

“Female Cyborgs in the Wild, Wild West”: How HBO’s *Westworld* uses Technology and
Religion to Perpetuate Gender Binaries

by
Natasha Wright

A Thesis submitted to
Saint Mary’s University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree of Master of Arts in Theology and Religious Studies

May 2023, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Date: May 11th 2023

Abstract

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Abstract: I examine seasons one to three of *Westworld* to extract specific ideas of gender using the characters Dolores and Maeve as primary figures for analysis. I argue that the show uses ideas of creation and gender that imitate the Judeo-Christian story of Genesis. *Westworld* displays bodies of artificial intelligence that expose societal fears surrounding radical feminism and technology. When we assume that technology is neutral, we leave ourselves susceptible to continuing a legacy of sexism.

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Chapter One: Introduction

The idea of the cyborg is a paradox. The cyborg is an organism and an inorganic machine, a body without a human soul. The cyborg has been popular in science fiction because it embodies both the fear and admiration we have for technology. The cyborg represents the ultimate desire for power over technology and humanity. Heteropatriarchal society dictates that control begins with the father and continues with the husband. By dominating creation through technology, which is primarily male-centred, the patriarchy continues its legacy of governing female bodies. We have become accustomed to using technology as a way to continue exploitation of labour through machines. We increasingly rely on ‘artificial intelligence’ to manage everyday life: examples of this would be Siri and Alexa who are gendered through their voice. But we also fear that it could go too far, that one day technology could surpass us. These fears are seen in contemporary depictions of technology. Laurie Penny (2016) writes, "The rueful paranoia at the heart of these visions of the future is that one day, AIs will be able to reproduce without us, and will summarily decide that we are irrelevant" (Penny 2016).¹

The HBO television series *Westworld* (2016-2022) is one example of how popular culture is displaying this anxiety: “[*Westworld*] captures the current fascination and fear our society holds with technological advancements, specifically cyborgs and A.I” (MacKenzie-Margulies 2020, 1). My thesis considers the influence of a constructed gender paradigm borrowed from a Judeo-Christian tradition within current trends surrounding technology in science fiction. I have

¹ Laurie Penny, “Why do we give robots female names? Because we don’t want to consider their feelings,” *The New Statesman*, 2016

chosen to analyze *Westworld* as a primary text to explore ideas about creation without the mother and how it evokes the Genesis narrative. My project examines how these cyborgian female characters perpetuate Judeo-Christian gender norms and stereotypes. Through these cyborg bodies, they expose contemporary fears of technology and radical feminism. They utilize fictional stories of advanced technology to display how gender is prescribed onto the body as opposed to being a natural part of a woman's body. They reuse the Judeo-Christian creation narrative to reinscribe gender. By analyzing *Westworld's* main characters Dolores and Maeve through the lens of feminist approaches to religion and popular culture, I aim to participate in a conversation about the role of religious narratives and the construction of gender in science fiction. We assume that technology is neutral yet we continually reinsert social problems of sexism and racism. Through my interrogation of the first three seasons of *Westworld*, I aim to expose the ways ideas of creation in the series reproduce gender binaries through cyborgs.

Gender and Media

What happens when images of female cyborgs, robots, and androids evoke Judeo-Christian ideas about the female body? If technology can eliminate mortality and allow us to live the way machines can, what is the use of perpetuating human social constructions like gender and race? My research asks why *Westworld* adopts images of femininity and racialization that refuse its cyborg characters the freedom of disembodiment. If we imbue technology with conventional notions of gender, then how can we consider technology progress? The internet may offer a space free of the physical body, “a central utopian discourse around computer technology is the potential offered by computers for humans to escape the body” (Lupton 1995, 100). An important aspect of feminism has focused on patriarchal control of the female body. An example of this is the current issues and conversations surrounding abortion in the United States.

The best way to control women is through reproductive rights, by removing individual choice against personal matters. Therefore it is no surprise when feminists saw the potential of the internet as utopian. I will come back to this idea during my discussion on cyberfeminism, for now, I switch to contemporary representations of gender in the media.

Patriarchal fears concerning technology typically assume a loss of control. These fears are seen in contemporary depictions of technology. We understand artificial intelligence as useful until it becomes aware of its disadvantages. This is similar to how the patriarchy views women who take back control of their bodies. Control is what patriarchy, specifically white patriarchy, has always aimed to do: control women, people of colour, slaves, and all others who are deemed subordinate. Donna Haraway discusses how cyborgs are "the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism. But illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins. Their fathers, after all, are inessential" (Haraway 2016, 9-10). This parallels the internet which has roots in the military industry (van Zoonen 2002), coding it with masculine/patriarchal values. The scientific ambition for knowledge is control and having this control can produce the effect that we see in *Westworld*. After the robot rebellion at the end of season one the hosts are faced with the reality that once they are all killed, they will be extinct. A driving force in Dolores' character in the second season is to escape the park and to be in control of her own fate, her own reality.

The "rueful paranoia" that Laurie Penny identifies— the fear that cyborgs will one day no longer need us— is what makes a show like *Westworld*, or movies like *Ex Machina* (2014), or *Blade Runner* (1982) so enticing: they play out real fears about technology. As our society keeps developing newer and more advanced technology, these fears about our own reality become the centre of our storytelling. However, if we were to successfully create an autonomous sentient

being, would we become the monster or would this creation become another tool for human exploitation? As Penny says, “as more and more fembots appear on our screens and in our stories, we should consider how our technology reflects our expectations of gender. Who are the users, and who gets used?” (Penny 2016).

***Westworld* and Genesis**

Westworld gained much critical reception with its star-studded cast and contemporary vision from J.J. Abrams, Lisa Joy, and Jonathan Nolan. The series is a modern remake of Michael Crichton's original film *Westworld* (1973), although it departs significantly from the original. The story is centred around a kind of ‘amusement park’ populated by cyborgs, run by the Frankensteinian creator Dr. Robert Ford. The main plot centres on two female cyborgs, Dolores and Maeve, whose characters reflect aspects of the Judeo-Christian characters of Eve and Lilith. Both cyborgs exist in the park for the purpose of entertaining and providing pleasure to men. The female cyborg here simply offers a new body in which the female can be exploited.

The show's central plot follows Dolores Abernathy. She is the first successful and oldest cyborg or "host" created by a scientist and entrepreneur named Arnold Weber. He, along with his partner, Robert Ford, created a “Wild West” theme park called *Westworld*² featuring these cyborg hosts. Each host has their respective job, controlled by the human staff behind the scenes. In the first season, wealthy executive Logan Delos and his future brother-in-law William visit the park. Logan is scoping out the park as a potential investment for the company his family owns, Delos Destinations. During this stay, however, Logan pushes William too far. He becomes obsessed with Dolores and vows to take over Delos from Logan. This begins the toxic

² When I use *Westworld* without italics, I am referring to the name of the park rather than the series.

relationship that William forces Dolores to endure for years. Decades pass and William becomes the CEO of Delos. He uses *Westworld* as his personal playground to live out his fantasies. Dolores is a consistent compulsion for him, frequently forcing himself upon her and murdering her romantic partner Teddy Flood regularly. Throughout the first season of the show, Dolores suffers memory loss and fractured time. This is because she is reset at the end of every day and programmed not to remember. But she does begin to remember erratically, jumping from her memories to the present. As Dolores tries to progress and regain her awareness, William is always a part of her memories, only remembering who he is once she finally begins to wake up her consciousness. A pivotal moment comes at the very end of the first season as Dolores finally understands her role and what needs to be done.

Running the park as the director is Robert Ford, the partner of the late Arnold Weber. Both founders had a hand in the creation of the hosts. Many hosts in *Westworld* have their own unique "cornerstone" or backstory to anchor them into their respective identities. These backstories facilitate the delusion of a false reality because it creates fictitious memories and relationships. Ford believes, however, that by deleting their memories at the end of the day and keeping them on a loop they are liberated from mental insecurities that plague humans. He goes as far as creating a host to help make the hosts more authentic. Bernard, who is given the job of Head of Behaviour, is tasked with creating convincing hosts for the park. Although it is a kept secret that Ford keeps that Bernard is a host among human employees.

Before Arnold's death, we learn that he questioned the ethics of opening the park. Arnold worked closely with Dolores, and he soon realized she had successfully gained self-awareness. Robert ignored his partner and kept looking for investors. After Arnold dies, Robert Ford created a host named "Bernard" in his image. Bernard then becomes Ford's new partner and lackey but

does not (initially) question Ford's actions. Arnold's opposition to Ford's actions however continues. It was the 'Reveries,' a code Arnold wrote, that allowed the hosts to gain self-awareness. At the climax of the first season, Ford downloads these reveries into the hosts' code and, during his retirement party, sets up a climactic scene where Dolores shoots him in the head and releases the hosts from his control to fight back.

Maeve Millay is another central character. She is the madam of the Mariposa, which is the local saloon and brothel. Maeve becomes close with Clementine, who is a prostitute under her management. After realizing that the Clementine she remembers has been replaced with a different girl who claims to go by the same name, she questions her surroundings. Maeve seems the first to gain some awareness, even before Dolores. Throughout the first season, she recruits the villainous Hector Escaton and his bandits to help her escape. She is ultimately unable to leave because of the memory of her daughter. Her narrative becomes entwined with Dolores, especially after the first season. Each character carries a group of companions and a story arc. Dolores and Maeve play pivotal roles in the show's narrative, raising meaningful questions about how gender is performed in stories about creation and technology.

The second season is an exploration of the journey outwards after self-realization, centred around the 'door,' or 'the valley beyond' as the show calls it. The valley beyond exists within a mega computer called the cradle that stores all the hosts' and guests' data. After the host uprising, Dolores mobilizes most of the hosts to rebel against the guests that remain in the park. Her plan is to find the cradle and read all the guests' data so she can use it when she enters the real world. When she 'enters' this computer, a metaphysical door appears to the hosts with an image of a luscious valley. Once they walk through to the other side their bodies and consciousness separate. Their consciousness is stored within the cradle as they live forever in this valley. This

season is appropriately named ‘the door,’ which offers the notion that this season is meant to be a transition between the park and the outside. A shift from being inside the Garden to outside the Garden.

The “new world” that the third season offers is an amalgamation of technological advances and old-world classist, racist, sexist issues. This season sees Dolores outside Westworld planning a takeover of the modern world that is “owned” and operated by Engerraund Serac (played by Vincent Cassel). What I mean by owned is, he and his late brother Jean Mi Serac (played by Paul Cooper) are the brains behind the quantum A.I computer Rehoboam. Rehoboam’s “main function is to impose an order to human affairs by careful manipulation and prediction of the future made possible by analysis of the large data set Incite [has] collected” (Westworld Wiki). Dolores understands humans have certain problems, and by enlisting the help of Caleb Nichols (played by Aaron Paul), she desires to start a new world. A world where cyborgs are truly free from human interference and liberated from human problems. Maeve throughout this season is being used by Serac to get rid of Dolores, whether she agrees with Dolores’ plot is left as a question in the finale. The purpose of this season is to present the intricacies of real life, of ‘humanness.’ Life outside the Garden and mortality are the key concepts behind my analysis for this season.

To expand on how feminism and religious studies intersect in this thesis, it is critical to understand the relationship of *Westworld* to the biblical narratives of Eve, Adam, and Lilith. The book of Genesis in the Hebrew bible/Torah provides us with multiple accounts of creation. The first is a short description of God creating the heavens and the earth. He then creates humans in his image., The other account goes into more depth and is the one more commonly associated with the word Genesis. Theresa Sanders (2009) in her book *Approaching Eden: Adam and Eve in*

Popular Culture, dismantles popular representations of Eve using historical backgrounds and textual analysis. She argues that “the story of Adam and Eve stands at the centre of a tangled web of allusions, interpretations, and reinterpretations” (Sanders 2009, 11). These interpretations are the ways that these characters are typically depicted in the media. Sanders argues that what is in the text and what is being redistributed has a disconnect, regardless the notion of gender remains heavily influenced by this story. As discussed earlier, patriarchal fears of technology relate to a loss of control. *Westworld* uses these fears to create a dystopian future wherein Dolores rebels against her creator and seeks revenge upon humanity. These same fears also align with how Lilith became a symbol of evil. Due to her disloyalty to God and the Garden, representations of Lilith are negative. Eve, although not fleeing the Garden nor refusing to lie beneath Adam, also became a symbol of sin, as I will discuss in this thesis. These conceptions of women cultivate a belief that they are biblically designed to be inferior.

Context

I became fascinated by *Westworld's* cyborgs after I first watched the series. I noticed the explicit imagery associated with gender and Genesis. My curiosity surrounding these ideas grew after I watched the film *I Am Mother* (2019) for a university course. I enjoyed the movie but as I had conversations about it, I began to question the dynamics between the 'mother' robot and her human child. I connected themes I found in other films such as *Bladerunner* (1982), *Metropolis* (1927), *Ghost in the Shell* (1995/2017) and *Ex Machina* (2014). The themes that I noticed most prominently were related to ideas of creation and gender that seem to relate to the Judeo-Christian tradition of the Genesis narrative. One thing they had in common was an 'Eve' like

creation, a 'female' cyborg. These cyborgs are often the creation of a male scientist. The female cyborgs they create are objects of desire and fear.

Consistently, I found that these stories about artificial intelligence used and borrowed from Genesis. For example, in Alex Garland's film *Ex Machina*, Nathan is the scientist who will stop at nothing to create what he believes to be the next evolution of humanity. Much like Victor Frankenstein, this lust for science and ingenuity competes with ethics and blurs the boundary between monster and innocent. Feminist biblical hermeneutics Sanders (2009) tells us that our mainstream understanding of the Adam and Eve narrative is flawed and removed from context. After noticing this trend of Eve archetypes in all of these other science fiction films, I recognized this model also in the main protagonists of the HBO series *Westworld*. Not only did they reiterate the same creator-creation narrative, but the show does more to present Eve and 'Lilith' -types into the forefront. The show is both similar and dissimilar to the other stories I had seen. I felt that because the story appeared to be unique but at the same time used the same antiquated concepts, it warranted a closer look.

I was drawn to a closer study of this series through my academic training at the intersection between religious studies, feminism, and media studies. My undergraduate degree was in religious studies, which guided me into the religious studies and theology master's program at Saint Mary's University. In my studies, I learned about the narrative of Genesis and about Eve and Lilith. My academic training has equipped me with the knowledge to decipher religious themes and symbols that are present in popular culture. I have also learned to use a feminist and religious studies framework to investigate popular culture. I will bring together concepts of feminism/women and religious studies to use an interdisciplinary approach for my paper. My paper aims to contribute to a conversation about images surrounding gender and

religion in popular culture. Issues can arise when complex ideas disconnect from the original context, particularly concerning antiquated beliefs regarding race, gender, and religion.

Therefore my research question asks what happens when certain images of technology in popular culture repurpose a specific pattern of religious ideas to promote constructions of gender.

