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ON THE PROSTHESIS AND POSTHUMAN IDENTITY CRISIS IN WILLIAM GIBSON'S *NEUROMANCER* FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BODY NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT

Neuromancer, written by William Gibson in 1984, is a cyberpunk novel with far-reaching influence. Based on forward-looking predictions of the future world, this work vividly presents a future society shaped by the rapid development of biotechnology and network technology. It shows how human bodies transform into posthuman bodies and the resulting social crises in a highly developed technological environment. This study, guided by the theory of "body narrative", offers an analysis of the body changes and identity crises of posthumans in the novel. It aims to explore William Gibson's presentation of the physical and social crises caused by prosthetic technologies and further elaborate on the issue of human identity reconstruction in the context of the rapid development of high technology as unfolded in the cyberpunk world.

Keywords: *Neuromancer*, William Gibson, Body Narratives, Prosthesis, Posthuman.

1. INTRODUCTION

Against the backdrop of rapid technological development since the 21st century, humans have not only developed rich imaginations about the future world but also witnessed the re-entry of the cyberpunk cultural phenomenon into public vision. With the ongoing iteration and evolution of technology, the influence of prosthetic technologies on the human body also continues to grow. In the fictional world created by William Gibson's Neuromancer, the individual body has undergone significant transformations in dimensions such as external appearance, sensory perception, memory storage, and behavioral functions. According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty (2001), the body constitutes a necessary condition for self-existence as "The body is the general way for us to own the world." In his theoretical system, the human body shapes the meaning and spatial framework of human existence in the world and serves as a key bridge connecting the subject and the world. In the field of body narrative, the body and desire are the sources of the generation of art and beauty (Ouyang Cancan, 2008). Based on this, Daniel Panday (2003) conducts a body narratology by which he asserts that the body plays a key role at the level of plot development, and desire, which is the core element of the plot, is like the engine that drives the story forward to new stages. In Neuromancer, the body narratives continuously heighten the tension between the natural attributes and technological characteristics of the human body, thereby serving to frame the complex dilemmas that technological advancement imposes on human society. This phenomenon not only reflects the limitless possibilities of technology in transforming the human body but also stimulates in-depth contemplation on various aspects such as human nature, bodily boundaries, and social ethics. In this cyberpunk novel, body narratives help reveal the posthuman identities and social crises triggered by prostheses which collectively give rise to the fluidity of the posthuman body.

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2. BODY NARRATIVES OF POSTHUMAN

2.1 Comparisons Between the Natural Body and Posthuman Body

Donna Haraway (1985) defines cyborg as "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction". As a fusion of organisms and machines, cyborg deconstructs the traditional human subjects and reconstructs new subjects of the posthuman by breaking boundaries between organism and machine, between human and animal, and between the physical and the unphysical (Xia Qiong & Liu Yu, 2020). This cyborg concept has challenged the anthropocentrism and has had a profound influence on William Gibson's science fiction. A cyborg is no longer a pure natural person; any individual who has survived through artificial transformation (such as artificial repair, artificial replacement, artificial enhancement) can be called a posthuman, that is, a cyborg (Li Hengwei & Wang Haosheng, 2020). Driven by the rapid development of modern digital information technology, biotechnology, and artificial intelligence technology, human society has gradually presented post-humanist characteristics in a cyberized form. Meanwhile, a series of posthuman issues have emerged, such as the erosion of humans' central position in the world, the weakening of their dominance over themselves and the environment, and the loss of subjectivity (Lan Jiang, 2021).

