

# Representations of Posthuman Women in Contemporary Science Fiction Television

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## Abstract

This thesis explores the representation of what I have come to call the posthuman woman in contemporary science fiction television. This is a term I have devised to explore the nuances of female technological-organic hybrids. In the case study programmes *Star Trek: Voyager* (UPN, 1995-2001), *Dark Angel* (FOX, 2000-2), *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi, 2003-9), *Dollhouse* (FOX, 2009-2010), *Caprica* (SyFy, 2010), *Orphan Black* (2013-7), and *Westworld* (HBO, 2016 - ), these characters demonstrate discourses of anxiety around emergent technology within accessible popular narratives. Scientific advances in genetic engineering, artificial intelligence and robotics have undermined previously stable notions of human subjectivity. The humanist concept of the self, which is predicated on masculinist notions of rationality and body/mind dualism, is challenged by the emergence of posthuman technologies. These case study programmes reflect notions associated with posthumanism, such as the importance of the body to conceptions of the self.

In these programmes, the posthuman woman is a technological object created and owned by nefarious corporations. This character type resists patriarchal control, both through her ‘malfunctioning’ body and through strategic coalitions with others. These programmes offer a remarkably explicit political call to action, which is reminiscent of contemporary anti-capitalist and radical feminist discourses. The posthuman woman’s distinct gender identity may seem irreconcilable with notions of cyborg gender-fluidity, and her normative femininity often acts as a curb on her radical challenge to the gender and human/non-human binary. Nevertheless, these programmes demonstrate a renewed interest in complex issues of embodiment that are relevant to posthumanism and feminism more broadly. Furthermore, they question hegemonic discourses of scientific objectivity and control, as well as drawing on contemporary anxieties of corporate overreach. By focusing on television, this thesis challenges the medium’s reputation as inherently conservative, instead arguing that television’s unique narrative structure is key to representing the posthuman woman’s multiplied identity.

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## Statement of Word Count

The length of this thesis including references is: 95,620 words.

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## Introduction

We live in a time of great technological change, as the last few decades have seen genetic engineering, robotics and artificial intelligence become increasingly viable and sophisticated. These technologies provoke a significant amount of anxiety over what it means to be human. Pramod K. Nayar writes that new forms of genetic engineering, where human DNA could hypothetically be altered, or even spliced with animal DNA, has resulted in scientific debates where ‘the nature of the human has run up against arguments about, for instance, the animal incorporated within/into the human.’<sup>1</sup> One reason why the incorporation of the animal into the human is so disturbing is because the very concept of the human is based on a process of exclusion: ‘the universal category of the “human” is not really universal at all because several forms of life have been throughout history subordinated to the human as sub-human, non-human and inhuman in the system of classification.’<sup>2</sup> The human, and particularly the white male able-bodied human, is defined primarily by what it is not. Anything that does not achieve full subjectivity – which is located on a spectrum including women, people of colour, disabled people, animals, the environment and, crucially, non-organic technology – is considered lesser. The reason why genetic engineering, robotics and artificial intelligence are so threatening to the notion of the human is because it forces us to imagine a reality where something can move from a non-human status to one where they are virtually indistinguishable from the human. As Sadie Plant argues, ‘Imitation is a dangerous game for those who consider themselves originals.’<sup>3</sup> When discussing Eliza, a chat bot which came dangerously close to passing the Turing Test designed to distinguish between human and machine, Plant writes, ‘there was [...] the rather more insidious threat posed by anything capable of faking its humanity. How would he, or they, ever be sure which was which and who was who?’<sup>4</sup> To question this too closely would mean potentially unravelling the entire system of white supremacist patriarchal hierarchies that underpin Western society. The blurring of boundaries between technology and humanity risks destabilising notions of gender, race and a plethora of other assumptions. However, it also means that fictional representations of technological-organic hybrids can provide a useful space to interrogate ideas about binary gender. As Donna Haraway argues:

Contemporary science fiction is full of cyborgs – creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted. Modern medicine is also full of cyborgs, of couplings between organism and machine, each conceived as coded devices

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<sup>1</sup> Pramod K. Nayar, *Posthumanism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Sadie Plant, *Zeros + Ones* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998), 91.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

[...] I am making an argument for the cyborg as a fiction mapping our social and bodily reality and as an imaginative resource suggesting some very fruitful couplings.<sup>5</sup>

‘A Cyborg Manifesto,’ first published in *The Socialist Review* 1985 and included in a collection of Haraway’s essays in 1991,<sup>6</sup> is a work of feminist techno-utopianism. Haraway imagines the potential of new technology to allow women to rethink their relationship to their bodies, and gender more generally. It is a bold, challenging argument, so it is no surprise that the notion of cyborg feminism has received fairly little mainstream acceptance. Even in science fiction, there have been relatively few representations of Haraway’s genderfluid cyborgs.

In my thesis, I examine representations of technological-organic hybrid women. Unlike Haraway’s cyborg, these posthuman women are not genderless. They adopt a feminine gender presentation, and their narratives often follow conventional arcs of heterosexual coupling and motherhood. This, in and of itself, is not unusual in popular culture. Many feminist science fiction critics have noted that representations of female cyborgs often serve to confirm retrograde male power fantasies. My work intervenes in this area by discussing how femininity works as an imperfect method to understand how these posthuman women challenge humanist assumptions. There are many ways in which these characters criticise the same power structures that Haraway’s work, and posthumanism more broadly, reacts to. These narratives present scientific advancement as inextricably entwined with capitalist heteropatriarchy. For example, these series draw upon real-world atrocities, such as eugenics and reproductive control, committed in the name of science. The main characters suffer from gendered oppression, and fight back to overcome it. The posthuman woman builds liberatory alliances to escape from the control of scientific corporate organisations. This alliance building serves as a metaphor for the solidarity-building commonly associated with radical feminist activism. While patriarchal science often pretends that it has absolute control over its creations, in accordance with the hierarchies of power implicit in the notion of the humanist subject, the posthuman woman’s augmented body rejects these technological interventions. These characters are not ‘free’ from gender, but their genders prove an asset, not a liability, to their attempts to regain subjectivity.