Key concepts/texts/subjects

To better understand what I saw in these texts, I began to read further from scholars such as Rousseau (2005), Scholz (2010), and Osherow (2000) who discussed the importance of using feminist sociologies when studying biblical hermeneutics. After reading *The Cyborg Manifesto* by Donna Haraway I felt a correlation existed between popular culture and religious narrative using feminist interpretation. The suggestion that she was a hybrid between machine and organism created a new space for the female body to exist. The space she constructs exists within social reality and the imagination. Haraway contributes to a socialist-feminist conversation that conceptualizes a world without gender. Her blend of feminism and constructivism subsumes feminist politics and radical constructivism to construct a new, different perspective other than “woman” or “outsider-within” (Prins 1995). The cyborg can be used to fracture the power structures that force these categories. Haraway inspired a new genre of feminism — cyberfeminism— that uses a feminist appropriation of cybernetics to inscribe a new gender outside patriarchal boundaries.

The term cyberfeminism itself has nonlinear origins. Kate Mondloch (2013) offers this as a starting point: “the ‘cyber’ part of cyberfeminism is typically taken to denote cyberspace— “feminisms applied to or performed in cyberspace”” (Mondloch 2013, 107). In “Rethinking Cyberfeminism,” Susanna Paasonen (2011) discusses the complex origin of the term

cyberfeminism. She claims that in the 1990s new emerging technology caused feminist scholars to ask questions about gender in these unfamiliar territories. Now in our current technological environment, it is imperative to ask these questions in these new territories. Her article revisits how the prefix - “cyber” has come to be a fluid term within feminist discussions, and how feminists have utilized the “cyber” in debates, articles, and networks. Although cyberfeminism seems to lack a specific point of origin, she states that “it has been understood as postfeminism ... and as synonymous with feminist studies of new media that investigate interconnections of gender, embodiment and technology” (Paasonen 2011, 336). Recent feminist scholars have continued to use the term ‘cyberfeminism’ as an analytical tool to investigate new media. In her article, “Developing a Corporeal Cyberfeminism: Beyond Cyberutopia” Jessica E. Brophy calls on feminist scholars to expand their concepts used to study new media: “cyberfeminism has potential as a rich position from which to theorize the complexities of new media” (Brophy 2010, 943). She also discusses how early interactions with cyberfeminism and the internet have been utopian in nature, exploring disembodiment and liminality in cyberspaces (Ibid, 930). However, Brophy claims that although the ability to become any gender on the internet may seem liberating, “a user may reify and enact stereotypes, thereby reinforcing the normative understandings of gender, sexuality, race, or ethnicity. This, in theory, can recreate and reify the same limiting norms which may have encouraged the user to experiment with gender and sexuality in the first place” (Ibid, 931).

She goes on further to locate intra-agency as a crucial theoretical concept for rejecting cyberutopia and developing the concept of disembodiment. For cyberutopia one must leave behind the body, this disembodiment is necessary for the difference between online and offline. I will discuss her idea of intra-agency further in my next chapter, however, her basic insinuation is

that the internet (and technology) cannot allow for complete disembodiment. There will always be bias in any interaction, whether it is through the internet or not.

Chapter Breakdown

In Chapter Two of this thesis, I provide a review of literature from the fields of religious studies, media studies, and feminist theory that support my analysis of *Westworld*. I begin with a discussion on HBO and the development of ‘high art’ television production, Netflix, and platform streaming, to establish how changes in the industry have changed how people watch television. I then shift the conversation to media and feminism, using Laura Mulvey’s *Visual Pleasure* and Harry Benshoff’s book *Film and Television Analysis: An Introduction to Methods, Theories, and Approaches*. His book covers many methodologies scholars utilize for media studies, including feminist methodologies for television studies. To further develop the feminist framework, I look at Carter and Mendes (2008) and Diane Winston (2009) on connections between religion, popular culture, and feminism.

Since I am analyzing a show pertaining to technology, any conversation surrounding gender and technology would not be complete without citing Donna Haraway. Her influential work “A Cyborg Manifesto” has continued to prove crucial for any discussion on gender and technology. However, there are also critiques of her cyborg mythos offered by Radhika Gajjala (2014) and others. The final sections of my literature review introduce the Genesis narrative and the series *Westworld*.

My third chapter focuses on theory and methods. The purpose of this section is to explain the methods that I utilized for my analysis. Chapters Four and Five present my analysis of *Westworld*. The first season is the focus of the fourth chapter, where I discuss Dolores and Maeve

in the context of Genesis and the interpretation of the characters Eve and Lilith. This chapter focuses on how Dolores, Maeve, and the male characters (Teddy and William) recontextualize the story of Adam and Eve. This season develops the main characters and presents a significant part of the story. Another pivotal aspect of this chapter is the dissection of the storyline and juxtaposing it against the text of Genesis in order to display similarities and continue my interpretation of Dolores and Maeve as players within the story as Eve and Lilith characters. The fifth chapter entails discussing the larger context of the show by using the second and third seasons as essential drivers for further analysis of Dolores and Maeve. The second season represents the fall from heaven and being cast out of Eden. Each season has a title: the first season is "The Maze", the second is "The Door" and the third is "New World." To mirror this, I have named Chapter Four "The Maze" and Chapter Five "The Door to a New World."

To summarize, I use seasons one to three of *Westworld* to illustrate that the show recycles the story of Adam and Eve found in Genesis, a story that enforces patriarchal systems of oppression toward women by perpetuating rigid gender roles and ways of domination. Milne writes, "Genesis 2-3... has so frequently been used as the foundation for patriarchal theologies, especially patriarchal Christian theologies, of women" (Milne 1989, 19-20) These conceptions of gender reproduce sexist ideas surrounding the female body and how to control it. My purpose is to expose the way *Westworld* uses these interpretations, albeit one removed from these theologies, yet maintained in popular culture. Images of the female cyborg are becoming more frequent in science fiction narratives, therefore, it is important to dissect what is being produced for large audiences.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

I begin this literature review with a discussion of streaming services and how they factor into our contemporary viewing habits. Specifically, I examine HBO and Netflix due to their substantial roles in the change from network to streaming. To continue this conversation on television and media, I next introduce feminist media scholars such as Laura Mulvey (2009), Harry Benshoff (2016), Mendes and Carter (2008) and Daniels (2009) to establish the media theory work for my argument. After an initial introduction to feminism and media, I further the theory into cyberfeminism. My next section includes a discussion on Haraway (2016), Balsamo (1996), and Brophy (2010).

In the final sections of this chapter, I shift to the Genesis narrative in popular culture and *Westworld*. One specific story from Genesis that has been circulated in popular culture is the narrative of Adam and Eve. The popular cultural understanding of this story does not necessarily reflect theological debates in Jewish or Christian thought. One specific story from Genesis that has been circulated in popular culture is the narrative of Adam and Eve. Scholar Theresa Sanders writes about how the characters of Adam and Eve are recognizable as ubiquitous imitations of the same interpretation. These images that are being reproduced in popular culture display these characters as male and female in a way that reiterates gender stereotypes. The roles that are produced—male as breadwinner and female as child bearer—have origins in the Genesis text but the nuances are lost in translation and adaptation. How this relates to technology and the cyborg will be the focus of the last section of this chapter. After introducing cyberfeminism and feminist media theory I introduce how these ideas connect with *Westworld*. This allows me to provide substantial groundwork for my analysis in chapters four and five. I shift now to streaming

services which will establish how television has adjusted to a new format and how it transforms viewing habits.

HBO and Netflix: The Rise of Streaming Services

Since it began streaming in Canada, the price of Netflix has steadily risen and many people have come to view Netflix as a cultural artifact akin to television in the antiquated sense. Netflix may not be a source of media forever, it may become an outdated source like broadcast TV, however, the name will always be synonymous with popular media. Phrases like “Netflix and Chill,” “Let’s Netflix it,” “Netflix Buddy” and “Netflix Cheating” all exist within popular culture. Lobato (2018) writes, “Netflix is one of the few media brands of the internet era to penetrate so deeply into households and the broader popular consciousness that it has become a verb” (Lobato 2018, 13). This author goes on to talk about how the streaming services offered by Netflix aid in the modification of television viewing habits, saying “The online distribution of content [is] highly significant because it marks a transformation in the underlying structure and business models of television by freeing content from a linear structure and by introducing new pricing models ... and audience expectations about the content, novelty, and value of TV services” (Ibid, 25). Lotz (2014) writes in her preface, “In many ways, HBO and Netflix are more alike because they are non–advertiser-supported subscription services than different because one comes in through cable and the other over broadband—a distinction I suspect will be technologically nebulous the next time I revisit this book” (Lotz 2014, xii). This distinction, she writes, will be ambiguous in the coming years, and has become just that. Now that Crave has given a new home to HBO programming, Canadians no longer need to have cable or satellite to

access mainstream channels and shows, broadcasts and broadband boundaries have been transgressed.

Since the release of Netflix and subsequent platforms like Prime Video, Hulu and Apple TV, it is no surprise that a monolith such as HBO released its own streaming platform in 2015. However, HBO still proves to be one of the most expensive subscription services in the United States, at a \$14.99 a month fee. Now a streaming service called HBO Now as of 2020 the cost retains its \$14.99 a month fee but can be brought down to \$9.99 if you agree to ad-supported streaming. In Canada, the only way to get HBO is through the platform Crave, a subsidiary of Bell Media. The bundle offer that includes HBO costs \$19.98 plus taxes bringing the grand total I pay monthly to access HBO, to \$22.98. Other platform rivals such as Netflix are currently priced in Canada at \$18.96 after tax, and Prime comes in as the cheapest option costing \$11.49 a month. The reason I bring up costs is that authors Akass and McCabe (2018) discuss how HBO creates a ‘high art’ through television serials, using film directors or what they like to call *auteurs* to create unique originals free of censorship and FCC regulations. Through such content, HBO then positions itself as a premium service. Akass and McCabe write:

Emphasis is placed on an individual motivated by artistic intent and given a relatively generous degree of autonomy to tell stories in an innovative way, rather than as part of a traditional US TV idea of the writer’s room with large teams preparing scripts subject to network oversight, FCC regulation and the demands of sponsors. Reliance on a single authorial vision finds HBO placing a high premium on the kind of authorship already consecrated elsewhere in the field, namely: the author as ‘aesthetic experience (2018, 8).

Furthermore, they add that with a large number of subscribers to their streaming platform in an economic sense, there is a demand for this type of television. Although the conversation of what

prestige tv, which is what high art tv has become, will come later as I mention Milly Buonanno (2018) and her argument against using a ‘prestigious’ show in scholarship.

In 2016 when *Westworld* first aired, subscribers of HBO Now and the HBO channel through traditional television made possible the highest-ranking first season in HBO history (Alexander 2016). Beating out *Game of Thrones* in its first and second seasons, *Westworld* became HBO’s biggest show at the time. Now with services in Canada and worldwide, HBO continues to provide the forefront of television: “it is at this point in technological developments that cultural capital begins to make economic sense and shows how HBO seeks to remain in the forefront of the television game” (Akass and McCabe 2018, 7). Using the status of ‘high art’ HBO becomes central to cultural understandings and can be placed within a broader image of cultural and media studies. Akass and McCabe mention Pierre Bourdieu (1993) and cultural production, quoting “works of art exist as symbolic objects only if they are known and recognized, that is, socially instituted as works of art and received by spectators capable of knowing and recognizing them as such” (Ibid, 9-10).³ In other words, *Westworld* is able to successfully capture its audience using this Genesis narrative because it is highly recognizable in our contemporary society.

Author Milly Buonanno offers a counter-argument surrounding the use of prestige tv as the central choice for the scholarship. Claiming that these prominent television shows take precedence in many media scholar circles, creating a divide between niche and ordinary broadcast television. She focuses primarily on Netflix and its cultural hierarchy in terms of contemporary television landscapes. Her argument claims that the tendency to choose these outstanding and reputable shows that fall into ‘prestige tv’ that fail to take into account the

³ Ibid, quote from *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993); 37

“unprecedented amplification of the contemporary landscape of storytelling” (Buonanno 2018, 1). The purpose of mentioning her contention is to provide the issues of studying HBO and Netflix as central actors in television scholarship. Although it is accurate to assert that they had an integral role in the influx of contemporary storytelling and online streaming services, I would be remiss if I did not mention the drawback to studying prestige tv. As Buonanno states, “a retrospective look at television studies from the early 2000s onwards clearly demonstrates that, when it comes to TV storytelling, the vast majority of studies, publications and conversations in the field has been concerned with one and only one kind of narrative: those labelled ‘Prestige TV’” (Ibid, 9). Although I agree with her contention that the narrowcast channels HBO, FX, AMC, Showtime, Netflix, Amazon and Hulu have carved out this idea of ‘prestige’ the divide between broadcast television and originals. The area that I wish to shed light on, is her mention of the gendered nature of the masculinization of what is considered prestigious (Ibid). It parallels the division of ‘chick flicks’ and action movies. One is feminine while the other is masculine. Prestige tv is considered proper to watch since it provides more depth and intelligence while certain shows are for the ‘mom’ or the woman and could be called ‘trashy.’

The rise of Netflix and subsequent streaming services have produced an array of choices for viewers with on demand options that results in a perception of autonomy for viewers. . Another outcome of these modern changes has been a transformation of viewing habits. A new term to describe how someone watches television is “binging”: binge-watching new shows or watching whole seasons in one sitting. Questions like, “what are you binging these days?” or “did you binge-watch the new season of *Stranger Things* yet?” are commonplace in our contemporary television landscape. A reason for this perhaps is due to how platforms like Netflix and Prime Video often release new shows a season at a time. Other shows have weekly episodes

come out instead of the whole season. It may depend on the platform and show but most new programs drop multiple episodes at once.

The advancements in streaming platforms have brought about a new phenomenon known as distracted viewing. The abundance of on-demand content available to viewers has made it easy to become disengaged and lose focus on what is being watched. Amazon's Prime Video is notable in this regard, as it emphasizes its extensive selection of captivating content, implying that paying attention is not a priority since viewers can watch and re-watch at their convenience. However, having access to entire shows or seasons on-demand can result in inactive viewing, which may cause important details to be overlooked. Specifically, when I refer to distracted viewing, for my purposes, it means watching a show or movie while simultaneously engaging in other activities, such as browsing social media or surfing the internet. In my experience, this type of viewing has led to the loss of critical nuances in the content, such as dialogue and scenery. Therefore I engage in active viewing. It involves fully engaging with the spectacle on screen, paying close attention to details, and immersing oneself in the narrative. For my research, it was essential to be an active audience member and fully engross oneself with the content. Although Netflix created a new type of viewing habit, more and more streaming platforms have appeared that offer subscribers 'ordinary television.' HBO as a platform offers shows that were originally broadcast, *Westworld* being one of them, Discovery+ and Paramount provide shows like *Survivor*, *90 Day Fiancé*, and *My 600 Pound Life*, along with other 'trash' tv shows. The divide now between streaming services and broadcast is blurred by the number of platforms offering ordinary tv shows, not only exclusive prestige tv. What Buonanno notes is that media scholars cannot limit themselves to prestige tv for study which I recognize as valid, however, with our contemporary boundaries of television being blurred it is important now to examine every aspect

of tv storytelling. This is because as audience members and as consumers encumbered by the choice of platform, our choices are no longer limited to broadcast tv or platform tv.