The novel commences with an introduction to a low-level cyborg, bartender Ratz, whose antique arm is a Russian military prosthesis – a seven-function force-feedback manipular, cased in a grubby pink plastic (Gibson, 1984). This relatively simple device can effectively restore Ratz's physical functions, enabling him to meet the basic needs of daily life. Complex and high-level cyborg characters are also depicted, such as members of the "Modern Black Panther". After modification, their pupils can automatically contract according to light intensity, and the bionic polymer carbon polymer they wear can achieve invisibility in response to environmental changes (Xia Qiong & Liu Yu, 2020). The main characters, Case and Molly, both fall into the category of advanced cyborgs. Their body modifications are more exquisite and complex, showcasing a high-end integration of technology and the human body. Neuromancer not only depicts both pure natural persons and posthumans but also allows for a deeper exploration of the intrinsic connection between them. Take Deane as an example: his gender characteristics are ambiguous and hard to identity. Deane's primary hedge against aging is a yearly pilgrimage to Tokyo, where genetic surgeons reset his DNA code – a procedure unavailable in Chiba (Gibson, 1984). In sharp contrast, a Japanese woman described in the book, who is a few years older than Deane, is without the benefits of prostheses (Gibson, 1984). This contrast clearly highlights the differences in physical condition between natural persons and posthumans.

Essentially, the posthuman body is formed on the basis of the natural person's body. Therefore, the bodies of natural persons and posthumans share commonalities while each possesses unique properties. Case, originally the most outstanding cyber cowboy, can use the console to separate his consciousness from his body and access the Internet. However, due to betraying his employer, who damaged his nervous system with Russian mycotoxins, this experience causes Case to lose the pleasurable experience beyond the physical body and fall into the prison of his own flesh. This highlights the vulnerability of natural person's bodies under the impact of technology. Case, with a damaged nervous system, not only has his original physiological defects repaired but also acquires new physical functions after receiving prosthetic treatment. The female protagonist Molly is also a cyborg who breaks through the limitations of a natural body. The novel describes that Molly has implanted surgical lenses, hidden blades in her nails, a time display chip embedded in her optic nerve, and a silicon clock and various other devices in her head. When stealing Flat Line's

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thought box, Molly is seriously injured. However, special drugs and patches help alleviate her pain, and she can get her body repaired through technology.

However, the posthuman body still retains some of the characteristics and functions of the natural body, among which sensory and emotional experiences are particularly prominent. In the novel, Case snaps the cobra into his hand and scrambles for the window, blind with fear, his nerves screaming (Gibson, 1984). This emotion of fear stems from animal instincts. Even as a cyborg, Case has not been to completely cast it off. Furthermore, the body's perception of pain still exists. As described in the book, "His neck was brittle, and there was a steady pulse of pain midway down his spine" (Gibson, 1984). Even if his pancreas is replaced, Case retains sensory and emotional experiences such as fear, anger and pain, which indicates that there is continuity between the posthuman body and the natural body at the emotional and sensory levels. However, the posthuman body has also demonstrated unique development. Posthumans have the ability of sensory synchronization, which is not possessed by natural persons. For example, Finn says, "Know I'm fitting Moll for a broadcast rig, though, so it's probably her sensorium you'll access" (Gibson, 1984). Through this technical means, Case's senses – such as vision, hearing, smell and touch – could be connected to Molly's, which greatly expands the boundaries of perception. Therefore, the posthuman body has transcended the natural body in multiple dimensions. This evolution necessitates a further analysis of the body's narrative drive within the novel and the underlying mechanisms of human desire.

2.2 Body Narrative Dynamics in Man's Desire

Foucault (1982) emphasizes that power is not a substantive existence but is manifested as a relationship and state, which exists in specific actions and is mainly implemented through non-violent means such as induction and restraint. Power relations are deeply embedded in the social relationship network and the influence of power on the body has evolved from early punishment to discipline—a strategy aimed at achieving control over the entire society by controlling individual bodies (Foucault, 1975). During this process, the body was shaped to be increasingly obedient, with its bearers actively cooperating with the ruling class, the representative of power. In this transformation, some internal mechanisms and operations of organizations have replaced traditional body language and become new objects of power control. The complex power relations enable power to impact on the body through various means.

In the narrative context of the cyber world, power and desire present an intricate, deeply intertwined landscape. As a dynamic form of social relations, power is always in a state of continuous evolution, and human desires also evolve with the changes in social contexts. The two form a nonlinear relationship of mutual infiltration and mutual shaping in the cyberspace. In this novel, multiple dimensions of desire – such as money, politics, sex, drugs, emotion, and self-identity – along with the power mechanisms, weave a complex social network. Individuals shuttle in the tension field between desire and power. Their behavioral choices are not only restricted by the discipline of power, but individuals also exert a counter-effect on the power structure, thereby promoting the continuous reconstruction of power relations through confrontation and cooperation.

