution, because when the natural deficiencies like aging and death in human beings will be overcome and a coexistence of posthuman bodies and human beings will be realized. In this sense, people will agree with Katherine Hayles, "the posthuman view thinks of the body as the original prothesis we all learn to manipulate, so that extending or replacing the body with other protheses becomes a continuation of a process that began before we were born" (Hayles 1999, 3). The positive thinking of posthuman bodies believes that the combination of human beings and technology will usher in a turning point for human beings' next step of evolution.

From this point on, movies like *Avatar*(2009) represent human beings' expectations for a harmonious coexistence with posthuman bodies. In *Avatar*, when Jake steps into Pandora, a habitable moon to the Na'vi, he is overwhelmed by the pure and harmonious atmosphere there. Growing to sympathize with the Na'vi, Jake chooses to fight with them to drive away human beings and transfer his human body to Pandora permanently, thus becoming one of the Na'vi. Instead of destroying one side, to some extent, Jake has resolved the conflicts between the two civilizations and helped them coexist. In this case, the movie offers us to regard Pandora as an utopia for positive thinking of posthumanism. Similar to this are *Transcendence* and *Lucy*. When human being, Will, allows the virus to be uploaded into the computer to repair the damage humans have done to the ecosystem, he also chooses to sacrifice himself for the sake of human beings as well as machines in *Transcendence*; when Lucy chooses to inject all the CPH4 to her body to reach 100% of her brain capacity, she also chooses to give up her natural body to preserve all the information humans have reserved form the beginning of history in *Lucy*.

As has been stated, it is possible to believe that humanism and the development of technology can be coexisted. In his article "Why Must Scientists Become More Ethically Sensitive Than They Used to Be?"(1998), John Ziman maintains that "as their(humans') products become more tightly woven into the social fabric, scientists are having to perform new roles in which ethical considerations can no longer be swept aside"(Ziman 1998, 1813). Essentially, posthuman bodies are human beings' products which are designed mostly to meet human's needs under Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics: a robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm; a robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the first law; a robot must protect its owner existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the first or the second law(Asimov 1950, 40). Although it is difficult for a robot to make a choice, if the three laws contradict within themselves, Asimov pictures a possible future for us to live harmoniously with other forms of life in posthuman era.

Conclusion

The body images in posthuman sci-fi movies not only reveal the logos center doctrine of human beings, but also the relationship between technology and discourse, illustrating the anxiety of humanism and the conduction of posthuman condition. From *Ghost in the Shell* to *Blade Runner*, from cyborgs to replicas, posthuman bodies in sci-fi movies offer us various readings of human subjectivity, traditional gender roles, embodiment and disembodiment and the relationship between human beings and technology, which help us transcend the present condition to foresee and construct the system of new body aestheticism in posthuman era. In Rosi Braidotti's words, "we need to visualize the (posthuman) subject as a transversal entity encompassing the human, our genetic neighbors the animals and the earth as a whole"(Rosi 2013, 83). In many ways, posthuman bodies transcend the limits of human beings' corporeality, encourage us to subvert anthropocentric ideology of body aestheticism, and embrace an intersubjective future with different entities.

Hainan Normal University, Haikou, China

Works Cited

Alaimo, Stacy. *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010.

Althusser, Luis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)." In *Mapping Ideology*, Ed. Slavoj Zizek, 100-140. London: Verso, 1994.

Asimov, Isaac. "Runaround". In *I, Robot*. Greenwich, Conn: Fawcett Publications, 1950.

Boler, Megan. "Hypes, Hopes and Actualities: New Digital Cartesianism and Bodies in Cyberspace." *New Media & Society* 9.1 (2007): 139–168.

Braidotti, Rosi. *The Posthuman*. Cambridge, UK/: Polity Press, 2013.

Braidotti, R, Gender Studies, and Afd Media. "Posthuman, All Too Human. Towards a New Process Ontology." *Theory, Culture & Society* 23.7-8 (2006): 197–208.

Clynes, Manfred E., and Nathan S. Kline. "Cyborgs and Space." *Astronautics* 5.9 (1960): 26-27, 74-76.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. Brain Massumi. New York: Continuum, 2004.

Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* London: Gollancz, 2011.

Fenner, David. "On the Evolution of Film Theory and Aesthetics." *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* 44.3 (2021): 107-114.

Fletcher Murray, Stuart. *Disability and the Posthuman: Bodies, Technology and Cultural Futures*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020.

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences.* London: Tavistock Publications, 1970.

Haraway, Donna J. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." In *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. 149-81. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Harris, Daniel, and Stacy Holman Jones. "A Manifesto for Posthuman Creativity Studies." *Qualitative Inquiry* 28.5 (2022): 522–530.

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

Heidegger, Martin. *The Question Concerning Technology: and Other Essays*. Trans. William Lovitt. New York: Harper & Row, 1977.

Kunyu, Wang. "Body Image in AI Movies: A Way to Understand the Posthuman." *Critical Theory* 4.2 (2020): 118-129.

Marx, Karl, Friedrich Engels, Karl Marx, and Richard Dixon. *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works*. New York: International Publishers, 1975.

Merleau-Ponty, M. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. C. Smith. London and New York: Routledge, 2005.

Nietzsche, Friedrich W, Walter Kaufmann, and R J. Hollingdale. *The Will to Power*. New York: Vintage Books, 1968.

Pappas, Nickolas. "Spike Jonze's Her: Love and the Science Fiction Film." *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* 44.3 (2021): 7-17.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques. *The Social Contract*. England: Penguin Books, 2004.

Rubin, Gayle. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." In *Feminist Anthropology: A Reader*. Ed. Ellen Lewin, 87-106. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2006.

Saffari, Ehsan et al. "'Does Cinema Form the Future of Robotics?': a Survey on Fictional Robots in Sci-Fi Movies." *SN Applied Sciences* 3.6 (2021): 1–13.

Saldanha, Arun. "Aestheticism and Post-Humanism." *Dialogues in Human Geography* 2.3 (2012): 276–279.

Summa-Knoop, Laura T. Di. "Aesthetics and Ethics: On the Power of Aesthetic Features." *Journal of Comparative Literature and Aesthetics* 43.1 (2020): 54–68.

Ziman, John M. "Why Must Scientists Become More Ethically Sensitive Than They Used to Be?" *Science (American Association for the Advancement of Science)* 282.5395 (1998): 1813–1814.