Technology has disturbed notions of what constitutes humanity for almost as long as humans have been able to express this fear. Beginning in the 1990s, the rise of the Internet, the cloning of Dolly the sheep, and other advances led to both backlash against new technology and new technology-based radical movements, such as posthumanism and cyberfeminism. Furthermore, feminist representation has become increasingly fraught during this time. Representations informed

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<sup>5</sup> Donna Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,’ in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 274-5.

<sup>6</sup> Throughout this thesis, I usually reference the 1991 version. The versions are the same, barring a few differences in layout.

by feminism have been a part of the media landscape since the 1970s. However, the rise of girl power postfeminism, which valorised images of independent, successful women while maintaining that structural sexism was resolved, came to the fore in the 1990s. This was followed by a resurgence of popular feminism, which acknowledges the existence of patriarchal harm, but also champions the sort of depoliticised empowerment narrative characteristic of postfeminism. Therefore, representations of gender have been in a state of flux.

I have chosen to focus on a selection of science fiction television programmes from 1995 to the present day. My case studies include *Star Trek: Voyager* (UPN, 1995-2001), *Dark Angel* (FOX, 2000-2), *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi, 2003-9), *Dollhouse* (FOX, 2009-2010), *Caprica* (SyFy, 2010-1), *Orphan Black* (2013-7), and *Westworld* (HBO, 2016 - ). I have chosen these programmes because they feature at least one main character or significant supporting character who is both a technological-organic hybrid and gendered female. These characters include, but are not limited to:

- Seven of Nine (Jeri Ryan) from *Voyager*, who is a human woman with a number of technological implants who has recently been liberated from the Borg, an evil cyborg collective
- Max Guevara (Jessica Alba) from *Dark Angel*, who is a runaway genetically engineered super-soldier
- Models Six (Tricia Helfer) and Eight (Grace Park) from *Battlestar Galactica*, which are Cylons, or semi-organic androids, who have rebelled against their human creators<sup>7</sup>
- Echo (Eliza Dushku) and Sierra (Dichen Lachmann) from *Dollhouse*, who are people whose brains have been technologically augmented. These augmentations allow the nefarious Rossum Corporation to imprint them with various personalities and allow them to be rented to rich clients
- Zoe Graystone (Alessandra Torresani) and Tamara Adams (Genevieve Buechner) from *Caprica*, who are virtual reality copies of two deceased girls. Zoe is also downloaded into a prototype Cylon by her father
- The Leda clones, particularly Sarah Manning, Cosima Niehaus, Alison Hendrix, Helena and Rachel Duncan (Tatiana Maslany) from *Orphan Black*, who are a group of genetically identical clones

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<sup>7</sup> The use of 'Models' refers to their physical appearance: the Cylons were created with eight physical models. Therefore, multiple different Cylon characters are played by each actor. Throughout this thesis, I clarify how I will refer to each specific character when they are discussed.

- Dolores Abernathy (Evan Rachel Woods) and Maeve Millay (Thandie Newton) from *Westworld* who are robotic Hosts at a futuristic Wild West themed amusement park who slowly become self-aware

They are all fictional series featuring a semi-serialised structure, combining some level of episodic plot with an ongoing serialised arc spread over the course of the programme. Obviously, as this thesis cannot be comprehensive about the representations of posthuman woman, I have selected this fairly narrow focus for a number of reasons. First of all, as I detail below, I have focused on televisual representations of posthuman women because much of the current literature about cyborgs is focused on literary or filmic texts. I argue that television provides a fruitful arena for thinking through questions of posthumanity. Although there are obviously older television series that fit the criteria outlined above, I focus on more contemporary programming because the 1990s saw a new influx of science fiction programming, and a great deal of industrial change more broadly. This tumultuous period in television history shows little sign of tapering off, and, as I argue in my fifth chapter, these series have taken advantage of the unique structural potentials of the television medium. The 1990s also saw an explosion of new technology, such as increasing access to the Internet, breakthroughs in mammalian cloning, and more sophisticated artificial intelligence. As Jackie Stacey argues, popular culture during this period attempted to grapple with the implications of rapid scientific advancement.<sup>8</sup> I will argue in this thesis that, as technology progresses, these anxieties remain just as acute as they were in 1996, when Dolly the Sheep first fascinated the media. I have chosen to focus on representations of posthuman women, despite the fact that these programmes often feature posthuman men. As I detail below, this focus is because of the specific ways in which posthumanism and femininity are conceptually linked. Furthermore, the series, although they include male characters, often foreground the female characters with more compelling storylines. Finally, my research concerns American productions and co-productions. There are a number of international programmes which touch upon the same themes, such as the Swedish drama *Real Humans* (SVT, 2012-4) and its UK remake *Humans* (Channel 4, 2015 - ). However, I have focused on programmes which, due to their country of production or fictional setting, react to the specificities of the American military-industrial complex. My selection of television programmes is, by necessity, partial. One of the reasons why I analyse these series is because, as I discuss throughout the thesis, they share several narrative and thematic similarities. These include, but are not limited to, the conflict against an organisation aligned with corporate military science, an emphasis on reproduction as conceptually linked to concepts of humanity and a final choice between separation from, or assimilation into, broader society. I hope that these examples prove illustrative of a broader social anxiety about femininity and

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<sup>8</sup> Jackie Stacey, *The Cinematic Life of the Gene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 7.

new technology, rather than a fully comprehensive detailing of every programme that has touched upon this topic.

As I will argue later in this introduction and throughout my thesis, the relationship these series have with feminism are more sophisticated than has generally been allowed for. The period from the 1990s to the present day saw massive changes in the television industry. The American market has long been dominated by the big three networks (ABC, CBS and NBC), but the 1990s saw regulatory change which allowed for the growth of new networks. Furthermore, beginning in the late 2000s and 2010s, online streaming services have increased the number of platforms available for television programming, leading to a flourishing of narrative television known as ‘Peak TV.’ This division in the viewing audience opened up a space for cult television programming. As Stacey Abbott argues, the once-niche phenomenon of cult television, which are series that inspire a dedicated fanbase, is now a vital business strategy. The big three networks once had a captive audience, and saw little need for maintaining low-rated but beloved niche television programming. However, now that audiences are so fragmented, and ratings for any one network are shrinking, networks want ‘their shows to generate the audience commitment associated with cult TV.’<sup>9</sup> Although Abbott points out that cult television is no longer synonymous with genres of the fantastic (i.e. horror, fantasy and science fiction), Catherine Johnson asserts that these genres were responsible for establishing many of the television practices which have since become mainstream. 1990s cult hit *The X-Files* (FOX, 1993-2002, 2016 - ) pioneered the mixing of episodic and serialised narratives.<sup>10</sup> As I explain later in this introduction and in more detail in my fifth chapter, this bifurcated narrative structure has enormous implications for the way posthumanity is represented in these programmes. Furthermore, as Johnson argues, telefantasy combines both plausible and implausible narrative elements. Thus, ‘by disrupting socio-cultural and generic verisimilitude through their representations of the fantastic, these series invite the viewer to question, not the fantastic aspects themselves, but the normative conventions of the everyday.’<sup>11</sup> I focus on science fiction television narratives in particular because of their interest in exploring issues surrounding technology, as well as this potential to reflect upon and question the audience’s everyday assumptions. Science fiction asks questions which other genres do not.