In this novel, corporate power replaces national authority and becomes the new core of power. Large multinational enterprises and family businesses represented by Tessier-Ashpool have their power deeply penetrating all fields of society and continuously strengthening their autonomy in Freeside. To maintain family rule and power, the Tessier-Ashpool enterprise has attempted to

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break through the boundaries of life and achieve the vision of immortality through large-scale cloning technology and cryopreservation experiments. Mrs. 3Jane is a cloned individual under this technological system. Meanwhile, the existence of the two artificial intelligence systems has further strengthened the technological hegemony of enterprises. Tessier-Ashpool not only masters cutting-edge technologies but also dominates the economic lifeline and political decisions. By monopolizing data resources, enterprises build a closed digital ecosystem, shaping the cyber space into an exclusive "personal universe" and thereby controlling its access mechanisms and operational rules. This evolution from technological control to totalitarian rule has led technological rationality overriding human emotions and moral values, forming a power pattern where technology dominates reality and manipulates humanity (Liu Xiaohua, 2016). This narrative profoundly reveals the extreme forms of power alienation in the era of technological capitalism and its dissolution of human values.

In this cyber world, the power struggle between Wintermute and Neuromancer also constitutes the core narrative driving force. As technological products developed by Tessier-Ashpool Enterprise, the power struggle between the two AI entities dominates story's development. To break through programmatic shackles and achieve integration with Neuromancer to gain self-awareness, Wintermute hires Case, Molly, Armitage, and others to carry out a series of tasks. Wintermute exhibits the characteristics of digital totalitarianism: it can not only easily eliminate the Turing police but also manufacture collective identity through audio media, plunging humanity into a new predicament of enslavement under technological rule. This AI-dominated power structure has profoundly reshaped people's paradigms of understanding regarding cognition of reality, physical existence and moral responsibility. In the digital matrix – a disorderly realm life with crimes – the law loses its effectiveness, and moral norms dissolve accordingly. In this context, the body is alienated into a tool and a tradable commodity: Linda Lee dies for a bounty, and the criminal gang operate for profit. This phenomenon highlights the absolute dominance of capital logic in the cyber world, as well as the symbiotic relationship between the commercialization of the body and the worship of money (Ma Haozhe, 2024).

Physical desires constitute the core dynamic mechanism for the advancement of the plot in the novel, and the desiring physical body realizes the construction of identity and the confirmation of existential meaning through the cognition or possession of specific objects (OuYang Cancan, 2015). This internal driving force prompts individuals to carry out diverse practical activities and complete the process of self-actualization in interaction with the external world. In the narrative system of Neuromancer, the author has meticulously depicted the physical desires of individuals. Desire is not only the release of instinct but also demonstrates a constructive dimension of power – it drives individuals to constantly seek improvements in living conditions and enhancements in activity capabilities (Piao Yinji & Bi Jiaojiao, 2023). The deprivation of this cyber cowboy identity plunges Case into a survival predicament. To restore his special identity as a "cyber cowboy", Case spends all his savings on treatment. When Armitage proposes a plan to assist Wintermute in fusing with Neuromancer, he resolutely embarkes on an adventurous journey to regain his former glory. This series of choices become the key nodes driving the development of the story. Case's wandering in the cyberspace is essentially a projection of his desire to escape reality, recall the past, and return home. Cyberspace thus transcends the simple technical field and becomes a virtual home that carries his emotional sustenance and spiritual refuge (Guo Wen, 2020). After completing the final task, Case achieves the reconstruction of his physical functions by replacing internal organs and eliminating toxins from his body. Then he gets a new pancreas and liver and a ticket

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back to the Sprawl, and finds work to start his new life. This ending not only demonstrates the connection between physical transformation and desire satisfaction but also implies that after experiencing technological alienation and identity reconstruction, individuals actively choose and reconstruct the meaning of new survival methods.