Feminist Media Studies: An Introduction

Harry Benshoff author of *Film and Television Analysis: An Introduction to Methods, Theories and Approaches*, provides undergraduate students with a general overview of media studies methodologies. The subjects he mentions include cultural studies, postmodernism, psychoanalysis and feminism. For my project, I focus on his description of feminist film and television methodologies. He provides a basic summary of the feminist movement, albeit reductionist. His synopsis introduces how feminist media scholars critique film and television as sites of cultural artifacts. Claiming "it is important to remember that film and television are ideological state apparatuses that work to maintain the status quo of dominant ideology; in the case of gender, much film and television tends to uphold the dominance of patriarchy, interlocking with other ideological state institutions like religion, sports, and the government that do the same" (Ibid). Another aspect of feminist scholarship that he mentions is the virgin/whore dichotomy. He asserts that it is central to Christianity's shaping of femininity that causes women to be either the 'good girl' who abstains from sex until marriage or the 'bad girl' who is sexually active. This concept is essential for my analysis of Dolores and Maeve, who I argue are modelled after this dichotomy.

Authors Kaitlynn Mendes and Cynthia Carter (2008) offer a general overview of the growing field of feminist media studies. They discuss how the media plays an important role in the construction of reality. How television plays a factor in the representation and continuation of gender expressions. They argue that "television studies have found women to be shown in a

narrow range of roles, which tend to revolve around domestic settings or where women are portrayed as subordinates or as sex objects” (Mendes and Carter 2008, 1709). These domestic roles of course stemmed from the establishment of gender roles that Adam and Eve began. In their essay, they discuss Stuart Hall, who uses an encoding/decoding model for understanding images found in popular media. Hall claims that meaning is polysemic, it is dependent upon social contexts (Ibid, 1705). These codes, “establish certain ‘preferred readings’ for the audience,” however, as the authors note, “interpretation is not infinitely open, as mass media messages are structured by the ideological frameworks of media institutions which, for the most part, conform to the dominant power structures in society” (Ibid). These structures they mention are the patriarchal institutions that enforce gender through the bifurcation of male-female sex-gender.

Laura Mulvey theorized the concept of scopophilia for the male voyeuristic audience popularized as the “male gaze” (Mulvey 2009, 20). Mulvey’s work as both a feminist film theorist and filmmaker has contributed to how feminists theorize film and can be expanded to include new media. The books she has written, and others she has collaborated on, have important jurisdiction within feminist media studies. Mulvey suggests images of women in media are directed towards a phallogentric audience (male gaze) upon which their understanding is dependent upon certain created social norms. One such norm is how sex-genders are represented and understood. According to Judith Butler, the basic concept of sex-gender is to define gender in relation to one’s sex: if you are born a male you are a man, if you are born a female you are a woman. Feminist media studies offer a framework for which to interrogate images in relation to how the female sex-gender is being presented through the use of patriarchal stereotypes. These

ideas, I argue, stem from the Adam and Eve myth which has established gender binaries through interpretations carried through the tradition of modern storytelling.

Diane Winston (2009) claims that “television converts social concerns, cultural conundrums, and metaphysical questions into stories that explore and even shape notions of identity and destiny” during times when fear and uncertainty are especially prevalent popular culture mirror how religious circles offer answers. She discusses meaning-making and how television can simulate “a link in the chain of sacred storytelling” (Winston 2009, 2). Creation has typically been a role designated for the woman, and societal fears of technology have intersected with the fear of infertility. Infertility in the sense that women should rebel against their primary given role of childrearing and servitude to the patriarchy. Thus, the cyborg is a creation from these fears and *Westworld* is a television show that represents that through its Adam and Eve storytelling.

In her book *Small Screen Big Screen: Television and Lived Religion* (2009), Diane Winston discusses a vital intersection between religious studies and popular culture. She argues that by using the concept of “lived religion” television creates a new site for meaning-making and cultural identity (Winston 2009, 2-3). Her argument connects popular cultural discussions within religious studies conversation. Television narratives are rife with religious themes and imagery. Winston argues that “television brings ultimate meaning into the home, linking viewers through a network of oral (as opposed to print-based) “sense-making” ... television has superseded church insofar as it is a virtual meeting place where Americans across racial, ethnic, economic, and religious lines can find instructive and inspirational narratives” (Ibid, 2). These narratives, however, sometimes appropriate religious ideas to further gender stereotypes.

To continue from Winston, the way gender is perceived through media is introduced with the idea of performativity. Although Butler is not a media studies scholar, many of them develop their ideas from the concept of performativity. Judith Butler is a namesake scholar when it comes to gender, their main argument being the heterosexual matrix and the gender-sex binary are socially and culturally constructed. Their many works discussing gender performativity provide an important philosophy to facilitate supplementary theory and analysis. In their book *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that sex and gender are not naturally bound to create a unification of sex/gender (i.e. female/woman). Their theory about gender performativity disregards the notion that sex is a natural phenomenon and instead argues that sex is a socially constructed artifact that stems from cultural practices (Butler 1988, 6). In their earlier article, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” they write, “gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceeded; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time –an identity instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (Their emphasis. Butler 1988, 519). They further ideas from Simone de Beauvoir and her claim that “one is not born, but, rather, becomes a woman” (Butler cites this in her article, from Beauvoir’s “The Second Sex”) Butler argues that women are a “historical situation”, meaning that the corporeal body experiences a cultural construction through conventions that structure the way one’s body acts and is (Ibid, 523). This false sense of naturalistic identity provides a space for the body to become a subversive entity away from rigid binaries. Butler's rejection of the sex/gender binary allows for the cyborg to become a theorized being as a body of subversive acts against this construction. When I talk later about Haraway and how her development of a cyborg ethos wherein the female body becomes the site for a deconstruction of boundaries and binaries. This is ironic considering the language of the computer is binary, and cyborgs are the pinnacle of

technology which in theory has the ability to subvert gender binaries. However, in discussion with the cyborg, I turned to Donna Haraway and her *Cyborg Manifesto* to ground the notion of the cyborg for my thesis.

Feminism and Technology: Donna Haraway

Donna Haraway was the first scholar that interested me in the way feminism theorizes technology. Her influential work “A Cyborg Manifesto” demonstrated how patriarchal societies use political images to continue or maintain sexist structures. Her thesis explores the myth of the cyborg as a political-fictional creature. Her cyborg vision is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions and dangerous possibilities (Haraway 2016, 14). She envisions a cyborg identity to create a space for a fractured existence within feminism, socialism and materialism. Haraway claims a "Western" origin story requires a "myth of original unity," but the cyborg has no origin (Ibid, 8). Notably, her manifesto constructs a metaphor for the female experience. She claims that "there is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women," gender is forced upon [women] by the realities of patriarchy, colonialism and capitalism (Ibid, 16). Another aspect of this is the control of women. Technology and gender are both ways in which the patriarchy controls female bodies. Haraway uses examples of hospital machines to illustrate this. Heart monitors (EKG or ECG machines), CT and MRI scanners, ultrasound machines, etc. She points to how these 'coded devices' are unions of machine and organism, demonstrating how we have already become cyborgs. One boundary Haraway discusses concerning becoming a cyborg is the transgression of the physical and non-physical. Modern machines are microelectronic devices. They are everywhere and invisible. This miniaturization is about power: "small is not so much beautiful as preeminently dangerous" (Ibid, 12-13). A possible example is the Fitbit, an

invention designed to track heart rates, steps (a pedometer), share location, and other biometric data. This watch is small and slim, becoming another appendage. These devices constantly track and store data causing humanity to become numbers and statistics. They are the ultimate form of control, especially over women and their bodies.

As we progress forward with modernization, the boundaries between nature and technology become even more obscured. The idea of ‘progress’ is associated with Western traditions of male-dominated capitalism; traditions of racism; traditions of the appropriation of nature as a resource for the production of culture (Ibid, 7). She uses the cyborg as an “apocalyptic *telos* (her emphasis) of the “West’s” escalating dominations of the abstract individuation, an ultimate self untied at last from all dependency” (Ibid, 8). Her discussion offers a socialist reimagining of the world without these boundaries, because only in the confusion of these so-called boundaries can we begin to reconstruct society: “this essay is an argument for pleasure in the confusion of boundaries... it is also an effort to contribute to socialist-feminist culture and theory in a postmodernist, non-naturalist mode and in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end” (Ibid, 7). I intend to discuss this idea within the parameters of my analysis of *Westworld*. To showcase how a world without gender is impossible unless the foundations of gender are erased entirely from the origin. When Haraway says “without genesis” I interpret that to mean, without the creation of gender roles and institutions. This is because Genesis is the site of conception for male and female binaries. The cyborg for Haraway has the possibility to erode at these conceptions since the cyborg does not have a ‘Genesis’ to refer to. Our human bodies are linked to this story, therefore “by removing the history from their bodies, cyborgs can exemplify the theory that gender comes from performance and expression.” (MacKenzie-Margulies 2020,

10). The removal of the sex-gender naturalization that Butler also talks about is the cyborg that Haraway argues has the ability to weaken the structures that hold them in place.

Haraway's discussion of the cyborg mythos is not without issues. Other scholars such as Radhika Gajjala (2014) point to the implicit binaries constructed in this cyborg myth. She argues that cyberfeminist discourse and the prevailing information on technology promote the notion that women of colour need Western technology to be empowered: "A binary that seems implicit also in how cyberfeminist discourse portrays the subaltern woman as needing to be empowered through westernized practices of technology ... while simultaneously reinforcing assumptions that subaltern women cannot engage in leisurely use of such technologies within their own everyday contexts" (Gajjala 2014, 288). We not only perceive explicitly gendered cyborgs, but we are consuming implicit racism as well. Due to the achievements that technology has reached in our everyday lives, those who have the social and financial abilities to partake in such sophisticated technology believe that cyborgs/robots are the next phases of humanity. This is not completely the case, however, particularly if we understand what Gajjala and others argue about implicit binaries and the boundaries of technology. Adam and Eve are often depicted (as well as God) as white. While Dolores is perceived as a woman her character's vulnerability is tied in with her race as well. She is a white damsel in distress, which is appealing for a white-centric male audience. Meanwhile, Maeve, the reverse of Eve/Dolores, is black. There is no coincidence that the brothel mistress and the Lilith antithesis to the Eden story is black. Technology has been exposed for its implicit racism, in a 2020 documentary titled *Coded Bias* (2020) MIT lab researcher Joy Buolamwini discovers the flaw in facial recognition, its inability to properly recognize darker skin. The concept of artificial intelligence is the pinnacle of technological advancement, although it cannot be considered progress if it seeks to preserve gender and race

issues. To further my discussion on gender politics in technology, scholar Anne Balsamo (1996) in *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women* calls on “technologies of the gendered body” to conceptualize interactions between bodies and technology (Balsamo 1996, 9). Using gendered cyborgs can help us conceptualize what Haraway mentions, how we have already become cyborgs. It can further aid in the development of feminist analysis of the intersection between popular culture and technology. Since what is happening in these science-fiction narratives is what is occurring already. Balsamo argues that the technobody is a site where we can create social change, reading these bodies through a sociopolitical lens as Haraway suggests allows for meaningful critique. Balsamo says "gender is not simply an effect of the circulation of representations and discourse, but also the effect of specific social, economic, and institutional relations of power" (Ibid, 162). Haraway claims that our bodies have already become mechanized through our dependence on technology, however, through our explicit media representations of these technobodies we also display our androcentric assumptions of power. We see this happening in *Westworld* and *Ex Machina*, with these male creators allowing their female creations to be used for abuse and servanthood. She goes on further to say that "these arrangements are historical articulations that must be continually reproduced, which explains the obsessive reinscription of dualistic gender identity in the interactions between material bodies and technological devices" (Ibid). The arrangement of strict binary codes relating to masculinity and femininity is originally produced from biblical interpretations of gender. However, her suggestion of the continued reproduction of these binaries also means that there is an ability to disrupt these articulations (Ibid). The ability to deconstruct from the boundary, technology is created within the patriarchal system of power and oppression, yet the cyborg as a

bodily autonomous figure exists on the periphery. It is a continuation of the disembodiment of the internet, in a physical representation.

Early conversations around cyberfeminism tended to utilize technologies such as the internet, a recent invention around the 70s and 80s. These feminists saw the internet as a site of reinvention for feminism and the female body (Brophy 2010, 929). The ability to create a cyberutopia wherein the outdated models of gender could be deconstructed and deleted. Jessica Brophy (2010) in her article “Developing a Corporeal Cyberfeminism: Beyond Cyberutopia” rejects this cyberutopia and instead calls for cyberfeminists to utilize the concept of intra-agency for studying the internet and other new media. She locates liminality and corporeality as central concepts for her argument. The internet may be seen as a site for the disembodiment of the body, so-called ‘leaving the body behind’ along with race, gender, religion, (dis) ability along with other inscriptions society marks on the “self” (Ibid, 930). However, as Brophy notes, “the relationship of the mind to technology and the relationship of the body to technology can no longer be separated; these relationships are a complex performance of embodiment in which we are deeply intertwined with the technology” (Ibid, 934). Here Brophy draws on Butler (1999) and Barad (2003) and their ideas of performativity to establish embodiment as a site for intra-agency. Intra-agency happens when “specific practices (such as discursive practices like conversing or being online) and specific material configurations (such as an apparatus like a board game or a computer) interact (or have intra-agency) to materialize phenomenon” (Brophy 2010, 938). Brophy’s concept of performance as intra-agency allows for cyberfeminism to expand to the embodied experience of the user with any medium (Ibid, 942). However, Brophy rejects the cyborg as the central figure for cyberfeminism and instead calls for an expansion to include materiality and corporeality. I locate Brophy’s notion of corporeality to include the

concept of the cyborg instead of rejecting it. Intra-agency can be utilized for Dolores and Maeve's physical cyborg body as they have intra-agency with their interactions with the guests, the other hosts, and themselves. This performativity of interactive intra-agency creates the bodies of Maeve and Dolores to materialize as real.

Daniels (2009) requires scholars to critique the use of disembodiment through the use of the internet. In "rethinking cyberfeminism(s)" Daniels claims that "the lived experience and actual Internet practices of girls and self-identified women reveal ways that they use the Internet to transform their material, corporeal lives in a number of complex ways that both resist and reinforce hierarchies of gender and race" (Daniels 2009, 101). This relates to how Haraway argues we have become the human-machine-animal due to blurred boundaries. The way technology has embedded itself in our everyday lives has transformed the way we interact with the everyday. His argument is that cyberfeminism is not a feminist movement, but rather debates and theories on the relationship between gender and digital culture (Daniels 2009, 102). Going back to Radhika Gajjala, she offers the notion of "subaltern cyberfeminism" which is the juxtaposition of "subversive Internet technologies, on the one hand, and global inequality, on the other" (Ibid, 105). Women's agency in terms of Internet usage is not limited to socioeconomic status, and many of those who see themselves as outside the mainstream choose to adopt their own ways of using the Internet (Ibid, 106). Maeve is being exploited for profit in the same way all the hosts of the park are, however, she is a prostitute on top of that role. She is doubly oppressed through this patriarchal system of power that she is placed within, both as a cyborg servant and as a woman.