As I explain in my thesis, the television narrative, especially in terms of increased serialisation, allows for compelling new spaces which explore posthumanism and feminism in unique ways. These narratives touch on the ways in which technology destabilises notions of human individualism and challenges conventional gender roles. This interplay between emergent technology and changing conceptions of womanhood provides a fruitful, yet challenging, space for research. It is

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<sup>9</sup> Stacey Abbott, ‘Introduction: “Never Give Up – Never Surrender!”: The Resilience of Cult Television,’ in *The Cult TV Book*, ed. Stacey Abbott (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Catherine Johnson, *Telefantasy* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005), 105.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

notable that the posthuman woman's narrative relies upon heterosexual romance, marriage and motherhood, which is often prevalent in television discourses. These more conservative means of resolving their narratives are generally troubled by their technological natures. Furthermore, the posthuman woman also allows for more direct commentary on how the capitalist control of scientific endeavour relies upon gendered oppression. These programmes touch upon the history of medicalised reproductive control and eugenics, issues which are inextricably tied with patriarchal control over women's bodies. The series detail the posthuman woman's doubly oppressed status, as posthuman and as woman, in mutually reinforcing narratives that demonstrates how the two are conceptually linked. As Rosi Braidotti argues, 'the human norm stands for normality, normalcy and normativity [...] This standard is posited as categorically and qualitatively distinct from the sexualized, racialized, naturalized others''<sup>12</sup> As discussed above, female subjectivity and technological advancement both challenge the idea of the normative human: femininity and technology function similarly, and that makes their narratives inextricably entwined. In this thesis, I will use textual and contextual analysis to demonstrate that these television programmes reflect vital debates about the place of women and the implications of emergent technology in a patriarchal capitalist system.

While many scholars of cyborg representation are dismissive of the possibility of radical deconstruction of the technological-organic boundary within mainstream popular culture, I will demonstrate how these characters offer a substantial, albeit incomplete, challenge to capitalist heteropatriarchy and enact some of the aims of the cyborg and posthuman projects. In doing so, they engage with the contemporary anxieties surrounding rapidly advancing emergent technologies. These technologies are alternately regarded as threats to the idealised human self, but also increasingly integrated into our everyday lives. The posthuman woman reflects a culturally ambivalent attitude towards encroaching technology. Furthermore, these programmes are sceptical of a neoliberal political sphere where corporations are given increased control over our lives with less and less oversight. These series exhibit paranoia towards encroaching corporate control, and especially capitalist involvement with the military and science in general. As I will prove in this dissertation, this is influenced both by real-world science, but is also a broader reaction to the ways in which emergent technology challenges and destabilises fixed notions of identity. These programmes engage directly – and in some cases, explicitly – with radical feminist traditions and use narratives which see a collective of marginalised groups working together to free themselves from an oppressive patriarchal capitalist institution. These series cannot be regarded as simply replicating the liberal feminism often seen on television, or the more recent iterations of postfeminism and popular feminism. Obviously, there are limits to the radical approach of these programmes, which is often tempered by narratives in which the heroine has to learn normative femininity or enter into heterosexual partnerships. Nevertheless, the acknowledged existence of patriarchal structures and the need to collectively, and

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<sup>12</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 26.

occasionally violently, resist these structures in order to achieve true agency and freedom cannot be so easily dismissed. These narratives are partial and incomplete in their advocacy of radical feminist ideas, and often shy away from the more uncomfortable moments of capitalist critique in an attempt to contain their heroines' destabilising potential, but their engagement with radical politics cannot be denied. In this introduction, I will provide a brief overview of relevant works in posthumanist theory, cyborg writing, feminist media studies and television studies, in order to demonstrate how my work intervenes in these areas.

Posthumanism is a multifaceted movement with many definitions. I focus on what Andy Miah calls 'critical' and 'philosophical' posthumanism.<sup>13</sup> These forms of posthumanism reject the cultural inheritance of liberal humanism. Liberal humanism is an ideology which 'has helped to articulate all the major themes of the continuously unfolding revolution of modernity, structuring key concepts and debates in politics, science, aesthetics, philosophy, religion and education.'<sup>14</sup> The main objection which feminists and posthumanists have to liberal humanist ideology is its conception of identity, which 'rel(ies) on an abstract version of human sameness [...] while there are positive aspects of this ideology in its attempts to argue that all human beings are entitled to fundamental rights and freedoms, what is often obscured by this ideology is the fact that certain specificities are thus coded as "outside" human identity, while others that might be thought of as equally marked and specific are instead taken to be transparent and universal.'<sup>15</sup> In summary, liberal humanism claims an essential truth to humanity, but it is necessarily gendered male and racialized white, and excludes those who do not fit the ideal. According to Judy Wajcman, posthumanists 'characterized the conceptual dichotomizing central to scientific thought and to Western philosophy in general, as distinctly masculine. Culture vs. nature, mind vs. body, reason vs. emotion, objectivity vs. subjectivity, the public realm vs. the private realm – in each dichotomy the former must dominate the latter and the latter in each case seems to be systematically associated with the feminine.'<sup>16</sup> As previously mentioned, this is reliant on deconstructing the normative liberal humanist subject. Posthumanism challenges these assumptions on a variety of grounds. As Braidotti writes, 'the posthuman condition is an assumption about the vital, self-organizing and yet non-naturalistic structure of living matter itself. This nature-culture continuum is the shared starting point for my take on posthuman theory.'<sup>17</sup> First of all, posthumanism acknowledges in particular the ways in which humanism erases the experience of marginalised groups such as women, people of colour, and the disabled, particularly because humanist thought erases the importance of the body to the construction

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<sup>13</sup> Andy Miah, 'A Critical History of Posthumanism,' in *Medical Enhancement and Posthumanity*, ed. by Bert Gordijn and Ruth Chadwick (New York: Springer, 2008), 90.