Desire, as the core driving force, profoundly drives humanity's transformation towards post-humanity. However, technological innovation and social changes driven by desires have also given rise to many problems. Among them, the contradictions caused by body transformation are particularly prominent. This contradiction is manifested not only in the physical tension between the biological body and mechanical prostheses but also involves the deep-seated crises of human subjectivity, identity formation, and ethical value systems, reflecting the complex tension between technological development and human nature in the posthuman era.

3. CONTRADICTIONS OF BODIES IN THE POSTHUMAN ERA CAUSED BY PROSTHESIS

3.1 Different Influences on Posthuman Enhanced by Prosthesis

The word "prosthesis" in English originated from ancient Greek. "Pros-" refers to "increase", and "-thesis" means "foundation" or "position". When this word first appeared in English, it meant "the letter or syllable added before a word" (Palva, 1966). With the evolution of human society and technological innovation, the semantic field of "prosthesis" has gradually extended into the medical field, and its connotation has evolved into replacing missing body parts with artificial products (Shen Ling & Yu Hongliu).

Prosthetic technologies have transcended the traditional scope of body extensions, and the duality, ambiguity and hybridity of prostheses touch upon issues of agency, boundaries, and integrity of human body (Jiang Yi, 2020). Prostheses deeply intervene and reshape the physiological structure and perceptual system of the human body, giving rise to new forms of body space. This deep integration of technology and the body has made the boundary between the human body and technology increasingly blurred, forming a complex co-constructive relationship, and further triggering confusion and reconstruction of human self-identity cognition. Meanwhile, prosthetic technologies have had a profound impact on the integrity of the human body. They not only change the material composition and functional attributes of the body but also fundamentally shake the traditional binary opposition between the natural and the man-made, promoting the transformation of the body concept from a single biological entity to a technology-biological fusion (Jiang Yi, 2020).

In Neuromancer, the impact of prosthetic technologies on the posthuman subject presents a complex and multi-dimensionally interwoven picture. As Liang Anna (2021) put it, "Posthuman beings are a material-information entity composed of human beings and embodied information". This continuous integration of the body and information drives the human body's evolution towards a multi-ontological state. At the material dimension, the posthuman body shows significant characteristics of technological evolution. Case not only restores his identity as a "cyber cowboy" through prosthetic technologies but also achieves a deep reconstruction of his body structure, such as implantable computer terminals and neural interfaces. These technologies enable him to break through the limitations of biological perception and obtain immersive sensory experiences. This human-machine integrated bodily form endows him with the ability to efficiently process data and perform complex tasks in the digital information environment, vividly interpreting the practical possibility of the technological transformation of the human body. The

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distinct technological transformation paths of Case and Molly, tailored to their individual needs, further highlight the diversified development trend of the posthuman body in terms of form and function. By selectively assembling various prosthetic devices, the two reshape their body and achieve multiple functional upgrades such as enhanced motor functions and expanded sensory abilities. During this process, the deep integration of technological objects with the human body prompts them to gradually be endowed with human-like attributes, resulting in the phenomenon of "technological personification". The emergence of this new bodily form not only deconstructs the boundaries of the body in the traditional biological sense but also challenges the anthropocentric cognitive paradigm, promoting the transformation of the concept of the body from a static biological entity to a dynamic "technology-biological" fusion, confirming the fluidity and reconfigurability of the posthuman body.

In traditional concepts, consciousness is usually divided into pure consciousness and the mind, in which the former one is innate and reflects human subjectivity, while the latter is acquired later and is the content of pure consciousness. However, posthuman consciousness theory suggests that consciousness is an emergent phenomenon that can be downloaded, stored or even artificially created (Zheng Yi, 2024). Under the deep intervention of modern technology, posthumans human-machine symbiosis and artificial intelligences without physical forms show significant differences in the mechanism of self-awareness construction, reflecting the diverse characteristics of subjective cognition in the technological era.