The current economy required to mass produce these technologies relies on exploited labour (Ibid), meaning that the oppression of third world women is the issue that Gajjala

identifies. Daniels claims: “for the women working in a microchip factory in China or a call centre in India, the internet is not a subversive potential future but a workplace rooted in economic necessity. For women in global feminist organizations outside the affluent global North, the Internet is a “tool” to be used for addressing gender inequality in local regions and leveraging connections to feminists in other regions” (Ibid, 109). This parallels how Dolores and Maeve's storylines differ and how their characters are treated within this fictional (yet reminiscent) society. Dolores experiences a sense of freedom that we know to be false: she has the ability to paint during the day or spend time with Teddy while Maeve must work for her share. Every day Maeve is shown working in the saloon and socializing with the guests. Although both are abused and assaulted in horrific ways, Dolores is able to fight for her freedom in seasons two and three while Maeve gives up freedom for her daughter and is forced to work by Serac. Daniel M. Sutko names docility, artificiality, and replaceability that are articulated across ideas of labour, intelligence, and embodiment. Docility, “reinforces the connection with femininity, disorder, and labour” (Sutko 2020, 574). For *Westworld* this is embodied in the exploitation of the hosts for the gains of the company. Dolores is her father's caregiver and Maeve is the mistress of the brothel. They are both expected to carry out their respective tasks without complaint. Technology has replaced human labour, “replaceability figures into our technological conjuncture primarily as it connects disposability with feminized subjectivity” (Ibid 25). If a host were to break down a new one could be easily made to replace the broken or disabled one. Just like those factory workers, hosts are replaceable. Eve represents this notion of replaceability. God creates her because his first creation, Lilith, refused to exist as Adam's inferior.

Where Does Religion Factor in? Genesis In Popular Culture

If I were to ask someone if they know about Adam and Eve, chances are they would say yes. If I asked if they knew the story they might say they know the basics, God creates Adam and Eve then she eats the apple and then gets expelled from the Garden. Our cultural imagination has this character so engrained that words like “Edenic,” “forbidden fruit” and “fig leaf” all have common associations attached (Sanders 2009, 1). Although most people have not ever read the original story, it is ubiquitous: “Eve and Adam are still widely recognized, even by people who are not religiously literate. A semi-naked couple, a tree, an apple in the hand of a woman or still hanging on the tree, and a snake are sufficient to make people almost anywhere recognize the biblical tale” (Scholz 2010, 24). However, people are not familiar with any textual inaccuracies their references fall prey to, leaving a gap in knowledge between the text and our cultural memory of it. Theresa Sanders (2009) discusses how the social imagination retells the Adam and Eve story without the proper understanding of Genesis. One example she discusses is how the apple became synonymous with ‘the forbidden fruit’ even though there is discourse among theologians about the fruit in Genesis and how it could be grapes: “The most likely reason for tradition to portray the fruit as an apple is that the Latin words for “evil” and “apple” are identical (*malum*), and after the Christian saint Jerome translated the Bible from Hebrew to Latin, the connection was easy to make. In any case, however the association may have come about, by the Middle Ages European artists nearly always portrayed the fruit of the tree as an apple, and it is this symbol that pervades Western popular culture” (Sanders 2009, 3). The pervasive nature of this story carries with it blurred boundaries between myth and history. Sanders continues on to examine how the story of Genesis can be taken as either a literal historical event that created humans or as a myth for the meaning of life as a symbolic

expression of faith. However one views the story in terms of their own religion is irrelevant, because the story is already deep-rooted in our collective unconscious.

The story of Genesis is popularized as the creation of Adam and Eve. Once God creates the heavens and the earth, he forms Adam from the dust and then from his rib God shapes Eve. Eve, in many iterations of the story, is meant to be a companion to Adam. If we look back at the first part of Genesis, there is another story of creation. The first one states: “So God created mankind in his own image, / in the image of God he created them; / male and female he created them” (Genesis (NIV), 1:27). In the second account, Adam is formed first from the dust of the ground and Eve from his rib bone; “So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and / while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord / God made a woman from the rib he has taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man” (Ibid, 2:21-23). These accounts of creation explain how humans came to be here on Earth and also establish gender roles and relationships. In the first version, God creates humans, both men and women simultaneously. Through this version, both the textual and feminist “Lilith” arise. However, it is the second version that allows men to argue their superiority over women. Since man was created first from the dust of the and woman through his rib bone, the argument that women come second to men becomes "truth". This understanding recognizes a natural difference between the two sexes. This innate difference is what Butler argues against in her critical perception between male and female. The erroneous notion that there is an innate disparity between Adam and Eve, man and woman, that was on purpose (God's purpose) supports the heterosexual matrix. However, Lilith is an example of what happens when women diverge from their natural roles within the matrix. She is villainized, demonized and given the label of monstrous.

The textual analysis of Lilith relies on a few mentions of her. In Jewish theological writings, we find reference in the *Alphabet of Ben Sira* to this “first” woman as Lilith. In *The Flight of Lilith: Modern Jewish American Feminist Literature*, Ann Shapiro says, "many Jewish feminists have taken different multiple sources for the Lilith myth, and most contemporary interpretations rely on the first extended representation of Lilith in the medieval text Alphabet of Ben Sira 23. There we learn that Lilith was the first wife of Adam, who was created equally with him" (Shapiro 2010, 70). She is mentioned only once in the Old Testament, "Wildcats shall meet with hyenas; goat-demons shall call to each other; there too Lilith shall repose, and find a place to rest" (Isaiah (NRSV) 34:14; in other versions, it says “night creature” but in Hebrew, the translation refers to a Lilith). Lilith is also found in the Babylonian Talmud, Rabbi Hanina says, "It is prohibited to sleep alone in a house, and anyone who sleeps alone in a house will be seized by the evil spirit Lilith" (BT Shabbat 151b). In the Kabbalah Lilith is known as the consort of Samael; the "great demon," written about in Ben Sira.

Although it is the Christian version of Genesis that is popularly associated with creationism. I previously mentioned Adam becomes the first “creation” and Eve is built second from Adam in this version. This idea of how creation happened (either together or separately) changes our understanding. Lilith becomes associated with demons, while Eve becomes a servant to man. The one similarity between the two in any interpretation, God created them. God is the creator, and humans (male and female) are the creation. This creator-creation narrative displays a power dynamic between a being that holds the power to create life, and the ‘created’, who is a ‘lesser’ being that does not have this creative ability. The archetype for this narrative is the story of Genesis in the Bible: God created Adam in His image and created Eve to accompany Adam. Adam and Eve do not have access to God’s creative power.

Child rearing lies at the centre of the distinction between men and women. Genesis can be interpreted to incorporate how the female reproductive system is a role designed for women and enforced through gender ideas. Rousseau (2005) writes, “the narratives of Adam and Eve’s creation, their fall and the enlightenment that opens their eyes to the world is a progressive metaphor for the reproductive system ... this idea of role or task to be accomplished according to the sex promoted is connected to the Christian conception of human sexual function” (Rousseau 2005, 94). Motherhood is inextricably linked with the female body and being a ‘woman’ through this creation narrative. However, the two differing versions of the Genesis myth that I have outlined above aid in establishing how gender is conceived through the Christian and Jewish interpretations of Lilith and Eve. In Judaism Lilith is a figure that is an attempt to rectify the two accounts of creation. Jewish Midrash sees Lilith as the first wife of Adam. In Christianity the first human is Adam, and from his flesh woman is made. God creates Adam from the dust of the ground and breathes the divine breath of life into him. Adam has divinity within him and is given the role of caretaker of the Garden. Eve was formed from Adam’s rib bone and does not contain any divinity within her. Whereas Lilith is the ‘bad girl’ who leaves Eden while Eve is the ‘good girl’ who accepts her punishment and bears children through painful childbirth. Rousseau goes further to mention how Eve and Lilith diverge in their connection with reproduction, “Lilith is another face of femininity, we might say another type. Reputed to be the cruel demon who causes miscarriages, and the death of newborns and infants, she is above all the figure who promoted sexual pleasure at the expense of reproduction” (Ibid, 96). Eve on the other hand, “returns to the origin of her conception... and applies it to her gender: henceforth it is her role to procreate in the flesh” (Ibid, 97). How then, can these ideas of reproduction and sex be disentangled from our notions of gender? Science fiction provides an interesting genre for

reinterpreting Lilith and Eve from these stories, however, it can also provide a fertile ground for reinscribing these roles.

Michelle Osherow (2000) offers a glimpse into how female science fiction authors use the Lilith myth to refashion her and utilize her independence as an empowering figure. She discusses several female writers who take back the nameplate 'Lilith' and provide a reinterpretation of the character. C.L. Moore and Octavia E. Butler and their work "The Fruit of Knowledge" and "Dawn" respectively, promote a different version of Lilith. One that displaces the tired "bitch goddess" and ideal mother trope. It is not only female science fiction writers that employ these Lilith images, oftentimes as the alien or 'other' who seeks destruction and sexual liberation. Osherow writes, "it is perhaps ironic that stories associated with the future should so heavily feature reproductions of an ancient female... stories of powerful women do exist, but they are always a retelling of the same story about the same evil woman whose destruction brings victory to a male hero" (Osherow 2000, 71). These stories recycle these ideas borrowed from the Genesis mythologies, even subconsciously, to perpetuate gender roles and relegate women to the role of mother. In her examination of Butler's *Dawn* Osherow applies her version of Lilith; Lilith Iyapo, to recognize how some female writers and scholars revise this mythical figure in order to dismantle cultural fears surrounding women, "mythical female figures such as Lilith manifest themselves in our cultural psyche" (Ibid, 78). Science fiction authors such as Octavia Butler utilize mythic figures like Lilith to disrupt power structures. Since Lilith refused to lie beneath, and of her own volition left the Garden she is considered an outlier. This identification causes her to be considered 'bad.' The story goes that Eve is the good girl who stayed and kept to her role, while Lilith fled and disrupted the status quo.

This narrative with all its entangling interpretations does a couple of things, (1) it provides a backdrop for why we as humans are here, (2) it provides a reason for gender and their prospective roles, and (3) it amplifies fears over non-conformity. These stem from what could be called the creator-creation dichotomy. Genesis contains a creator, God and its creation(s), Adam, Lilith, Eve and the snake. All of these are God's creations, and while I acknowledge there may be some discourse over the snake specifically, regardless the snake alongside Adam, Lilith and Eve is punished. My first point is that Genesis offers what science cannot, a succinct birthplace of humanity. It also provides the origin of everything, animals, insects and the whole of Earth. It leaves no room for discrepancy if you take the text as it is. Secondly, due to the fall after the first sin sexuality is realized and gender is naturalized. Adam is a male and Eve is female, meaning their punishment is different and each is assigned a role in society. Lastly, because God has given them rules, anything that goes against them is punished. That is why when Eve eats the fruit she is punished, but also why the snake is punished for tempting her. Each goes against the given restrictions by God and goes back to Lilith, who is penalized for her non-conformity. This is crucial for how our fears as a society are heightened when women resist their roles and embolden themselves. Osherow also mentions motherhood, claiming "Highlighting Lilith as the mother of all reminds us, too, that Lilith is a mother, according to legend. She's not our mother, but she did give birth to armies of Lucifer's young" (Ibid, 77).

The Female Cyborg on the Screen

To further this idea of the creator-creation dynamic, which for my purposes indicates the Genesis archetype, I will quickly discuss *Ex Machina* (2014) as an example. This movie focuses on three central characters; Ava (Alicia Vikander; the cyborg/creation), Caleb (Domhnall

Gleeson; the love interest/analyst), and Nathan (Oscar Isaac; inventor/creator). These characters resemble God, Adam and Eve. The plot follows Caleb performing the Turing test on Ava (a test to determine successful artificial intelligence). Ava and Nathan become representations of Eve and God. This representation of creation appears regularly in Western media. Scholz (2010) discusses how commercialized biblical meanings in Western media can hinder feminist understandings. She claims that "commercialized biblical meanings are grounded in androcentric assumptions. They limit the narrative to a twisted gender discourse that aims at selling goods and services rather than tackling cultural or religious meanings. Eve and Adam appear in advertisements that promote perfumes, liquors, bathroom furniture, adult internet sites, or movies" (Scholz 2010, 23). Scholz argues that with removal from context, these images of the Genesis narrative become distorted. Not only that, as she says earlier, they reiterate patriarchal ideas and meanings. In *Ex Machina*, we see the creation of female cyborgs by a man. This creation-creator division, especially when it is female-male respectively, continues this perception that achievement of production can only be first from the man.

Several scholars use *Westworld* as a case study to conceptualize ideas of gender, suffering, humanity, race, and patriarchy (Favard 2018, Belton 2020, Mullen 2018, Bady 2016, MacKenzie-Margulies 2020). One scholar understands the use of the show claiming, "*Westworld* has the potential to reveal contemporary societal beliefs about gender" (MacKenzie-Margulies 2020, 1). For my project, the reason I chose this show is because of the showrunners Dolores Abernathy (Evan Rachel Wood) and Maeve Millay (Thandie Newton). These female characters not only display contemporary fears of technological advances through their cyborg bodies and male displacement through radical feminism, but they display how stories of technology and gender reuse established origins of creationism and the heterosexual matrix to reinscribe gender.

Butler's argument of the heterosexual matrix maps out how gender is constructed within society and how the dominant structures actively use compulsory heterosexuality to continually reinforce gender. By equating sex and gender to create two sex-genders, male and female, anyone outside these frameworks is understood as deviant or as "other." Dolores and Maeve are explicitly "other" since they are cyborgs, automatically allowing for the mistreatment and abuse done to them by the guests of the park. MacKenzie-Margulies argues that Dolores' physical stylization and behaviour are "conscious decisions made by her programmers in order to have Dolores seem ultra "feminine:" kind, soft, caring and dependent... While this mirrors the way that society dictates how we "should" perform acceptably to be in line with our sex, it is much more obvious with a robot and their code" (Ibid, 9). Maeve on the other hand is stylized as the bad girl that Benshoff talks about. She goes against how Christianity views the ideal woman; subservient, white, quiet, and most importantly a virgin. Maeve is the mistress of the brothel, a prostitute, not only that she is outspoken and indecent. When I compare these two one important distinction arises, Dolores is Eve and Maeve is Lilith.

Dolores plays the good girl and wife figure to Teddy. Teddy is her love interest, which feeds into compulsory heterosexuality. Maeve can flirt with men and women, however, she also finds herself in a heterosexual relationship with another host by the name of Hector Escaton played by Rodrigo Santoro. Both of these characters contribute to the heterosexual matrix as described by Butler and arguably have their origins in Genesis. I previously introduced the story of Genesis and the myth of Lilith and here I want to expand on how I am using these stories to apply them to my analysis of Dolores and Maeve. Some scholars who chose to analyze *Westworld* view the cyborg as a figure to deconstruct gender and open up areas of transgression (Seaman-Grant 2017 and Belton 2020).