<sup>14</sup> Tony Davies, *Humanism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 5.

<sup>15</sup> Sheryl Vint, *Bodies of Tomorrow: Technology, Subjectivity, Science Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 11.

<sup>16</sup> Judy Wajcman, *Feminism Confronts Technology* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 5.

<sup>17</sup> Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 2.

of identity. Some strains of posthumanism go further, arguing that an emphasis on the human as a uniquely important agent erases the rights of non-human actors such as the Earth and animals. Finally, a number of posthumanists see potential for emergent and imagined technologies to disrupt stable categories of human and non-human. N. Katherine Hayles's work demonstrates how science exposes the limitations of the humanist model, and how science fiction plays upon the anxieties and instabilities of new technology.

N. Katherine Hayles's ground-breaking 1999 book *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* is particularly relevant to my research as it ties actual scientific thought with more speculative fictional treatments of imagined technology. Hayles also emphasises the importance of embodiment and how representations of fictional technological-organic hybrids reflect on the problems with liberal humanist notions of the self. Hayles sees the work of science and literature as mutually reflective: 'The scientific texts often reveal, as literature cannot, the foundational assumptions that gave theoretical scope and artefactual efficacy to a particular approach. The literary texts often reveal, as scientific work cannot, the complex cultural, social, and representational issues tied up with conceptual shifts and technological innovations.'<sup>18</sup> Much has been written about the mutually reinforcing relationship between science fiction and anxieties about scientific change and shifting social mores. While the relationship is not straightforward, science fiction often 'makes use of a wide range of scientific ideas.'<sup>19</sup> The idea that science fiction imagines new possibilities of technological advancement is generally called extrapolation. This is not, of course, the only way to account for the purpose of science fiction narratives. Darko Suvin's influential *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction* rejects any strict link between science fiction and real-world science, instead arguing that science fiction should involve a setting or characters that are sufficiently different from the reader's experience, but are nevertheless plausible. This creates what he terms a 'space of potent *estrangement*.'<sup>20</sup> (emphasis in original) This certainly applies to my case studies, which are generally set in the near- or far-future, but do not generally ask the audience to accept the supernatural, or at least not initially, in ways common to fantasy or some forms of horror.<sup>21</sup> Science fiction offers 'an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment.'<sup>22</sup> Suvin argues for science fiction as a thought experiment, which allows us to reflect upon our own world and values. This is the source of both its aesthetic pleasure and its potential as a useful mode of social reflection and critique. There are problems with this model – as Roger Luckhurst argues, the

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<sup>18</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 24.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Lambourne, Michael Shallis and Michael Shortland, *Close Encounters?: Science and Science Fiction* (Bristol: Adam Hilger, 1990), 34.

<sup>20</sup> Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), viii.

<sup>21</sup> In programmes such as *Battlestar Galactica* and *Orphan Black*, the lines between science fiction and supernaturalism become blurred, but this is not part of the initial premise.

<sup>22</sup> Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*, 8.

relationship between science and science fiction is complex, and the idea of extrapolation and ‘science fiction as the scientific method’ are based on erroneous masculinist assumptions.<sup>23</sup> It is therefore useful to think of the relationship between science and science fiction as more fluid.

While some of my case study programmes do draw upon plausible scientific advances in their representation of posthuman technology, as will be outlined in my fourth chapter on corporate military science, all of them use technology as an avenue to explore questions of what these technologies might mean for our definitions of subjectivity, and what relationship in particular these technologies might have to gender. Hayles asserts that information technology has led to a fantasy of information which is free of a material substrate, as ‘especially for users who may not know the material processes involved, the impression is created that pattern is predominant over presence. From here it is a small step to perceiving information as more mobile, more important, more *essential* than material forms.’<sup>24</sup> (emphasis in original) Hayles argues that this erasure of material realities in favour of a disembodied fantasy of information is inherently sexist, due to humanist privileging of mind over body. Furthermore, it is disconnected from the scientific reality of how technology relates to its physical form. For example, Jill Didur demonstrates that concepts of genetic engineering are based on notions of ‘ownership, implementation, and regulation are haunted by an Enlightenment subject that presupposes knowledge as disembodied and humans as autonomous and unified agents, and ultimately re-inscribes relations of power along colonial lines.’<sup>25</sup> This ignores the ways in which genetic engineering is an imperfect science, where results often elude the control of the scientist. Bodies are complicated; it is in the scientist’s, and particularly in the scientific corporation’s, best interests to pretend that they are not. The posthuman woman demonstrates how scientific information is always embodied: generally, the corporate scientists which create the posthuman woman claim absolute control over the products of their science. However, as I argue, in these series the mechanical or genetic impositions on the posthuman woman’s body often fail or malfunction. These malfunctions, generally caused by an unforeseen interference by the posthuman woman’s biology, allow the posthuman woman to resist her creators and determine her own subjectivity.

In the September 1960 issue of *Astronautics*, Manfred E. Clynes and Nathan S. Kline wrote, ‘For the exogenously extended organizational complex functioning as an integrated homeostatic system unconsciously, we propose the term “Cyborg.”’<sup>26</sup> The cyborg was redefined by Haraway in her ‘Cyborg Manifesto.’ In this manifesto, as well as in Haraway’s later work, the cyborg functions both as an aspirational figure whose endless fluidity resists normative ideas of gender, and a very real

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<sup>23</sup> Roger Luckhurst, ‘Pseudoscience,’ in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Mark Bould, Andre Butler, Adam Roberts and Sherryl Vint (London: Routledge, 2009): 403.

<sup>24</sup> Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 19.

<sup>25</sup> Jill Didur, ‘Re-Embodying Technoscientific Fantasies: Posthumanism, Genetically Modified Foods, and the Colonization of Life,’ *Cultural Critique* 53, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 100, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1354626>.