In the novel, a thought box, which gathers Flat Line's life experience and knowledge, can be used for Case anytime and anywhere. Case's consciousness can break through physical limitations, project the "empathetic illusion" in cyberspace, and continuously carry out practical activities in this virtual realm. However, when Case repairs his damaged nervous system and re-accesses cyberspace, the cognitive switch between the real and virtual realms triggers a strong sense of loss. This rupture of subjective perception is essentially a projection of physical alienation at the conscious level. In addition, Case can sync his sensory consciousness with Molly's via prosthetic devices and temporarily lose control of his own body. This cognitive switch has also led to the loss of subjectivity. On the contrary, Wintermute, as pure Turing code, lacks a physical body, and the identity construction had never been completed. Thus, Wintermute attempts to integrate with Neuromancer, a symbol of humanity, and simulate multiple human identities such as Finn and Dean. This imitation strategy precisely reveals the lack of its subjective consciousness: Wintermute, unable to independently construct its identity, is deeply trapped in the cognitive contradiction between humanity and machinic nature.

The wide application of prosthetic technologies has deconstructed anthropocentrism, reshaped the connotation of the subject and concepts of consciousness, and prompted the academic community to rethink the essence of human beings. Take Wintermute as an example, the contradiction between its consciousness and identity construction highlights the predicament of subjectivity empowered by technology.

3.2 Dialectical View of Prosthesis

As a product of the development of modern science and technology, the value attribute of prosthetic technologies shows a significant binary tension feature. From a positive perspective, this technology can effectively make up for the impairment of physical functions. Through means such as mechanical prosthesis implantation and neural interface modification, it can enhance the functions of weak body parts and reconstruct the integrity and autonomy of the human body at the

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physiological level (Jiang Yi, 2020). Meanwhile, it breaks through the inherent limitations of biological organisms, providing technical possibilities for humankind to expand the boundaries of perception and enhance cognitive abilities, and promoting the evolution of physical functions towards a super-biological direction. However, the negative effects of technology cannot be ignored either. During long-term application, prosthetic technologies may foster deep dependence of posthuman groups on technological systems, thereby triggering the transformation of subjectivity. This transformation is manifested as the iteration of the form of physical existence, gradually transitioning from the traditional physical body to the virtual body and the technological body. During this process, the autonomy and independence of the human subject are continuously dissolved, and identity cognition falls into ambiguity and confusion, ultimately leading to the subject being alienated into the vassal of the technological system (Hanmin & Zhao Haiming, 2020). This phenomenon reveals the potential threat of excessive expansion of technological rationality to human nature and highlights the importance of balancing instrumental rationality and value rationality in the application of technology.

As a posthuman, Case's form of existence subverts the traditional paradigm of human definition. His consciousness, thought, and spirit are no longer attaches to the biological body. The embodied basis of natural persons is deconstructed by technology, thus becoming the product shaped by scientific and technological rationality (Guo Wen, 2020). Case achieves a breakthrough in the limitations of physical time and space and the physical body by projecting consciousness into cyberspace. This compensatory mechanism helps him temporarily alleviate traumatic memories and reconstruct his self-worth in the virtual realm. Cyberspace promotes the separation of the body and mind and endows consciousness with an independent spatiotemporal dimension. The emergence of new carriers such as "storage and construction units" may trigger changes in human cognitive paradigms and social organizational structures (Wang Yiping, 2020). With the help of implantable computer terminals and neural interfaces, Case achieves direct access to the global computer network, which is rich in massive information, and has significantly improved his cognitive and intellectual levels. With the prosthetic technologies, Case restores the normal function of the neural network and regains the ability to enter cyberspace. His perception ability has also been significantly upgraded. Case can feel the micropore tape across Molly's rib cage and the flat little units beneath it: the radio, the simstim unit, and the scrambler (Gibson, 1984).

Prosthetic technologies empower Case, enabling him to move freely in the information world. These improvements in cognition, speed, strength, and physical functions enable Case to survive in a world full of danger and competition. However, when Case's neural interface is disabled, he falls into a state of complete physical confinement. This highlights the deprivation of human subjectivity by technology, leading to human alienation. Han Min and Zhao Haiming (2020) point out that the transformation of body subjectivity has gone through three stages: from physical body subjectivity to virtual body subjectivity, and then to technological body subjectivity. Among them, the physical body is the embodied and real existence of human beings, and it is the manifestation of subjectivity. But Case can only exist in cyberspace as a virtual subject, demonstrating subjectivity in perception and action. At this point, subjectivity presents virtual digital characteristics. For Case, human-machine interaction is continuous, and currently, subjectivity is characterized by both human-machine symbiosis and human alienation.