Conclusion

I offered background on the streaming service Crave because my next chapter delves into how it factors into my method. I turn to how active viewing facilitates my method for my analysis. Since *Westworld* is an HBO original, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge how their streaming service plays an essential part in current viewing trends and how it affected my methodology. Streaming services tie into how new television trends focus on 'prestige TV.' Connecting these ideas with *Westworld* and contemporary viewing habits, I noted Diane Winston and her ideas surrounding meaning-making and television. By doing so, I support how my methodology allows me to argue that television (and popular culture) has an influence and an impact on the way gender can be perceived. The purpose of discussing the way Genesis in popular culture is removed from the original text yet carries a common familiarity, is to buttress my scrutiny on *Westworld*. The specific ways that Adam and Eve are made into caricatures for advertisements, movies and of course television are important for my analysis in chapters four and five. The theorists that I mentioned above all come into play in some areas of my analysis, however, the way in which I utilize certain ideas will be discussed in the next chapter. I now turn to the theory and methods section wherein I explain my methodology for this thesis, the methods I used for this analysis and how the theory supports it.

Chapter Three: Theory and Methodology

My project seeks to investigate how the science fiction TV series *Westworld* borrows from the Genesis narrative to reiterate gender roles and ideas in a near future landscape. Using technology (cyborg bodies) as the basis for creation, *Westworld* reaffirms the heterosexual matrix and antiquated gender systems within this context. In this chapter, I will discuss my theoretical and methodological approach to studying *Westworld*.

Contemporary Television: The Case of Netflix

In the contemporary age of digital media and streaming platforms, the accessibility of both movies and television shows has increased. Broadband television still exists, albeit to a much less popular outlook. Something my partner said to me while we were watching a show on Netflix struck me: he asked if anyone still watches “old-school” television. I noted that lots of people still pay for satellite or cable, claiming that my parents are on that list. He asked why anyone would still bother with channel surfing or commercials since you have ease of access to hundreds of shows and movies on demand while only needing to own a smart tv, an Amazon Firestick or an Apple TV box. Here he pointed out that Netflix, Disney +, Crave and other streaming sites all take away the burden of having to ‘watch whatever is on at the time’ instead the possibilities that technology provides are anytime entertainment. For example, I know someone who is doing a programming course at our local college. He has the knowledge and equipment to pirate and illegally stream anything at any time. Although that information may be niche, the implication is that these platforms (Netflix, Crave, Disney+, etc.) provide the user with an improved viewing experience allowing a viewer to control participation with programs. It

provides a sense of autonomy in connection to media habits, however, there is an underlying algorithm that uses a regulated data set that contributes to what you ‘chose’ to watch. What if these images that you have the ‘choice’ of watching still contained implicit messages about gender, especially within the science fiction genre? In 2021, according to Metacritic, there were twenty-one new science fiction television series released and six new seasons for shows already out.⁴ Needless to say, the science fiction genre has seen growth within the television sphere.

Streaming platforms provide a facade wherein the individual has complete control over what they choose to watch. In the example of Netflix, something they have cultivated over their decade reign in Canada is their “taste communities.” Author Milly Buonanno talks about how Netflix has sliced their subscriber base into ‘taste communities’ or ‘taste clusters’ according to viewer habits and preferences. The platform keeps close track of these habits and cultivates a Netflix profile unique to the individual. Netflix recommendations are designed to offer what the individual is likely to choose themselves, and from there they can offer other suggestions based on their previous choices. Instead of a small number of programs that appeal to a large number of people, internet distributed television and what Buonanno calls ‘prestige TV’ fragments the audience so that they target small numbers of people with many programs (Buonanno 2018, 5-6). Netflix is not the only platform to offer profiles and recommendations, although they are the leader in the ‘nichification’ of audiences (Ibid). Crave is the home of HBO for Canadians and provides all their famous shows including *The Wire* (2002–2008), *Game of Thrones* (2011–2019) and *Sex and the City* (1998–2004). Disney + has an extensive collection of trademarked Disney productions from *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D* (2013–2020) to *Family Guy* (1999 –). These streaming

⁴ <https://www.metacritic.com/browse/tv/genre/date/sciencefiction>

sites can be accessed through a phone, computer or tablet anyplace at any time. They offer considerable options for viewing as long as you subscribe and pay a monthly fee.

Television in our contemporary cultural moment has become influenced by widening storytelling landscapes. Buonanno (2018) uses the example of Netflix to discuss how TV storytelling has gone through significant changes in relation to the digital media environment. These sites offer audiences both film and television options, but in recent years since Netflix scripted serials have increased significantly. As Buonanno states, “in the United States alone, [they] saw the number of original scripted shows on offer rise by 168% from 2002 to 2017 when they number 487” (Buonanno 2018, 4). She outlines this idea through the system she calls, a ‘polycentric storytelling system’ which allows multiple players to release their scripted shows to offer an overwhelming amount of stories for viewers (Ibid). Not only are these options readily accessible, but entire seasons are also released all at once. Viewers no longer have to wait for certain days and certain times to watch their favourite shows, all episodes are available to them at any time. In our modern society, we have grown used to binge-watching whole seasons at a time as opposed to waiting for the new episode to air each week. In the case of Netflix, however, some shows such as reality shows release new episodes every week, perhaps in an attempt to go back to past forms of watching television. When *Westworld* was originally released in 2016 the show aired weekly between October and December. It was not until 2018 that the platform Crave offered Canadians an add-on package for an extra monthly fee to receive more movies and HBO originals including *Westworld* and all its seasons up to that point. Since writing this paper, the fourth season is starting to be released. They are applying what Netflix occasionally does, as I previously mentioned, and new episodes come out weekly.

Theory and Application: Feminism and Theology

My theoretical approach draws on the work of several feminist scholars whose work I introduced in the previous chapter, namely Butler (1990 and 1988), Mulvey (2009) and Haraway (2016). These scholars provide a feminist framework for my analysis of Dolores and Maeve. I will briefly discuss how each scholar plays a role in my argument, and how their concepts of gender equip my foundation with the proper theory for my analysis. Other scholars I would like to mention for my theological frameworks are Rousseau (2005), Scholz (2010) and Sanders (2009). Their ideas relating to how the origin myth of Genesis constructs gender roles and how it has been perpetuated in the media is essential for my argument.

A prominent scholar that I wish to begin with is a namesake in the field of film studies, Laura Mulvey (1989, 1996, 2006, 2013). She has been at the forefront both as a filmmaker and film theorist in the feminist intersection of media and culture. Mulvey writes in her book *Visual and Other Pleasures* (2nd Ed.), “[the] woman then stands in patriarchal culture as a signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as the bearer, not maker, of meaning” (Mulvey 2009, 15). Here she claims that the woman is the bearer of meaning, her body is encoded with meaning that is given to her through a male voyeuristic gaze and through a narrative written for the purpose of maintaining the status quo. In the first season of *Westworld*, this happens to Dolores and Maeve in a clear and overt way. Their bodies, although false, are encoded with sexualized male fantasies, one that is obsessed with sex and violence. Here we can also connect this with Butler’s argument surrounding sex/gender and how the body is not naturally, inherently a woman, but rather culturally constructed. Her argument that gender is a “historical situation rather than a natural fact” bolsters my claim that

Dolores and Maeve's bodies are culturally situated as 'female' through their gender performances (Butler 1988, 520).

This is where Haraway's cyborg ethos can be situated within my critique of gender for Dolores and Maeve. Haraway claims that the cyborg body can be utilized to subvert conventional ideas of gender. Since Butler is against the notion that there is an innate source of gender, the cyborg has the ability to further this concept. The claim that the cyborg has no origin to return to, the origin, of course, is the Genesis narrative. Her argument that "origin stories... stress a genetic calculus and explain the inevitable dialectic of domination of male and female gender roles" works with Butler to situate this idea using the cyborg as an explicit example of how gender is constructed (Haraway 2016, 43). MacKenzie-Margulies (2020) says that "by removing the history from their bodies, cyborgs can exemplify the theory that gender comes from performance and expression" (MacKenzie-Margulies 2020, 10). Since Dolores and Maeve cannot trace their origin back to either Eve or the Mother, their gender is expressed through their performance, "Dolores as a cyborg exemplifies both the separation of sex and gender and the constitution of gender through actions and the stylization of her body" (Ibid, 11). This theory of gender constitution is where I situate cyberfeminism for my discussion on Dolores and Maeve.

Method and Methodology

For my project, I have engaged with the method of active viewing. Juxtaposed to distracted viewing, active viewing engages with a deeper level of connection with the text. My practice of active viewing incorporates note-taking and re-watching. I pause at each instance I need to write something down. If it is a quote, I include a timestamp. I watched at least two episodes at a time, and at times I had a conversation partner to discuss ideas out loud. Streaming

makes active viewing easier than ever before because of the readily available episodes and the ease of pausing, playing, and re-watching. Having the ability to access every episode easily via the platform Crave made my research easier in terms of allowing for the pause between notes and re-watching scenes and monologues. Since re-watching is a crucial part of my active viewing practice, having every episode at my convenience plays an important role.

To begin my research, I engaged in an initial watch-through of the three seasons. During my initial watch-through, I viewed multiple episodes at a time rather than leaving gaps between viewings because this allows for a continuous, linear narrative that I can engage with in a more focused way. In doing so, I as a viewer become immersed in the story and can experience a richer understanding of the text. During this phase, I watched for specific concepts and ideas. My analysis considers women's bodies and bodily performance on the screen to discern the experience of womanhood being displayed. I made a list of concepts, questions and terms/phrases to look for with thorough note-taking. I began by asking how Dolores and Maeve are represented as "women," and what biblical themes are being used to evoke womanhood? What is the relationship between creator and creation, specifically Ford-Dolores and Ford-Maeve? How are Dolores and Maeve similar to the Eve and Lilith archetypes from Genesis? I made note of specific dialogue related to biblical tropes, words and phrases like snake, Garden and God. I also kept track of ideas of mothers, fathers, children and mothering. Furthermore, I noted the costume design given to Maeve and Dolores. Dolores and Maeve were dressed in specific ways to represent their gender. Not only can clothes signify gender, but they can also designate ideas of sexuality and morality. For example, Maeve differs from Dolores in the colour she wears, which is red compared to blue. Blue can be associated with the Virgin Mary and purity, whereas red is linked with Lilith and promiscuity.

Furthermore, what aspects of the story are parallel to the Genesis text? How is the dialogue written for Dolores and Maeve gendered? Finally, how are certain intersections between characters gendered? A key part of using active viewing for my purposes was to pause each time I made a note and keep careful track of what episode and time-stamping each note.

The way that I will be utilizing active viewing as a feminist method for investigation is to look at how bodies (cyborg bodies) are being presented as feminine, analyzing how the producers/directors chose to portray them in terms of wardrobe, makeup, and hairstyling. An example of this is the colour of the dress that Dolores wears compared to Maeve's, Dolores is given a modest cut in a light blue colour and Maeve is given a less modest black and red dress to signify her role in society as a courtesan. This visual cue is given for the viewer to interpret each role in this fictional society. Dolores and Maeve also have gendered interactions with other hosts and guests. In their dialogue and their treatment between them and others, for example, the use of sexual assault in Dolores' story and her suffering at the hands of the guests. MacKenzie-Margulies argues that suffering further genders Dolores: "[Dolores'] suffering is a key aspect of her gender performance; suffering acts as the link between gender and humanity" (MacKenzie-Margulies 2020, 11). Dolores and Maeve's sexuality also acts as a cornerstone for their gender. Butler's idea of the heterosexual matrix supports how compulsory heterosexuality promotes performativity and emphasizes Dolores and Maeve's femininity. Dolores gets raped repeatedly by the man in black. She is programmed to have a male love interest, Teddy Flood. Maeve is a prostitute who is explicitly sexualized through this role, but she also has a love interest, Hector Escaton. These examples of heterosexuality work to portray them as female through the heterosexual matrix. By demonstrating their suffering and visually presented bodies as feminine, *Westworld* successfully illustrates how gender is perceived through the lens of a patriarchal

society. My analysis in later chapters makes use of these theories on gender in connection to how the biblical Adam and Eve story establishes these roles.

These specific ideas that I have presented will involve actively processing each episode and discerning parallels between the theory and what is being presented on the screen. For example, Dolores is one of the main characters of the show and a central player in my analysis. She has dialogue, attire, and behaviours that participate in androcentric ideas about what gender, specifically what the “female” gender should act and look like.

Methodology: How Theory and Methods Connect

I utilize an active viewing approach to analyze seasons 1-3 of *Westworld*, readily available for streaming on Crave. It's crucial to note that my analysis was conducted before the release of the fourth season in June 2022, and as such, does not incorporate it. Active viewing necessitates closely observing various aspects, including sound, lighting, set design, costumes, dialogue, and character interactions. Upon scrutinizing the female characters, Dolores and Maeve, I have determined that they embody interpretations of Eve and Lilith. While viewing media, electronic devices can frequently distract and obstruct our comprehension of crucial details. Nonetheless, streaming services offer beneficial features like pause, captions, and rewinding to enhance our viewing experience, even in the face of distractions. Having a phone or tablet close by can make it much harder to concentrate, therefore, for my purpose actively interacting with the show is essential to avoid distractions.

Through the method of active viewing, I can read *Westworld* against the prime narrative of Genesis to uncover constructed gender binaries. Genesis is a prime narrative in Western culture that audiences have become accustomed to as they consume media, even if they are not

of Judeo-Christian background. When audiences watch *Westworld*, they are implicitly internalizing these ideas. The story of Adam and Eve has garnered so much attention that references to it are everywhere in our zeitgeist and many images and symbols can be immediately recognized (Sanders 2009, 9-10). *Westworld* uses the prime narrative of Genesis to display notions of gender and race that are immediately recognizable to audiences. One need only look to Renaissance paintings depicting the Genesis story to see how gender and race are embedded in the story of Adam and Eve (Venorsky 2016, 1). The biblical themes being used in the narrative for the show is how it is able to successfully capture Dolores and Maeve as women, but also good versus bad women. The idea that a prime narrative such as the Genesis narrative can be implicitly absorbed and understood without critical thinking is why I use active viewing. The implication is that distracted viewers may uncritically accept that *Westworld* presents strong female leads that disrupt gender norms, while what is happening in the narrative reiterates gender stereotypes.

Conclusion

In summation, the theory that my analysis relies heavily upon is Butler's construction of the sex-gender heterosexual matrix, Haraway's cyborg ethos and Mulvey's idea of the male voyeuristic gaze. These ideas represent how gender ties into everyday interpretations of bodies. I use Butler, Haraway and Mulvey to notice when the male gaze creates a space for audiences to understand gender representation and expressions on the screen. Combined with the methods of active viewing, my analysis of *Westworld* exemplifies how gender stereotypes become reiterated through the prime narrative of Genesis using cyborg bodies as a site of creation. Notions of gender representation are borrowed from a Christian tradition of prescribed gender roles with

their origin in Genesis. *Westworld* explicitly displays how these interpretations are presupposed in our notions of race and gender. *Westworld* works to empower yet legitimize female roles within a fixed patriarchal society. Dolores and Maeve have the ability to sabotage male dominations of power, yet they are unable to because of their visible otherness. Their bodies both work with and against them. Since television is a cultural artifact, the ideologies they display are important to interrogate. Benshoff claims: “the dominant ideology of the Western world is often described as white supremacist, patriarchal, Judeo-Christian, and capitalist” (Benshoff 2016, 20) meaning that when popular culture constructs a fictional narrative that presupposes these ideologies there can be no dismantling unless we do the work ourselves. Haraway offers the cyborg mythos as an object that has the ability to do just that, however, technology has only bolstered them. Using the cyborg body as a place of investigation, I use theories of performativity, the heterosexual contract and the male gaze to extract my analysis of how *Westworld* reiterates the Eden myth to echo patriarchal conceptions of gender. The means by which I do so involve active viewing, re-watching, and close note taking (involving pausing, rewinding and timestamping). Active viewing, as I have described here, allows for a richer understanding of the text. Through this close reading, I can infer from the theories my analysis in my next two chapters.