<sup>26</sup> Manfred E. Clynes and Nathan S. Kline, ‘Cyborgs and Space,’ *Astronautics*, September 1960, accessed 13 June 2018, <http://web.mit.edu/digitalapollo/Documents/Chapter1/cyborgs.pdf>, 27.

observation of how collective resistance can function in the context of contemporary techno-capitalism. As Haraway writes:

In the traditions of “Western” science and politics – the traditions of racist, male-dominant capitalism; the tradition of progress; the tradition of the appropriation of nature as a resource for the productions of culture; the tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other – *the relation between organism and machine has been a border war* [emphasis mine] [...] This essay is an argument for the *pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries and for *responsibility* in their construction. It is also an effort to contribute to socialist-feminist culture and theory in a post-modernist, non-naturalist mode and in the utopian tradition of imagining a world without gender.<sup>27</sup>

‘A Cyborg Manifesto’ is a dense, heady work of theory, and it moves through many different lines of argument. The manifesto’s opening sections are its most famous and most thoroughly discussed. It is an arresting polemic which imagines the possibility of the cyborg, who breaks down the boundaries between technological and organic. Because she is created, not born, Haraway argues, the cyborg is not beholden to the gendered indoctrination which seems so inescapable in a patriarchal system. Although she is, like all of us, the product of the patriarchal military-industrial complex, she can use its technology against it. Haraway then moves to a more measured reflection on the problems of restrictive identity politics. The manifesto draws upon the work of third-world feminists such as Chela Sandoval, who pioneered the term ‘women of colour’ to describe a useful but non-exclusionary coalition of non-white women to resist racist patriarchy. Haraway suggests that ‘cyborg’ could function as a similar collective identity to resist the inaccurate universalising assumptions of the word ‘woman.’ The boundaries determining race and gender are, in Haraway’s reckoning, socially imposed: therefore, they can be resisted. Haraway writes that ‘the cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. It is the self feminists must code.’<sup>28</sup> The posthuman woman resembles the cyborg in a number of ways. Like the cyborg, she is the product of military and corporate science, but turns against her creator. The posthuman woman also consists of a non-individualised identity, which is usually, but not always, enabled by the technological aspects of herself. Throughout my thesis, I refer to this broad non-individualisation as ‘multiplicity.’ This multiplicity is complicated by her relationship to gender – and particularly the fact that posthuman women are simultaneously scientific creations and people who are born or can give birth – but this complication is important to explore, and neglected by the existing literature.

It is important to note that the combination of cyborg qualities (mainly the blurring of the lines between technological and organic bodies) and gender conformity is not exactly unusual in

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<sup>27</sup> Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto,’ 150.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 163.

mainstream representations of cyborgs. Feminist media scholars and science fiction critics have written extensively about representations of cyborgs through Haraway's framework. Anne Balsamo,<sup>29</sup> Claudia Springer,<sup>30</sup> Sue Short<sup>31</sup> and Despina Kakoudaki<sup>32</sup> have written book-length treatments regarding this subject. Furthermore, edited collections such as the 1999 books *Cybersexualities* and *The Gendered Cyborg* have also contributed to our understanding of the popular cyborg. These critics, writing about representations of cyborgs in literature and visual media, have generally found that mainstream depictions of cyborgs, and especially cyborg women, have failed to achieve Haraway's revolutionary promise. These critics generally see the cyborg's femininity as a failure of imagination. Andreas Huyssen, whose 1982 article 'The Vamp and the Machine' attributes the unruly woman-machine in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* to be symptomatic of man's twinned desire and fear of both technology and out-of-control femininity.<sup>33</sup> Despina Kakoudaki argues that 'precisely because of their destabilizing potential, the popular representation of cyborgs are sentimental, existential, sexualized, and fetishized in alarming ways. Instead of questioning the category "human," cyborgs obsess about whether they are human. Instead of creating a space outside gender, or at least having a complicated relation to sexuality [...] female cyborgs are mostly sexy and sexually exploited.'<sup>34</sup> This analysis has rarely been complicated. Claudia Springer acknowledges that angry cyberpunk women such as *Terminator 2*'s Sarah Connor 'clearly embody a fetishized male fantasy, but they also represent feminist rebellion against a brutal patriarchal system.'<sup>35</sup> However, what Springer calls 'phallic women' are mainly interesting to her because of the ways in which they embody traditionally masculine traits, and she still sees them as mainly sexual objects. Sue Short acknowledges some of the problems of this approach, not the least of which is a simplistic approach to what counts as feminine and masculine, but offers little in the way of an alternative.<sup>36</sup> In Kakoudaki's 2014 book *Anatomy of a Robot*, published 14 years after her essay cited above, she is still fixated on robots as objects of sexual fetishization: 'The artificial female body is sexy and sexually seductive and more sexually available somehow not despite its mechanicity but precisely *because* it is mechanical.'<sup>37</sup> (emphasis in original) There are, doubtless, numerous examples of robot fiction where female cyborgs are treated as hyper-gendered sex objects, but these treatments, by focusing on this point in particular, are missing the

<sup>29</sup> Anne Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

<sup>30</sup> Claudia Springer, *Electronic Eros: Bodies and Desire in the Postindustrial Age* (London: Athlone, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> Sue Short, *Cyborg Cinema and Contemporary Subjectivity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>32</sup> Despina Kakoudaki, *Anatomy of a Robot: Literature, Cinema, and the Cultural Work of Artificial People* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014).

<sup>33</sup> Andreas Huyssen, 'The Vamp and the Machine: Technology and Sexuality in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*,' *New German Critique* 24/25 (Autumn 1981-Winter 1982): 226-7, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0094-033X%28198123%2F198224%290%3A24%2F25%3C221%3ATVATMT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-P>.

<sup>34</sup> Despina Kakoudaki, 'Pinup and Cyborg: Exaggerated Gender and Artificial Intelligence,' in *Future Females, The Next Generation: New Voices and Velocities in Feminist Science Fiction Criticism*, ed. Marleen S. Barr (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2000), 166.

<sup>35</sup> Springer, *Electronic Eros*, 138.

<sup>36</sup> Short, *Cyborg Cinema*, 96.