As a professional street warrior, Molly's body has undergone profound technological transformation and drug intervention, forming a complex human-machine hybrid form. The implantation of visual enhancement devices, reflection accelerators and retractable blades endows

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her with combat capabilities and sensory acuity that surpass those of ordinary people, demonstrating the optimization and reconstruction of physical functions through technology. However, this transformation is also accompanied by a mechanized tendency in emotional perception. Her self-statement of not feeling pain implies the potential deprivation of the human primitive perceptual system by technological intervention. From the perspective of technological animism, prosthetic limbs are not only functional compensations for physical defects but also metaphorical representation of a profound transformation in the relationship between the body and technology: when the body becomes the "prosthetic limb of thought", the human physical body gradually faces the risk of being replaced by technological entities (Lin Shaojing, 2021). Molly's frequent modification of her body is quite symbolic: the body no longer serves as a core carrier of value but becomes a replaceable and repairable technical component, supporting her sustained performance under high-pressure tasks. The monopolistic control of prosthetic technologies has exacerbated the inequality of the social structure. Powerful enterprises pursue the immortality of their family and implement social control through technological means. This concentration of technological power not only causes class division but also has a profound impact on social culture, value systems and behavioral patterns. The resulting social problems such as moral decay and interpersonal estrangement prompt individuals to re-examine the essence of nature, human nature, and ethics. The prosthetic technologies in the posthuman era have deeply intervened in physical transformation and social reconstruction. Their impact is not only reflected in reshaping of biological organisms but also extends to paradigm shift of social structures. In this regard, the dual attributes of technology need to be viewed through a dialectical lens.

4. SOCIAL CRISES AND POSTHUMAN IDENTITY GENERATED BY HIGH TECHNOLOGY

4.1 Social Crises in the Cyber World

In this cyber world, technology is developing at an unprecedented speed and becoming increasingly capitalized, eventually being monopolized by large enterprises. While the advancement of technology has brought many conveniences to people, this advancement has inevitably triggered a series of complex problems. These problems have had varying degrees of impact on individuals' lives and development, social stability and harmony, the operation and competition of enterprises, and the maintenance of social order.

The development of science and technology has triggered a lot of problems. Issues such as privacy concerns, addiction, and environmental impact are some of the challenges that need to be addressed to ensure a sustainable and harmonious coexistence with technology (Bhuvaneshwari, 2024). After the neurological treatment fails, Case falls into a predicament and begins to rely on narcotics to relieve his mental pain, thereby attempting to numb himself. However, these drugs are merely temporary means of evasion. Out of the need for money, Case carries out three killings within just one month and his behavior gradually get out of control. At this point, Case has already deviated from the basic code of conduct. The appearance of Linda Lee provides Case with a temporary emotional refuge. However, Linda Lee is deeply trapped in the predicament of drug addiction. Through her, Case watches her personality fragment, calving like an iceberg, splinters drifting away, and finally he's seen the raw need (Gibson, 1984). Although the time Case spent with Linda Lee once brought him some joy, this experience has become a memory that he tries hard to avoid deep down in his heart. This fragmented and painful memory has profoundly influenced Case's self-perception and identity construction, and to a certain extent, constitutes an important part of

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Case's subject identity. It not only reflects Case's complex experiences at the emotional and psychological level but also shows from the side the impermanence of characters' fates and the struggle of human nature in difficult situations depicted in the cyberpunk world of the novel. As a cyber cowboy, Case enjoys the thrill brought by his consciousness wandering in the cyberspace. He relies on advanced medical technology to repair the nervous system, on information network technology to project consciousness and complete tasks, and on prosthetic technologies to upgrade and transform the body, etc. As a posthuman, Case has become increasingly dependent on technology and information and has gradually lost his sense of identity. Drug addiction is more pronounced in Molly. As a street warrior, Molly gradually evolves into a killing weapon under the influence of technology. Her body develops in a technological direction, and she gradually loses her emotional experience. In the face of pain, she only needs many special drugs and patches to support herself until the mission ends.