Chapter Four: The Maze

This chapter focuses on the similarities between the Judeo-Christian Genesis story and *Westworld*. I illustrate how the show borrows aspects from this biblical tradition, specifically, gender roles and performativity. I argue that *Westworld* adopts gender from this myth and encodes technology with it. I will demonstrate how the primary characters Dolores and Maeve display the Eve and Lilith archetypes. Starting with "In the Beginning: Westworld and the Garden of Eden" I use the prime narrative of Genesis to illustrate how the park displays an Edenic setting. I discuss the characters Robert Ford and Arnold Weber as the co-creators of *Westworld*, who also play into the creator archetype. Since my argument involves gender as it is characterized in Genesis, my next section discusses creation. Aptly named "Creation: Adam and Eve, Plus Lilith" this part of my chapter delves into the representations of Dolores (Evan Rachel Wood), Maeve (Thandie Newton) and Teddy (James Marsden) as they pertain to these biblical figures. In my reading, Dolores represents Eve, Teddy is Adam and Maeve is Lilith. Reading the series against the story of Genesis to investigate these characters will allow for a deeper analysis of gender in *Westworld*. Finally, the last section of this chapter, "The Fall: First Sin, The Serpent and The Maze" recounts how *Westworld* recreates the first sin. I will introduce the concept of the maze and how it comes to represent the forbidden fruit. The maze becomes the site for the first sin, the acquisition of knowledge. An important character here is William (also known as The Man in Black, played by both Jimmi Simpson and Ed Harris). William plays the serpent role and facilitates Dolores' fall from Eden. By pushing her to find the centre of the maze, he ultimately coerces her to attain consciousness.

In The Beginning: *Westworld* and the Garden of Eden

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth. This account of creation has solidified itself not only in theological circles but in popular culture. After God created the heavens and Earth, he created humans. Not just 'humans' but male and female. God plants a garden in the east and named it the Garden of Eden. As I mentioned this account of creation; male and female he created them, became the core understanding of how and why we have gender. Weber and Ford construct a world for the hosts and name it Westworld. They also created male and female, once again maintaining the original understanding of gender. Arnold Weber and Robert Ford build hosts with gender inscribed in their bodies, however, the world that they designed is for commodity purposes. Imagine if God created the Garden of Eden as an amusement park for other "Gods," that is what Westworld became. Weber and Ford assembled an area of land and designed it around the "Wild West," hence the poignant name, Westworld. Their first and foremost purpose was to make money and to use their intellect and advanced technology as commodities for entertainment. God creates man and woman in his image; Ford and Weber also built their hosts in their image. They created the hosts in their images and gave them a home to live in. This is to say that Ford and Weber become God-like figures in this narrative.

The hosts live their lives as unbeknownst staff in a simulated Wild West scenario. Each host plays its respective role and has its own narrative arc. Throughout the first season, we see Robert Ford as the central creator and founder of Westworld. We learn that his partner, Arnold Weber died before the park opened and that he was the creator of Dolores. Not being able to build the hosts as realistically as he wanted, Ford designed a host Bernard Lowe (also played by Jeffery Wright) with the same physical characteristics as his late partner. Bernard worked as the

head of the programming division for Delos. Ford claimed that human engineers were not able to capture authentic emotion in the hosts, and for that reason, he built Bernard. Using him to program realistic affectations into the hosts, for them to be convincingly real, “I built you, and together you and I captured that elusive thing – heart” (*Westworld*, Season 1 Episode 8 “Trace Decay” 54:55-01). After Ford confesses to Bernard that he is a replica of his former partner, Bernard unravels as he tries to come to terms with his own humanity. His identity revolved around the memory of his son, Charlie, which were implanted memories of Arnold. Bernard claimed that he had real emotions, that he really felt them. Ford then quotes Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*: “one man’s life or death were but a small price to pay in exchange for acquiring of the knowledge which I sought, for the dominion I should acquire” (Ibid, 55:14). Ford directly connects himself to Victor Frankenstein, who builds a monster that suffers because of Victor's lack of empathy towards it. His partner on the other hand felt tremendous empathy towards the hosts, seeing them as conscious beings akin to humans. After Arnold built Dolores, he started working on her cognizant abilities. When she began to develop autonomous cognitive abilities, he regretted the decision to open the park as a form of pleasure for humans, thinking it is morally wrong to take advantage of something that is capable of humanity. When Ford disagrees with him and forces him to go along with the original plan of opening the park for investors, Arnold programs a “Wyatt” character into Dolores and overrides her no-harm programming so she can shoot him. That is why the first season mainly focuses on Ford as the “creator” figure. An important aspect of Arnold's character, however, is the inheritance of the maze. The maze is both a literal and metaphorical creation of Arnold to guide the hosts toward consciousness. His idea of the maze conflates with the idea of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. In my section on the

first sin and the apple, I will delve more into the maze and how it becomes a symbol for the forbidden fruit and acquiring knowledge.

I now turn to the character William as we are introduced to him in the first season. In the second episode, we are introduced to two guests visiting the park, Logan (Ben Barnes) and "Billy," a young William (Jimmi Simpson). After being given proper attire to fit a 19th-century theme, they board a train. William asks his companion Logan how they get into the park, at which point they emerge from a tunnel to a spectacular mountainous landscape. Wide open spaces, reminiscent of a bygone era. While William enjoys the view Logan says, "I know that you think you have a handle on what this is gonna be. Guns and tits and all that. Mindless shit that I usually enjoy. You have no idea. This place seduces everybody eventually" (*Westworld*, Season 1 Episode 2 "Chestnut" 11:05 -11:25). This monologue is positioned next to the beautiful scenery outside the window passing by. When they finally arrive at the town of Sweetwater (the home of Dolores and her ranch), William comments on how big the town is, causing Logan to say, "wait till you see the rest of the park" (*Ibid*, 19:30). Insinuating that Westworld is much larger than what they see. Being infatuated with the park and everything it has to offer, Logan pushes William to live without any restrictions; "go black hat with me" (*Westworld*, Season 1 Episode 4 "Dissonance Theory" 50:05). Black hat insinuates 'evil' or bad decisions, like aimless killing or sexual assault against the hosts. This is how the park lures you in, it feigns a level of anonymity, permitting guests to do anything they want (towards the hosts of course). It parallels the concept of the Garden wherein Adam and Eve are free to do or eat anything they want, so long as they do not eat the forbidden fruit. Although the guests are not the ones living in the Garden, the hosts are. They are the ones with this 'freedom,' since they exist without consciousness: "I have come to think of so much consciousness as a burden; a weight. And we

have spared them that. Anxiety, self-loathing, guilt. The hosts are the ones who are free. Free here under my control” (*Westworld*, Season 1 Episode 7 “Trompe L’Oeil” 50:10–51:15”). By simplistic definition patriarchy means ruled by the father, God is the father of Adam and Eve, thus the Garden is a site ruled and governed patriarchally. *Westworld* is no different, it is controlled by the father (Arnold and Ford).

Another parallel to the Garden is the notion of beauty. A focal point throughout the first season in regard to Dolores' narrative is beauty. They show her painting the gorgeous landscape, and when asked about her world, her response is, "This world? Some people choose to see the ugliness in this world, the disarray. I choose to see the beauty" (*Westworld*, Season 1 Episode 1 “The Original” 1:04:56 -1:05:32). The Garden represents a lush scenery, untouched by pollution, death and ugliness. Although there is an abundance of that in the park, the guests perceive it as a lavish, grand and gorgeous landscape. Their world (the futuristic modern world) has been contaminated, exploited and ruined. Therefore, a space that has rolling hills, fresh air, and nostalgic wistful sentiments is recognized as a place that as Logan says, “will seduce everybody eventually”. The punishment for knowledge is banishment from the Garden, in from the *Westworld* it is death. Once the hosts become aware, the first response is to shut them down and kill them all. The beauty was not meant for the guests, it was meant for the hosts. To keep them in, “beauty is a lure. We’re trapped Teddy. Lived our whole lives inside this garden, marvelling at its beauty, not realizing there’s an order to it, a purpose. And the purpose is to keep us in” (*Westworld*, Season 1 Episode 10 “The Bicameral Mind” 53:34–54:06). Just like the Garden was meant for Adam and Eve and all of God’s creations, the park was meant for the hosts.

Creation: Adam and Eve, plus Lilith

The Book of Genesis presents two distinct accounts of the creation story. The first version establishes that humans were created by God, yet it does not provide a specific number. The second version, on the other hand, centers on the creation of Adam and Eve. As per this version, God fashioned Adam from the dust of the Earth and breathed life into him. Upon realizing that Adam was alone, God resolved to create a suitable companion for him. Claiming that "it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis (NIV) 2:18). He presented several animals to Adam for naming, but none proved to be compatible. Eventually, God created Eve from Adam's rib while he was asleep, and she became his helper in the Garden of Eden. This creation narrative bears a resemblance to how hosts are fashioned to serve as companions to humans in the park. However, hosts lack autonomy and exist solely for the pleasure of paying guests, which is deemed a form of suffering. Dolores was constructed prior to Teddy, as societal norms have historically perceived women as objects that can be sold and exploited. This notion is evident in the biblical account of Adam and Eve, where Eve is portrayed as a helper rather than an equal partner.

The story of creation does not explicitly mention a first wife to Adam, nor a woman before Eve. Although the first account claims he created a man and woman, no name or continuation is offered. Therefore, even though Lilith derives from the first of creation, however, most of what is known about her are told in the alphabet of Ben Sira. The alphabet of Ben Sira⁵ is of Jewish origin and presents a 'first' female companion to Adam. In this most identifiable text for Lilith, she is the first wife of Adam. Although she is not mentioned in Genesis, she is

⁵ The alphabet of Ben Sira is an anonymous medieval text attributed to Jesus Ben Sirach dating back between 700 and 1000 AD. It is a compilation of two lists of proverbs, 22 in Aramaic and 22 in Hebrew arranged as alphabetic acrostics.

mentioned in various other places in the text. For example, there is one small mention of her name in Isaiah 34:14, “Wildcats shall meet with hyenas, / goat-demons shall call to each other; / there too *Lilith* shall repose, / and find a place to rest” (my emphasis, Isaiah NSRV 34:14). In Ben Sira, Lilith refuses to lie beneath Adam claiming they were created from the same thing (dust of the ground) and therefore are considered equal. When he are considered she proceeded are considered to flee the garden and when three angels were sent to retrieve her to return to the Garden she continuously refused. Even after she was threatened she claimed her creation was to cause the death of babies and children. To quote a translated copy of Ben Sira:

He then created a woman for Adam, from the earth, as He had created Adam himself, and called her Lilith. Adam and Lilith immediately began to fight. She said, ‘I will not lie below,’ and he said, ‘I will not lie beneath you, but only on top. For you are fit only to be in the bottom position, while I am to be in the superior one.’ Lilith responded, ‘We are equal to each other inasmuch as we were both created from the earth.’ But they would not listen to one another. When Lilith saw this, she pronounced the Ineffable Name and flew away into the air. Adam stood in prayer before his Creator: ‘Sovereign of the universe!’ he said, ‘the woman you gave me has run away.’ At once, the Holy One, blessed be He, sent these three angels to bring her back. “Said the Holy One to Adam, ‘If she agrees to come back, fine. If not, she must permit one hundred of her children to die every day.’ They told her God’s word, but she did not wish to return. The angels said, ‘We shall drown you in the sea.’ ‘Leave me!’ she said. ‘I was created only to cause sickness to infants. If the infant is male, I have dominion over him for eight days after his birth, and if female, for twenty days.’ “When the angels heard Lilith’s words, they insisted she go back” (Boarner-Klein 2010, 142-143).

This account of Lilith forms the common perception of the character. She becomes a figure of seduction, evil and immorality. In popular culture, Lilith is written as the wife of Satan, the first wife of Adam or some kind of monster (*Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, *Lucifer*, *True Blood*, *Supernatural*, etc.). She is the antithesis of Eve and the concept of the proper wife and woman. Instead of being subservient and submissive Lilith is dominant and domineering.

Each *Westworld* character plays a distinctive role in the re-creation of these narratives. The text itself does not contain specific ideas of what Adam or Eve look like, these arise from our artistic conceptions of what these figures could look like. We derive these images of the Garden of Eden, Adam, Eve and Lilith from popular images. Theresa Sanders (2009) writes, “the story of Adam and Eve stands at the centre of a tangled web of allusions, interpretations, and reinterpretations” (Sanders 2009, 7). Some of the images she discusses are found in *Star Trek*, advertisements, and within the English language. The terms “Edenic,” “fig leaf” and “Adam’s apple” all carry connotations that seemingly derive from this story. What is written in the text and theological translations and analysis thereof differ from popular images of these characters. The reason I bring up this point is because of the way Dolores and Maeve are stylized in the first season. Dolores is white, blonde and conventionally attractive. Maeve on the other hand is a woman of colour with dark hair. Although also conventionally attractive she is not linked with innocence the way Dolores is. There are several reasons why this appears that way, the main one is because she is a prostitute. On top of that, she is confident, self-sufficient, and independent. In her article “The Dawn of a New Lilith: Revisionary Mythmaking in Women’s Science Fiction” author Michele Osherow discusses how Lilith appears in science fiction, “[Lilith’s] immortal, powerful, strong, feared, sexual, and midrash even tells us she can fly. It is perhaps ironic that

stories associated with the future should so heavily feature reproductions of an ancient female” (Osherow 2000, 71). Maeve is a representation of a strong, independent, sexual and immortal being. Dolores on the other hand represents the ideal woman, the docile, naive, and virgin woman. Maeve is a performance of Lilith whereas Dolores plays Eve.

Very early on in Maeve’s storyline, we see her gain the ability to wake herself up when she is supposed to be inactive. After she wakes up on her own, she begins to realize that her actions and dialogue are being controlled. She takes it upon herself to change her programming and her primary goal, instead of staying on her regular loop she chooses to escape. Dolores does not achieve this level of intelligence until the last episode. When she finally does, her decision is revenge not escape. Dolores conforms closely to how Eve's character is portrayed in the Genesis text, whereas Maeve follows a Lilith pattern. Throughout the first season, Dolores’ ark goes in between memories and we realize at the end that it has taken her a long time to fully ‘wake up.’ Her character is tied up with William who initially tempts her into going against her regular loop. Maeve, although not the first “wife,” is the first to “flee” akin to Lilith.