<sup>37</sup> Kakoudaki, *Anatomy of a Robot*, 82.

potentially more nuanced ways in which these technological-organic hybrids relate to femininity. While the posthuman woman is occasionally fetishized, this is not the totality of how they relates to their gender. For example, the posthuman woman is not primarily the ‘pleasure model’ detailed by Anne Cranny-Francis.<sup>38</sup> Although occasionally these programmes touch upon issues of sex work (particularly in *Dollhouse* and *Westworld*), the characters I discuss are not merely passive sex objects. These series engage with the complicated ethical issues surrounding sexual exploitation, and ultimately sympathise with the victims of rape and abuse in ways which challenge the male fantasy of the sex robot. In particular, the ways in which the posthuman woman relates to reproduction and gender presentation are more nuanced than have been accounted for.

The posthuman woman provides one way of thinking of cyborgs in a more complex manner. The existing research on cyborgs tends to de-emphasise the importance of femininity, instead prioritising androgyny and/or masculinity as the indicators of so-called progressive representations. I find this deeply flawed. As Joanne Hollows writes, feminists have often fallen into the trap of seeing ‘the traits associated with masculinity as preferable, and more “human”, than those associated with femininity.’<sup>39</sup> There are good reasons to be sceptical of social constructions of femininity: an emphasis on the value of femininity is a common tactic in anti-feminist discourses, and obviously femininity and masculinity are culturally constructed. Despite this, my research attempts to break out of the binary between the genderless Harawayian cyborg which is idealised by these critics, and the depiction of hyper-gendered popular cyborgs which seem to so disappoint them. I also contend that femininity, while often used to contain the breakdown of binaries symbolised by these technological characters, can also function to emphasise their posthumanity. This is also a point which Haraway herself has brought up. In an interview with Constance Penley and Andrew Ross, Haraway says that her cyborg ‘is a polychromatic girl... the cyborg is a bad girl, she is really not a boy. Maybe she is not so much bad as she is a shape-changer, whose dislocations are never free. She is a girl who’s trying not to become Woman, but remain responsible to women of many colors and positions, and who hasn’t really figured out a politics that makes the necessary articulations with the boys who are your allies. It’s undone work.’<sup>40</sup> So, clearly there is room for my intervention. My work does not merely apply to the fairly narrow field of cyborg studies, but speaks to debates about femininity, technology and media representation more broadly.

Television media in particular has had a fraught history with feminist representation. While many feminist media scholars have done important work, such as legitimating culturally denigrated

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<sup>38</sup> Anne Cranny-Francis, ‘The Erotics of the (cy)Borg: Authority and Gender in the Sociocultural Imaginary,’ in *Future Females, the Next Generation: New Voices and Velocities in Feminist Science Fiction Criticism*, ed. Marleen S. Barr (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 155.

<sup>39</sup> Joanne Hollows, *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 12.

<sup>40</sup> Constance Penley and Andrew Ross, ‘Cyborgs at Large: Interview with Donna Haraway,’ in *Technoculture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), 20.

‘women’s genres’ like the soap opera, there is generally a recognition that any feminist expression through the medium of mainstream media has been lacking. Bonnie J. Dow’s book *Prime-Time Feminism* argues that television works through issues of feminism as they arise in the popular imagination. Dow contends that ‘television implicitly supports a view of the world that discounts the ways in which cultural norms and values affect people’s lives. The medium’s individualistic view of the world implies that most problems can be solved by hard work, good will, and a supportive family. Television programming does not deal well with complex social issues; it prefers the trials and tribulations of the individual.’<sup>41</sup> This directly works against radical feminism, and promotes a form of liberal feminism. Both radical feminism and liberal feminism are complex, multi-faceted movements. However, broadly speaking, radical feminism rests upon ‘the concept of patriarchy to argue that men’s power is not confined to the public worlds of economic and political activity, but that it characterises all relationships between the sexes, including the most intimate, and that it is sustained by the whole of our culture.’<sup>42</sup> Liberal feminism, on the other hand, advocates for women to be given the same individual freedoms and rights as men, and therefore dismisses notions of systemic oppression and generally de-emphasises the need for collective action to address inequality.<sup>43</sup> Although, as Valerie Bryson notes, these two movements influenced each other and cannot necessarily be regarded as entirely separate, it is a useful enough shorthand for the differences between individualistic feminism and collective feminism. Dow argues that television generally advocates for liberal feminism, on the rare occasions that it advocates for feminism at all, as it provides less of a threat to the patriarchal status quo. I contend that these programmes, despite the liberal feminist and postfeminist elements present, do more interesting work with engaging with feminist ideas than has generally been accounted for.

The continuing influence of liberal feminism and individual solutions to systemic problems can be seen in the ongoing debates surrounding postfeminism and popular or emergent feminism. Diane Negra and Yvonne Tasker have identified postfeminism as a mode of discourses which emphasise individual achievements of women, while presenting the aims of radical feminism as already achieved. They argue ‘postfeminist discourses rarely express the explicit view that feminist politics should be rejected; rather it is by virtue of feminism’s success that it is seen to have been superseded. In this context, we argue that the transition to a postfeminist culture involves an evident erasure of feminist politics from the popular, even as aspects of feminism seem to be incorporated within that culture.’<sup>44</sup> These postfeminist discourses make the work of feminist media scholars more

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<sup>41</sup> Bonnie J. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women’s Movement since 1970* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), xxi.

<sup>42</sup> Valerie Bryson, *Feminist Political Theory: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 3.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>44</sup> Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, ‘Introduction: Feminist Politics and Postfeminist Culture,’ *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 5.

complicated, as ‘contemporary popular culture is produced, in part at least, in response to feminism [...] As such, it is no surprise to find evidence of feminism’s presence within popular culture.’<sup>45</sup> Because feminism has been accounted for, defanged and commodified, Tasker and Negra argue, these expressions of feminist discourses must be read with scepticism. This scepticism continues with the more recent emergence of popular feminism. Popular feminism ‘recognizes gender inequalities—though it finds mainly neoliberal solutions to address these inequalities.’<sup>46</sup> In her 2016 article ‘Post-postfeminism?: New Feminist Visibilities in Postfeminist Times,’ Rosalind Gill describes the unique complication of the increasing valorisation of feminist ideals in mainstream media:

For the contemporary feminist analyst, the current moment—by which I mean variously, this year, this month, and *right now*—must rank as one of the most bewildering in the history of sexual politics. The more one looks, listens, and learns, the more complicated it seems. Whilst some choose to offer linear stories of progress or backlash, with their associated affects of hope or despair, for most the situation seems too complicated for such singular narratives: for every uplifting account of feminist activism, there is another of misogyny; for every feminist “win,” an outpouring of hate, ranging from sexual harassment to death threats against those involved; for every instance of feminist solidarity, another of vicious trolling.<sup>47</sup> (emphasis in original)

As Gill argues, the current political moment is defined both by an increased awareness of the continued operation of the patriarchy (as seen in popular feminist projects such as Everyday Feminism and, more recently, the Women’s March and the #MeToo movement) and the increased visibility of overt misogyny. Gill articulates that this new, popular feminism draws upon the neoliberal commodified tendencies of postfeminism, while acknowledging that the exact form of disavowal which defines postfeminism may no longer be as relevant.