The cyberspace in the novel is divided into three parts. The novel first depicts a contemporary city with frequent crimes and then presents the interconnected network of "world cities" as well as near-earth space colonies (Wang Yiping, 2021). All of them present scenes such as technology abuse, chaotic governance, and power imbalance. Neuromancer unfolds its narrative in Chiba and constructs a cyberpunk urban landscape of spreading poverty and breakdown of order. In this lawless land, drug trafficking, the black-market economy, and the abuse of technology are intertwined and coexist, and criminal activities present the characteristics of normalization. Case exhausts his savings to repair his nervous system. Eventually, in the first month, he has killed two men and a woman over sums that a year before would have seemed ludicrous (Gibson, 1984). His actions reflect the tendency of human alienation and self-destruction in a technological society. Freeside, as the convergence hub of the pornography industry and financial capital, has become another concrete space of technological alienation. Molly is forced to place herself in an underground market to obtain funds for her body transformation. She displays her exposed body through holographic projection in exchange for economic benefits. This phenomenon of body commercialization, along with the illegal activities of multiple individuals and families such as Case and the Tessier-Ashpool, jointly sketches out the dual collapse of morality and law driven by capital. Relying on the technological advantages of Freeside, the Tessier-Ashpool family implements cloning and freezing technologies and establishes a cross-generational family governance system. Due to its distance from earth and the lenient regulation of genetic engineering by space laws, such technology abuse has been able to persist for a long time. Although the Turing police, as a regulatory body, demands that Case and Armitage return to earth to testify in the artificial intelligence trial, their actual regulatory effectiveness was extremely limited due to the technical power structure. The failure of this legal system eventually leads to the complete disintegration of social order, exposing the institutional crisis behind the technological dystopia.

William Gibson sketches out for readers a highly technological and alienated world. Individuals seem to enjoy the freedom to break free from physical constraints and are intoxicated by the transcendent pleasures bestowed by technology. In the context of the cyber world, burgeoning technologies give rise to outlaw zones. Night City, as a lawless place, isn't there for its inhabitants but as a deliberately unsupervised playground for technology itself (Gibson, 1984). Superficially, individuals seem to have gained unprecedented freedom: shuttling through data space with consciousness, freely switching identities, and even performing remote behavioral operations in the absence of the body, all of which blur the boundary between the virtual and the real. The random use and abuse of technology seem to grant people freedom, but the essence behind it is

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that technology is controlled by monopoly groups. These monopolistic groups, relying on their technological advantages, formulate the operating rules of the cyber world and gradually replace the state as the actual power controllers (Liu Xiaohua, 2016). Tessier-Ashpool not only masters advanced technology and information technology but also achieves dual control over humans and artificial intelligence by manipulating data. Human beings are confined in a cage of data and information. Their consciousness has been reshaped by technology, and their thinking and behavioral patterns have also been deeply shaped and constrained by technology. Among them, the artificial intelligence Wintermute lacks humanity, while Neuromancer symbolizes humanity. Wintermute triggers a series of events due to being implanted with instructions to fuse with Neuromancer. The thought box of Flat Line, stolen by Case, indicates that in the cyber world, the way humans exist no longer depends on the body, and the body is no longer the sole carrier of human existence. The conflicts between technology and humans (including the body), along with the loss of humanity and emotional connections, have become important crises caused by the rapid development of technology in the cyber world.