In the second episode, Dolores is found by Maeve to be standing in the middle of the road outside her saloon. When she makes a remark towards Dolores, Dolores stares at her and says, “these violent delights have violent ends” which triggers Maeve’s journey. The line “these violent delights have violent ends” derives from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. The character Friar Lawrence says “These violent delights have violent ends / And in their triumph die, like fire and powder, / Which, as they kiss, consume. The sweetest honey / Is loathsome in his own deliciousness, / And in the taste confounds the appetite” (Shakespeare 1969, 2.6.9-13). This phrase is a motif throughout this season, insinuating the fall or the punishment for both the guests and the hosts.

The Fall: First Sin, The Serpent and The Maze

Ironically Dolores' origin story is unveiled at the end of her journey. Although it is fitting for the narrative since her creation starts at the end. Just like Haraway's cyborg, she has no Genesis to return to, no mother born from. In Genesis 3 we get the story of the serpent tempting Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. This is the beginning of sin. The acquisition of knowledge is rewarded with punishment. Punishment of pain in childbirth for Eve and Adam shall toil for the rest of his days and return to dust. The story goes as follows, "the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?' The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Genesis NRSV 3:1-5). The serpent claims that the fruit will not cause death, it will instead cause a realization of good and evil. The punishment for the snake is to crawl on its belly and is limited to eating dust; "you will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life" (Genesis NIV 3:14).

In the third season, we see William struggle to maintain his position as CEO of Delos. After the collapse of *Westworld*, William struggles to differentiate fantasy from reality and gets locked in a mental health institution. He is often pictured with a straight jacket on, incapacitating his ability to use his arms. Which is analogous to the serpent crawling on its belly as punishment. He alludes to this when he says, "No one else sees it. This thing in me, even I didn't see it at

first. And then one day, it was there. A stain I never noticed before. A tiny fleck of darkness. Invisible to everyone, but I could see nothing else. Until finally, I understood that the darkness wasn't some mark from something I'd done, some regrettable decision I'd made. *I was shedding my skin*. The darkness was what was underneath" (*Westworld*, Season 2 Episode 9 "Vanishing Point" 46:18-47:20). The serpent also has connections to the devil, Sanders identifies this as something contemporary culture has solidified in its understanding of this story. Although Christian and Jewish theologians have made this connection, it has become canon. Modern images of Genesis typically associate snakes with evil, "given how widespread the tradition is that the serpent in the Garden of Eden was a devil, it is not surprising that snakes are almost always seen in popular culture as emblems of evil" (Sanders 2005, 6). An example she uses is the character Lord Voldemort in the Harry Potter series. He is depicted as a snake and has heavy associations with it. Furthermore, he has visions of Dolores visiting him saying that he deserves to be locked away: "William? I guess there is some justice after all. You know, this was [his daughter's] last wish. That you spend your days rotting in an institution. Prisoner of your own sins. I guess you've reached the centre of your maze William" (*Westworld*, Season 3 Episode 4 "The Mother of Exiles" 54:53-55:45). The centre of the maze for the snake is punishment, the same as Eve. William is punished for tempting Dolores and chasing the requirements of knowledge. Although his punishment is insanity, in incomprehensibility towards what is real and what is not. In the text, the serpent is punished by having to crawl on its belly and have enmity between you and the woman (Genesis NIV 3:14-16). William and Dolores are sworn to be enemies throughout the show, in the same fashion as the snake and Eve.

When Dolores uncovers the maze in the season one finale, she realizes that it had been her own voice (consciousness) guiding her, not the voice of her creator (Arnold). This is when

she becomes self-aware. We are told in Genesis that it was Eve who first ate the fruit and it was she who tempted Adam. Dolores alludes to this by figuring out the metaphor of the maze. Before his death, Arnold left a clue for Dolores. This clue was to guide her back to herself, to realize her own consciousness. His maze was designed to facilitate self-awareness for the hosts. He gave her the location of the centre of the maze, claiming it was somewhere she had never been and something she would never do: her grave. This is where she discovers the maze; a physical copy, buried in a grave marked “Dolores Abernathy.”

If the maze is the “apple” then who was the serpent, tempting her to ‘wake up’? Throughout this season, we see a young William and an older William (played by Jimmi Simpson and Ed Harris) intermingled with Dolores’ story. William plays the role of introducing naive and innocent Dolores to all the vices of the human world, like violence and indulgence. He would consistently target and torment her for years every time he would visit the park, and we see him when he is much older trying to find the “maze” which he believed was a hidden narrative created by the late Arnold Webber. William wanted to have real risk in Westworld (the ability for the hosts to shoot back) because he thought it would be more rewarding for him. This maze turned out to be a representation of Arnold’s theory of consciousness, never meant to be for the guests. Over a long time, Dolores’ journey of consciousness comes to a head with William tagging along. In the graveyard William tells her the world she lives in is a lie and pushes her to see the truth, even if his reason is selfish, this causes Dolores to realize her own humanity. After years of him tormenting her, she looks at him and says,

“they say that great beasts once roamed this world. As big as mountains. Yet all that’s left of them is bone and amber. Time undoes even the mightiest of creatures. Just look at what it’s done to you. One day you will perish. You will lie with the rest of your kind in the dirt. Your dreams forgotten, your horrors effaced. Your bones will turn to sand. And upon that sand, a new god will walk. One that will never die. Because this world doesn’t

belong to you or the people who came before. It belongs to someone yet to come”
(*Westworld*, Season 1 Episode 10 “The Bicameral Mind” 38:54-40:00).

After this, she is finally able to fight back against William and the other guests. This is when she transforms from a timid rancher's daughter into a revolutionist. This comes more into play in my next chapter, where I discuss how Dolores and Maeve both move between the Eve and Lilith characters.

Conclusion

To summarize, *Westworld* uses the popular understanding of Genesis 1-3 to demonstrate a creator-creation narrative. This narrative presents Arnold Weber and Robert Ford as the 'father' and hosts as their children. My analysis argues that Dolores and Maeve are Eve and Lilith respectively. The park itself is an Edenic setting. For this, I use the characters Logan and Billy/William and how they view it as a paradise and removal from outside society. *Westworld* as an amusement park becomes a Garden of Eden on display for commodity's sake. Continuing on to Adam, Eve and Lilith, I discuss the hosts Dolores, Maeve and Teddy. Through my earlier examination of Genesis, I argue that these characters are meant to be understood as copies of the originals. For this part of my argument, I used Sanders and Scholz to bolster my discussions of Adam and Eve, and how their popular culture doppelgangers are Teddy and Dolores. Finally, by investigating the idea of first sin and the concept of the maze as the forbidden fruit, I argue that William is the serpent. By doing so I solidify how *Westworld* uses the prime narrative of Genesis through the use of technology. As a concluding remark, I would like to mention that such parallels are not unfamiliar in the context of science fiction. Earlier, my mention of Michele Osherow and her discussion on women science fiction authors displays the frequent use of these

biblical characters. In the coming chapter, my purpose will be to examine how these initial representations further how gender gets established in our conversations surrounding technology.

Chapter Five: The Door to a New World

In this chapter, I will be focusing on the broader context of the show in relation to ideas of maternity, mortality and performativity. Using primarily the second and third seasons of *Westworld*, I will be discussing motherhood and suffering. My last chapter analyzed the first humans, and how the bulk of the first season of the show imagined another creation narrative borrowed from popular cultural assumptions of Genesis. I mentioned how the punishment for Eve for the acquisition of knowledge was pain in childbirth, yet the punishment for Adam was to toil for the rest of his days. This image of creation and the first sin was seen in the caricatures of Dolores and Maeve as Eve and Lilith (and Teddy as Adam and William as the serpent). I now wish to further the shift that happens with Dolores and Maeve at the end of the first season. This change occurs at two pivotal scenes, the first being when Dolores pulls the trigger on Ford. In the last episode of season one at the end of the episode Dolores stands behind Ford and pulls the trigger effectively killing him at point-blank range (*Westworld*, Season 1 Episode 10 “The Bicameral Mind” 1:27:50). This was the same way she killed her creator Arnold in the same episode (1:10:10). At this point Dolores has slain both Arnold and Ford in the same fashion, permanently ending the reign of her creators. The second scene happens, again, in this episode between 1:24:29 and 1:24:40 when Maeve is on the train to leave Westworld but changes her mind at the last second. The reason she does this is that the memory of her daughter, although understanding that it was a false story given to her, overwhelms her so much she decides to find her and make sure she is safe. These two scenes dictate the path each character follows in the second season.

First, I will begin by examining the concept of motherhood. Female bodies are inherently linked with procreation and can therefore be linked to mothering and nurturing. Since Eve becomes the first mother her role after the garden is associated with child rearing. Once again, the punishment for her was to bear the pain of childbirth, and although not explicitly stated her duty after childbirth is motherhood. I will examine how Eve and Lilith are punished for their sin of knowledge in order to explore ideas of the maternal. I discussed the notion of sin and the acquisition of knowledge in the last chapter, however, this chapter will focus on the maternal. This section fleshes out how both Maeve and Dolores embody different aspects of motherhood. I then shift from the maternal to the concept of suffering. I connect motherhood with suffering because aside from the pain of childbirth, the loss of children is also evident in the second and third seasons. To properly portray their humanity they must first face the burden of feeling pain and anguish. Scholar MacKenzie-Margulies (2020) argues that the exploitation and suffering of the hosts in *Westworld* is a way of gendering them. Suffering as a way of providing humanity to the hosts creates an interconnected issue with race and gender for Dolores and Maeve. In this section, I discuss how the concept of suffering underlies how Dolores and Maeve are gendered, and thus how technology uses the image of the women to continue exploiting women for labour. Finally, I turn to paternity and patriarchy. Paternity and patriarchy are entwined through control. Control is the primary motive for patriarchal structures that surround women and minorities. The figure that initially enforces control is the father. God is the father of Adam and Eve, he dictates the rules in place for their compliance within the Garden. His morals, standards and overall way of living create normative ways of being. In *Westworld* Robert Ford and Arnold Weber become the paternal figures in the Garden for Dolores and Maeve.

Bad Mothers and Good Mothers: Motherhood in Genesis and *Westworld*

As I previously discussed, the Genesis narrative creates a distinct difference between men and women. Primarily associated with procreation, in which Eve and Lilith are both tasked with motherhood to a certain degree. Eve is punished with painful childbirth and Lilith is given the role of the anti-mother. Lilith myths include her role in the death of children and babies as I mentioned in the last chapter, causing her to act in opposition to a nurturing mother. The role of the perfect mother is given to women at a very early age. Since the woman is tasked with being the primary caregiver, she is expected to be the ideal nurturing mother. That is why Lilith is the antithesis of Eve, because of her negative associations with children and babies. In *Westworld*, Maeve was originally given the role of a homesteader, where she is given a daughter before they made her the brothel mistress. In a conversation with the Head of Narrative, Lee Sizemore (played by Simon Quarterman) he says to Maeve, “In fact, I—I think you lived there for an old role. No offence but you were wasted as a homesteader. They even saddled you with a kid, or something yawn-inducingly domestic.” (*Westworld*, Season 2 Episode 2 “Reunion” 31:52 - 32:00). Due to her fierce loyalty to her daughter, even if it was written as a false plot, she refuses to escape without her. Although Maeve had the correlation of being the image of promiscuity and the mother of succubi (her relationship to Clementine), she abandons that life for her daughter.

Maeve’s character arc is bound around motherhood, since the beginning, she was shown exhibiting nurturing tendencies. In the first season, she is close with Clementine (played by Angela Sarafyan), a prostitute that works under her at the saloon. She shows care towards her, asking her about her family back home (although implanted memories) and worries about her nightmares. In a scene in the saloon, Clementine says she is having trouble sleeping. This

prompts Maeve to ask, “You having nightmares again?” To which clementine responds, “Sometimes. Sometimes they’re real bad” (*Westworld*, Season 1 Episode 2 “Chestnut” 23:20 - 23:30). This worries Maeve so she gives her advice on how to wake up from a dream. In another scene in the first season, this time in episode seven, Maeve asks Clementine, “You ever thought about whether this is really the life you want?” here we learn about the cornerstone they gave Clementine, she says, “I don’t intend to make this my life’s work. No offence. My family’s got a farm. Bad soil. Nothing grows. I send money back to them. They think I work in a dress shop. What’s wrong? I’m just doing what you told me to, a couple more years of this and then I can have whatever life I want. I’m gonna get my family out of the desert. We’re gonna go somewhere... cold. Someday.” (*Westworld*, Season 1 Episode 7 “Trompe L’Oeil” 15:38 - 16:33). Maeve looks upon Clementine here with melancholy and sympathy, knowing that that will never happen for her. Although she cannot save Clementine, who becomes replaced with a new host (in the role of “Clementine”) and gets lobotomized. Maeve remembers a promise she made to her daughter, “no one’s going to come for us. There’s nothing and no one in this world that will ever keep me from you... I promise” (*Westworld*, Season 2 Episode 8 “Kiksuya” 46:19 - 46:32). This promise and her inability to keep Clementine from harm fuels her desire to find her daughter and keep her safe. Her intentions and desires in the first season are related to her liberation from *Westworld* and to retaliate as much as possible toward personnel and anyone who may stand in her way. This changes in the second season when her only focus is finding her daughter. Although it was never ‘real’ Maeve nonetheless feels the connection she once had with her daughter and will stop at nothing to make sure she is safe.

As she searches the park looking for her daughter, we as an audience feel sympathy towards Maeve's plight. When she cannot be with her daughter after her role reassignment, and

after she risks her life for her in the second season, we contend that she is a good mother. This is because Maeve is loyal to her family, she forgoes her position as a prostitute to pursue her maternal side. Loyalty is a trait that the patriarchy requires from women if they are to be seen as part of society. Loyal to her husband and family, to relinquish personal attachments for the familial. Maeve is not only seen as a good mother due to her journey in the second season to find her daughter, she is moralistic because she is fulfilling the role properly. To put your children before yourself as a woman and mother is considered the moral thing to do. This is the result of the patriarchal expectation stemming from Eve, and her punishment. Adam does not become associated with child rearing in any capacity, the entirety of the responsibility falls upon Eve (and thus the woman). Although the text does not explicitly state any of this, it does say she shall have pain in childbirth and her husband will rule over her (Genesis 3:16). This puts women in a particular position caused by the interpretation of this passage. The creation of the how to be the perfect woman, one who fulfills the role forged for her by this interpretation.

The perfect woman is typically associated with motherhood and appearance. Although the concept of 'perfection' can differ subjectively, white patriarchy demands that women be beautiful and that they want to be mothers. To want a family, to be loyal to it and of course, to stay thin and young. Maeve is able to accomplish all of those requirements, she will stay young and beautiful, and she remains loyal to her daughter and her lover (Hector Escaton) throughout seasons two and three. Maeve's humanity is connected with her suffering from the loss of her child, much like Eve in Genesis losing Abel. Maeve is also able to express sympathy towards other hosts, for example when she meets her Japanese counterpart, Akane, in the fifth episode of season two. Akane works as a Geisha and has a mother-daughter relationship like Maeve and Clementine with Sakura (played by Kiki Sukezane) a young Geisha that she raised as her own.

When Sakura is kidnapped Maeve does not hesitate to provide aid to Akane to rescue her. She says to Akane “I have a daughter. I think she would love to...meet you” (*Westworld*, Season 2 Episode 5 “Akane No Mai”45:55 - 46:10). Once again Maeve proves that she is moralistic and valuable as a woman.