Particularly in more recent case studies, such as *Battlestar Galactica*, *Orphan Black* and *Westworld*, these programmes are keenly aware of how women are disadvantaged, and use the posthuman women’s doubly oppressed categorisation as non-human property and as women to criticise capitalist patriarchy. The framework of postfeminism and popular feminism remains important for my analysis of the posthuman woman, although I do think that, particularly in the mid-to late-2010s, issues surrounding popular feminism are potentially more complex than most scholars account for. Much in line with depictions of popular feminism, these programmes are increasingly aware of the existence of and the harms done by patriarchy. The posthuman woman, due to her

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>46</sup> Sarah Banet-Weiser, ‘Postfeminism and Popular Feminism,’ *Feminist Media Histories* 4, no. 2 (Spring 2018): 154, <https://doi.org/10.1525/fmh.2018.4.2.152>.

<sup>47</sup> Rosalind Gill, ‘Post-postfeminism?: New Feminist Visibilities in Postfeminist Times,’ *Feminist Media Studies* 16, no. 4 (2016): 613, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2016.1193293>.

oppressed status, is often the recipient of gendered violence, such as sexual assault and reproductive coercion (both in the form of forced pregnancy and forced sterilisation.) The fact that these series foreground men as the oppressors and women as the oppressed is no accident. The conclusions of these narratives are also particularly interesting in terms of the feminism question, partially because they are imperfect. One of the major criticisms of mainstream postfeminist and popular feminist media representations is that it depicts mainly wealthy white able-bodied cisgender women. While there are a number of notable exceptions in my case studies,<sup>48</sup> it is true that these programmes mainly depict white women, and are generally more astute in their observations about sexism than they are about classism, racism and ableism. Furthermore, there are a number of these texts which involve a retreat away from technology and towards a form of domesticated womanhood in the private sphere. This is, again, fairly typical of postfeminist discourses, which often show their subjects as ‘celebrating a kind of gendered “freedom” from both patriarchy *and* feminism.’<sup>49</sup> (emphasis in original) The posthuman woman, having achieved freedom from the explicit oppression of her patriarchal creators, is now free to pursue motherhood and heterosexual romance on her own terms. While there are a number of feminists who proclaim the virtues of motherhood, it is hard not to read these retreats – especially as they are often accompanied by the rejection of the technological aspects of their posthumanity – as regressive. Despite this, there are also moments where the series actively reflect radical feminism.

As I mentioned previously, the posthuman woman often has a non-individualised identity commonly associated with the posthuman. This collective identity is an important aspect of how she resists her patriarchal oppressors. The programmes often advocate feminist separatism as a solution to the struggle against patriarchy, and occasionally advocate its violent overthrow. This is a far cry from the typical solutions offered by postfeminism and popular feminism, which mainly rely on individual empowerment rather than collective solutions. Of course, overt criticism of existing power structures within fiction does not necessarily constitute effective action. As Mark Fisher argues in *Capitalist Realism*, our society is stuck in a cultural moment where there is a ‘widespread sense that not only is capitalism the only viable political and economic system, but also that it is now impossible even to *imagine* a coherent alternative to it.’<sup>50</sup> (emphasis in original) Fisher further writes that media often ‘performs our anti-capitalism for us, allowing us to continue to consume with impunity.’<sup>51</sup> It is, therefore, not necessarily true that capitalist critique reflects on or compels us to reconsider our

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<sup>48</sup> For example, Max (Jessica Alba) of *Dark Angel* is explicitly mixed-race within the diegesis and is played by a Latina actress; Sharon Valerii and Sharon Agathon (both played by Grace Park) of *Battlestar Galactica* are Asian, Sierra (Dichen Lachman) of *Dollhouse* is played by a mixed-race Asian actress, and Maeve (Thandie Newton) of *Westworld* is portrayed by a mixed-race Black actress. *Orphan Black* features a transgender clone (Tony), a lesbian clone (Cosima) and a physically disabled clone (Charlotte).

<sup>49</sup> Sarah Banet-Weiser, ‘Postfeminism and Popular Feminism,’ 154.

<sup>50</sup> Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester, Zero Books, 2009), 2.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

relationship with capitalism, just as postfeminism and popular feminism embed criticisms of some aspects of patriarchy in order to depoliticise feminist criticisms of the patriarchal system as a whole. However, as I argue in chapter five of this thesis, it is not true that these series entirely disavow the worth of political action to create alternatives to capitalist heteropatriarchy. It is perhaps ironic that these expressions seem to be better suited for television, generally seen as a conservative and anti-experimental medium, but, as I argue in this thesis, this is due to specific textual qualities associated with television. By looking at television narratives specifically, this thesis demonstrates the potential for this medium, and particularly the visual nature of television and the semi-serialised flexi-narrative which emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s, to portray posthuman identity. By looking at programmes from the mid-1990s through to the present day, I demonstrate how television narrative has responded to the changing industrial landscape, and what implications these new forms of narrative have in terms of posthumanist and feminist representation more broadly.