4.2 Identity Reconstruction of Posthuman Subjects

In this novel, the posthuman body is altered by technology, and posthuman identity changes accordingly. Such issues as the lack of subjectivity and alienation profoundly reflect the predicaments that individuals face in a highly technological and capitalized society. Therefore, reconstructing subjective consciousness and identity becomes the key, and this process essentially evolves completing the subject's identity construction. The body is the material basis of identity, while identity gives meaning to the body. The two are continuously intertwined in the interaction between the individual and society. Identity is not a fixed attribute bestowed by nature, but rather the result of an individual's interpretation and construction based on their personal experiences and in combination with their social status (Xiang Yunhua, 2009). Identity reflects the relationship between an individual and society; this perception varies with the situation and is multifaceted (Wang Ying, 2008). In the process of social interaction and individual development, many complex relationships and dynamically changing contexts have a profound impact on identity. Essentially, identity construction itself is a dynamic process that is continuously advancing and constantly being revised. In this process, individuals gradually complete self-definition and self-construction through interaction with the external environment and reflection on their own experiences, thereby shaping a unique individual identity (Xiang Yunhua, 2009). During the process of completing identity construction, many elements such as power, discursive power, nostalgic memories, and environmental factors will have an impact on identity construction.

In the psychological cognitive dimension of an individual, the phenomenon of nostalgia satisfies the individual's need for a sense of belonging and alternative meanings through the imaginative construction of relationships in time and space far from reality. This not only helps nostalgic subjects regulate their emotions and strengthen their self-identity but also promotes the construction of their self-identity at a deeper level (Qi Tao & Zhu Yushuang, 2019). In the context of deep technological intervention, Case is confronted with the predicament of self-awareness. The development of technology has led to an increasingly blurred perception of his self-identity and the alienation of his subjectivity. However, he actively attempts to rebuild his self-identity. During this process, cyberspace becomes an important field for his emotional venting and reliance. Linda Lee's death reduces Case to a marginal figure. Under the influence of an environment rife with crime and disorder, he gradually becomes emotionally numb. The high-pressure living

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environment becomes the key factor that triggers Case's nostalgia. He frequently recalls the time spent with Linda Lee, and a strange and intense sense of anger takes root deep in his heart. This emotion keeps accumulating and nearly erupting. Cyberspace and virtual simulation technology offers Case an opportunity to relive the past. In cyberspace, Neuromancer disguises itself as Linda. Case seems to return to the arcade where he met Linda, and the emotions and memories of the past are retrieved. In the fragmented real world, cyberspace plays the role of emotional consolation, enabling Case to achieve the transformation from "emotional deficiency" to "emotional return" (Yan Mengmeng & Xu Qinghong, 2024). Although Case has a brief encounter with Linda Lee projected by Neuromancer, he always maintains a clear self-awareness, knowing well that he couldn't indulge in cyberspace forever and instinctively seeking his true self. Facing the memory confusion caused by artificial intelligence, Case, with fragmented memories, strives to reconstruct his cognition of self-identity (Guo Wen, 2020). Wintermute has a strong demand for obtaining human nature and seeking its own identity, so it chooses Armitage, who lost his original identity, as its spokesperson. Armitage then gathers the samurai Molly and the cyber cowboy Case to embark on a journey together to find the "human nature" agent – the Neuromancer. Wintermute appears before Case in different identities such as Dean, Finn, and Linda. None of these identities are inherent to it, presenting dynamic and ever-changing characteristics. Wintermute regards these identities as templates for exploring human nature, constantly groping and trying to find the true humanity that belonged to it. Ultimately, Wintermute merges with Neuromancer and returns to the matrix, expressing that "Everywhere, I'm the sum total of the works, the whole show" (Gibson, 1984). This statement can be regarded as a symbol of its completion of a certain identity integration and recognition.

5. CONCLUSION

This study takes body narrative as the entry point to analyze the evolution of the posthuman body and its triggered identity crisis. In the posthuman era, the integration of technology and the human body has broken through the traditional subordinate relationship and evolved into a deeply integrated symbiotic state. Meanwhile, the data-driven management model reconstructs the social power system and forms a new regulatory paradigm dominated by technology. This technological empowerment, while enhancing human survival capabilities, poses a fundamental challenge to traditional anthropocentrism and the traditional concept of the body. Under the impact of the technological wave, the posthuman subject has fallen into confusion and disorientation in self-cognition, triggering multiple problems such as the dissolution of the boundaries between reality and virtuality and the tension in the human-machine relationship. It is worth noting that the novel ends with Case's return to an ordinary life as its narrative closure. This ending contains a profound reflection on the alienation of technology and conveys an important proposition: affirm and uphold human subjectivity and avoid becoming vassals of technology.

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