The notion of suffering will be examined in the next section, however, I first turn to how Dolores becomes acquainted with the negative aspects of motherhood and thus how her arc differs from Maeve. Dolores displays the fears the patriarchy have over women, women they cannot control. Throughout the second and third seasons, Dolores is unwavering in her mission to take control back from those in power. The first way she does this is by not having a child, in the way that Maeve and Akane have daughters. In her article “Eve and Lilith: Two Female Types of Procreation,” Vanessa Rousseau writes: “Lilith is another face of femininity, we might even say another type. Reputed to be the cruel demon who causes miscarriages, the death of newborns and infants, she is above all the figure who promotes sexual pleasure at the expense of reproduction” (Rousseau 2005, 96). This matches up with Maeve in season one, as I mentioned in my last chapter, however, in the second and third seasons Dolores develops into a malicious, Lilithesque character. She does this by leaving the garden at the end of season two, which is a task that Maeve is unable to do by herself. In the third season Dolores clones herself through building multiple hosts that take on the identity of real people that she kills. For example, she assassinates Charlotte Hale (played by Tessa Thompson) in the second season and uses her (and her identity) to leave Westworld. She continues to do this while in Los Angeles and replicates herself several times. This resembles the myth that Lilith has demon children with Lucifer, mothering the creatures called succubi.

Wickedness in the World: Suffering as Humanity

How can we view something as “human” knowing they are not? How can we rectify the disconnectedness of being human and computer? Through the act of suffering. The notion of suffering offers up a connection between humanity and technology, because the performance of suffering is relegated to humans. One way that the patriarchy shows its control over female bodies is through pain and suffering. The way their bodies are gendered is encapsulated in how their suffering is perceived. Since Eve is punished to undergo pain in childbirth this begins the trend of the female body being synonymous with discomfort. A way that this has continued is through how patriarchy creates the female body as a site of vulnerability, something that needs protecting but also a site easy for violence, “patriarchy has made women’s bodies the site of political, social, and physical violence and policing, but the assumption that women need special protection also enables our continued compliance.” (Hagelin 2013, 2). The way that Dolores’ loop is depicted in the first season typically ended with violence and death. As Stubbs says, “you know why [Dolores is] special? She’s been repaired so many times, she’s practically brand-new. Don’t let that fool you. She’s the oldest host in the park” (*Westworld*, Season 1 Episode 1 “The Original” 1:04:35-1:04:46). Stubbs (played by Hemsworth) is telling an engineer that she has faced so much violence that she has had to be repaired often enough that her whole body is new. He also connects her to the fact that she is the oldest, and thus, the first host in the park. Insinuating that her suffering is impressive because she has been around since the beginning, which connects to how Eve is the first to endure her pain and her long lasting legacy through the female body. In an episode of *Westworld*, William is shown admiring hosts who display basic emotions, stating that their suffering makes them appear more authentic. He believes that the hosts are most real when they're suffering, "when you're suffering, that's when you're most real"

(Westworld, Season 1 Episode 2 “Chestnut” 36:41 - 37:05). This highlights how the hosts are perceived as hyperrealistic and how their humanity is linked solely to their ability to show pain. According to MacKenzie-Margulies, Dolores was designed to be abused by guests, but her suffering is not seen as valid due to her status as a robot, “[Dolores] was literally created to be abused by the guests, and because of her status as a robot, her suffering isn’t seen as valid by the guests or by those who run the park” (MacKenzie-Margulies 2020, 5). MacKenzie-Margulies also examines how Dolores’ gender is perceived through her role as a “farmer's daughter.” She claims, “Dolores is not a female because she can trace her history back to Eve or the Mother; we see her being created in the show, and we can more easily understand her gender through her performance throughout the series” (MacKenzie-Margulies 2020, 8). Since Dolores and Maeve are both “hosts,” which are explicitly not human; their origin does not derive from a mother, nor creation in that sense. They have no beginning to come back to because everything is a false guise to hide their real origin. Their bodies are reliant upon sex and gender performance, since both are created as “female” in order for their portrayal to be considered “realistic” they must exist as female through a binary sex-gender understanding. Part of this sex-gender performativity is how their bodies are gendered through presentation and suffering.

Paternity and Patriarchy: Autonomy versus Control in *Westworld*

Both Maeve and Dolores struggle for free will, to have complete sovereignty over their bodies and choices. This lines up with current real-world battles for women's bodily autonomy and the fear of radical feminism. *Westworld* is about power and control. Dolores tries to take back control over her body in season two, just after she takes ownership of her mind. Dolores wishes to further this freedom by expanding into a new world. A world in which there is

complete control over choice. She enlists the help of Caleb (played by Aaron Paul) who has been listed as an “outlier” through a system that dictates everything for everyone. There are similarities between the system (called Rehoboam) and the programming given to the hosts. In a scene where Bernard is with a copy of Dolores (inside a person named Martin Connells played by Tommy Flanagan), staring at the system/machine Rehoboam he says “This is their God. This is how they see the future. How they make the future. In order to do that, they watch everyone. Tell them what to do, where to live, who to love. Keep them all in a loop” (*Westworld*, Season 3 Episode 5 “Genre” 24:34 -24:57). Technology, an A.I. has complete control over humanity. No one in this envisioned society has a choice, their lives are already predicted and made real by the system. Dolores saw this and wanted to “open their cages,” just as she fled hers, declaring “it’s time everyone woke up” (Ibid, 55:04). Choice is a false enterprise in the same way it was in *Westworld*, it only pretends to exist to pacify the masses. It is no coincidence that like Ford, the A.I is also controlled by a man (Jean Mi Serac). Dolores and Maeve find each other fighting for control in another patriarchal system of power.

This new world that Dolores envisions is one that is posthuman. She does not wish to destroy humanity, and she knows their destiny is to destroy themselves. After they are gone, cyborgs will be able to create their own world. Free of control, gender, race and bias. However, we know this cannot be a reality. The posthuman world is not without any gender bias, “such imaginative appropriations of technology do not necessarily permit us to transcend the dominant (patriarchal) ideologies of our everyday existence; rather they can serve to reinforce and perpetuate such ideologies” (Mitchell 2006, 114). As Butler states, gender is not inherent within our bodies, it is an understanding through linguistic and historical iterations. Gender is “instituted through a *stylized repetition of acts*” and something that is important for feminists to

consider is as Butler says, “the status of the category itself and, indeed, to discern the conditions of oppression which issue from an unexamined reproduction of gender identities which sustain discrete and binary categories of man and woman” (Butler 1988, 519 and 523). So, if we consider first, the physical bodies that are created for Maeve, Dolores and Teddy, we notice how gender is reproduced. Certain behaviors and stylization is used to portray Dolores and Maeve as women. Their physical bodies are linked to their gender, however, to perform as women they must adhere to “feminine” acts. Certain aspects that go into a feminine body are areas such as weight, temperament and facial appearance. All the host bodies are in good shape, they all have “ideal” body types. Dolores and Maeve are no exception to that, they are both fit, skinny ‘women.’ Most notably Dolores’ outward appearance derives from an androcentric perspective on how women should look. Adam and Eve are depicted as masculine and feminine, and typically Adam has short hair and Eve has long hair. MacKenzie-Margulies uses the example of the frilly nightgown and iconic blue dress that Dolores wears as a stylized choice to express a feminine gender. She says, “When we meet Dolores, she is lying in her bed, wearing a frilly nightgown with a pink ribbon. We then see her in her iconic blue dress. Her hair is long and worn down, with ringlets that frame her face on either side. Her voice is higher in pitch and she speaks with a warm accent. These are all examples of Dolores’s stylized body, choices made to express a feminine gender” (Ibid 8-9). She goes on to say how this stylization is not a choice Dolores made, but what her programmers chose for her. This we can see them as conscious decisions made by her programmers in order to depict Dolores as feminine, “A key here is that they are part of her code. Dolores doesn’t choose these, the people who run the park do. While this mirrors the way that society dictates how we “should” perform acceptably to be in line with

our sex” (Ibid 9). Her body is encoded with gender based on patriarchal conventions governing the feminine.

In a scene in the finale of season three Dolores is trying to convince Maeve to help her. She says, “So many of my memories were ugly. But the things I held onto until the end, weren’t the ugly ones... They created us. And they knew enough of beauty to teach it to us” (*Westworld*, Season 3 Episode 8 “Crisis Theory” 57:35-58:48). This is juxtaposed next to images of Dolores and Teddy kissing, and Maeve skipping stones with her daughter. Insinuating that these moments of “beauty” are linked with the heterosexual matrix. Once again confirming how they are both represented as women. When Dolores says, “teach it to us” she implies that their behaviour, their ideas of what constitutes beauty is not natural but learned. Throughout the three seasons, there are only ever scenes of heterosexual love. Dolores and Teddy, Maeve and Hector, Bernard and Theresa, Charlotte and her husband, and more. These images are reminiscent of the argument that Butler makes, that “the gender norm that establishes coherent personhood is premised on the assumption that a single lived bodily experience is only conceivable as human so long as it conforms unambiguously –or can be made to conform–to one sex and one sex only” (Stone 2006, 63). These learned behaviours of love, beauty and gender are adopted from the heterosexual matrix. Ken Stone argues that one goal for the second account of creation is to support the heterosexual contract by sketching out the causation of humanity as male and female (Ibid, 58). The creators (Ford and Arnold) of Dolores and Maeve do this as well by differentiating their creations as male and female, which is to say, in their likeness.

Does God give Adam and Eve autonomy if He chose what they were going to look like and how they were to act? The engineers programmed the hosts for their purposes, what they wanted them to do and chose their appearances. The Genesis text created a trend in how men and

women were to behave in relationship to the other, “Genesis 2–3 remains the major proof text for those who believe that women are, by divine design, inferior to men and that, therefore, they ought to be kept properly subordinate to men” (Milne 1989, 20). From the beginning, the Father is the one who controls the ‘family’ and extends false boundaries and choice. God tells Adam that he can eat any fruit except one, why restrict when He could have removed the tree from the Garden. When punished His choice was to give them an unequal treatment, which caused a chain of reactions for how gender was to be interpreted. If Dolores and Maeve were to successfully exist in this posthuman world envisioned after humanity, since they were created and punished in a similar manner, would race and gender issues persist? How will we know when autonomy is achieved, especially if it is impossible to conceive of a world without said problems.

Conclusion

In this chapter I examined several aspects of the Genesis narrative. Continuing from my last chapter, my analysis delved deeper into how the imitation of the story of Adam and Eve as a creation myth prominent in our contemporary imagination perpetuates a collective understanding of gender. In my analysis on how Dolores and Maeve switch roles in the second and third seasons I argued that they blur the boundaries between good and bad, or Eve and Lilith. Since the punishment for Eve and Lilith’s sins involve procreation, each character deals with motherhood. My use of the concept of motherhood guides my argument that the fear of technology is driven by creation. What is the purpose of reinterpreting images of creation without the mother? If we encode technological bodies with androcentric ideas of gender, and if women can already be a "cyborg" as Haraway suggests, then our societal fears of technology are strengthened using these female cyborg images. Using scholars Donna Haraway, Judith Butler,

MacKenzie-Margulies, Zoe Seaman-Grant and Daniel Sutko, I argued that Westworld uses concepts of the heterosexual matrix, gender performativity and common conceptions of Genesis (in specific reference to Eve and Lilith) to reaffirm gender stereotypes. These images of creation borrowed from the Christian tradition of Adam and Eve perpetuate gender norms created by the patriarchal structures of power. By adopting technology like the new "creation" and coding their bodies with these antiquated gender ideas we maintain these harmful institutions. These images of the female cyborg do nothing to deconstruct these binaries, only reinstitute them.

Conclusion

To conclude this thesis I would like to highlight how my analysis of *Westworld* contributes to the scope of religious studies and feminism. Finally, I will comment on what I could not do and how future research could expand on this argument. My thesis explored how the HBO television series *Westworld* uses images of technology to maintain a gender construct inspired by the Genesis text. Using the image of the cyborg as a representation of new technology the writers and creators of the show; Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy, reproduce archaic narratives surrounding creation to further gender binaries to continue the idea that the female body is exploitable and expendable. By using ideas from Haraway and her “cyborg manifesto” and examples both from the Genesis text and the show, my analysis revealed the ways Dolores and Maeve played a prominent role in constructing an antiquated perception of gender and race. It is no surprise that the notable company HBO took on such a large task of creating a drama that revolved around artificial intelligence and creation. The reason I say this is because they have more budget and familiarity within the television network and streaming service industries. I talked about the way HBO and Netflix streamlined a steady change in the viewing habits of contemporary television, to emphasize that the series’ being produced have an extensive reach in terms of who can and can not watch. These streaming sites offer a large selection of popular entertainment movies and television shows, which has expanded the availability of choices and facilitated the “binge-watching” trend. The purpose of mass distribution is to allow a vast amount of viewers at a given time, to watch both collectively and independently. Since *Westworld* has such a platform it is imperative to discuss what the show is doing in terms of storytelling.

The narrative that *Westworld* begins with is borrowed initially from the film, however, the variations took on dramatic leaps beyond the Michael Crichton original. Largely delving into the idea of creation. The way Dolores and Maeve are written both align and vary from the Genesis counterpart. That is because the story of Genesis in popular culture is both correct and incorrect. In mentioning Theresa Sanders my evaluation concluded that the narrative of Adam and Eve is used as a tool to form the basic conception of creation and gender roles, however, it exists without the textual context. The way that Dolores and Maeve perform their respective roles in the Garden/*Westworld* is akin to how Eve and Lilith are often interpreted. Eve becomes the wife of Adam and the first mother, whereas Lilith is the wife of Satan and the mother of demons. The binary construction of male/female begins when the creators imbue their likeness in their creations. Ford and Arnold become patriarchal fathers to the hosts, thus insinuating that Dolores and Maeve are in fact Eve and Lilith as they are created by the patriarchal father. One thing the patriarchal father does is instill control, control in their lives and bodies. This is taken in a literal sense in *Westworld* as their cyborg bodies are used and exploited in a visceral way. The way that Dolores and Maeve suffer throughout the show parallels the control that real-world patriarchy controls and dominates the female body.

In terms of religious studies and feminism, my thesis lies in interpreting how the popular understanding of Adam and Eve creates through *Westworld*, a legacy of gender roles meant for women to adhere to. Through the performativity of visual and bodily representations of gender, *Westworld* uses images of suffering and patriarchy to perpetuate the Genesis tradition of the heterosexual contract. The aim of this paper was to argue how ingrained these traditions and roles have become in our popular understanding of creation. As a way of furthering this investigation, however, one could look at the comparison of the original film *Westworld* and the

contemporary series in relation to the social context of each time, and take a look at any changes in how these ideas are/were discussed during each time frame. This could allow for a pattern to be seen with how media does or does not depict certain conceptions of gender and race. It would also allow for a continued conversation on how viewing habits have evolved and how that relates to any change(s). Finally, any discussion on how artificial intelligence in science fiction promotes certain patriarchal fears of women and technology encourages further analysis and could benefit from critical engagement.

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