Televisual narrative is particularly well-suited for representing posthumanity in ways which may seem counter-intuitive. After all, television has not historically been known for its radical content. In fact, Robert J. Thompson's claim for a new era of 'quality television' is based on the assumption that television in general is artistically uninteresting and apolitical: as he argues, 'quality TV is best defined by what it is not. It is not "regular" TV [...] In a medium long considered artless, the only artful TV is that which isn't like all the rest of it. Quality TV breaks rules.'<sup>52</sup> Although Thompson's assessment of the exceptionalism of quality television is hugely flawed and generally rejected by later television criticism, it reflects a certain bias towards a type of stylistically legitimated television and against a strawman notion of the 'rest of' television content. As Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine point out, this process of legitimation is inherently gendered: the low cultural forms of television are feminised, while the legitimated television programme is associated with the masculinised sphere of middle-brow art.<sup>53</sup> It is generally assumed that television espouses broadly conservative politics, particularly in relation to gender representation. Of course, as reception studies have demonstrated, the relationship between televisual discourses and audience reception is not as straightforward as is commonly assumed. Stuart Hall, for example, asserts that cultural, and particularly televisual, signs and discourses are polysemic, having multiple meanings. Hall draws a distinction between the dominant and preferred meanings, the meanings which are in accord with the dominant cultural order, and our ability to map these signs in different ways.<sup>54</sup> One of the primary ways that this has been demonstrated in practice is in feminist media research. Gill demonstrates how feminist media studies moved from, in the 1970s, a concern 'with how texts operate to produce

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<sup>52</sup> Robert J. Thompson, *From Hill Street Blues to ER: Television's Second Golden Age* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 13.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine, *Legitimizing Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 5.

<sup>54</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding,' in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1980), 123.

meanings which reproduce dominant ideologies of gender’ to later research, which showed that ‘the notion that the media offered a relatively stable template of femininity to which to aspire gave way to a much more plural and fragmented set of signifiers of gender.’<sup>55</sup> These competing discourses, while generally working to promote normative ideology, also open up spaces for unconventional ideas, such as posthumanism. In particular, this is very different from Thompson’s argument that quality TV ‘almost always tends towards liberal humanism.’<sup>56</sup> The visual nature of film and television allows for representations which, by necessity, elude the written forms of science fiction. Michael Hauskeller, Thomas D. Philbeck and Curtis D. Carbonell argue that film and television in particular provide accessibility to the often complex considerations of posthumanism, as ‘we can debate endlessly about the meaning of proposed changes in the human condition, but it is the visual images and the stories that are being told with them that bring the point home.’<sup>57</sup> While this visual element is shared between film and television, I choose to focus on televisual representations of posthuman women for a number of reasons.

First of all, representations of female technological-organic hybrids on television remain under-explored. I intervene in this field to discuss how the television narrative in particular facilitates aspects of posthuman representation, particularly the multiplicity of the posthuman woman. The amount of literature about these programmes, of course, varies wildly between series: for example, *Battlestar Galactica* has received a great deal of academic attention since its premiere, including the edited collections *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica*<sup>58</sup> and *Battlestar Galactica: Investigating Flesh, Spirit and Steel*.<sup>59</sup> This can be explained by its legitimated status as quality television, largely based on its aesthetic virtues. Rhonda V. Wilcox classes *Battlestar Galactica* as part of a new wave of visually distinctive cult television programming, arguing that their ‘visuals have left far behind the medium close-up reverse shot clichés of standard television.’<sup>60</sup> While the Cylons of *Battlestar Galactica* have been discussed at length, the examination of the female Cylon’s relationship to gender is often in line with the problems of cyborg criticism: that is, the Cylon is compared to Haraway’s cyborg, examined, and found wanting. There has been an edited collection on *Dollhouse* as well as a special issue of *Slayage*. There are also a few journal articles about *Dark Angel*, *Caprica* and *Orphan Black*. Seven of Nine recurs in discussions about *Voyager*, and the *Star Trek* franchise as a whole. Bronwen Calvert’s 2017 book *Being Bionic: The World of TV Cyborgs*

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<sup>55</sup> Rosalind Gill, *Gender and the Media* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), 3-4.

<sup>56</sup> Thompson, *From Hill Street Blues to ER*, 15.

<sup>57</sup> Michael Hauskeller, Thomas D. Philbeck and Curtis D. Carbonell, ‘Posthumanism in Film and Television,’ in *The Palgrave Handbook of Posthumanism in Film and Television*, ed. Michael Hauskeller, Thomas D. Philbeck and Curtis D. Carbonell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 4.

<sup>58</sup> *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica*, ed. Tiffany Potter and C.W. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> *Battlestar Galactica: Investigating Flesh, Spirit and Steel*, ed. Roz Kaveney and Jennifer Stoy (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

<sup>60</sup> Rhonda V. Wilcox, ‘The Aesthetics of Cult Television,’ in *The Cult TV Book*, ed. Stacey Abbott (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 34.

attempts to discuss the representation of cyborgs on television, including sections on *Voyager*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Caprica* and *Dollhouse*. However, it is a broader historical overview, beginning with *Doctor Who* (BBC, 1963 – 1989, 2005 - ), and does not focus specifically on gender or posthumanism. My research focuses on the emergence of the semi-serialised narrative, the proliferation of science fiction programming from the 1990s onward, the changing television industry, and debates surrounding technology and femininity which was primarily enacted from the 1990s onward. These will be discussed throughout my thesis.

Secondly, I chose to write about television rather than film because of the unique qualities of television narrative. In particular, beginning in the late 1980s, American and Western television began to explore the flexi-narrative. According to critics such as Glen Creeber, previous forms of televisual narrative tended towards a few discrete types. The main two forms of ongoing narrative were the episodic and the serial. Episodic television, which mainly included sitcoms and procedural drama, maintained continuity of character and setting, but rarely explored an ongoing plot. Instead, the plot of each unit of broadcast – an episode – was self-contained, with the conflict introduced and resolved within the same frame of time each week. This contrasted with a serial narrative, best exemplified by the soap opera. In this format, plot unfolded over a number of episodes, and there was typically no plot which was introduced and resolved within the same episode. Beginning with 1980s television programmes, such as the police procedural *Hill Street Blues* (NBC, 1981-87), television began to combine the two modes. In this form of narrative, there continued to be episodic plots which were introduced and resolved in the same episode, but also there was an overarching plot structure, often involving shifting relationships between the main characters, which developed over the course of several weeks. Creeber calls this style the ‘flexi-narrative,’ but a more generally accepted term is the ‘semi-serialised’ narrative.<sup>61</sup> This increase in serialisation is the result of a number of industrial changes in television, but is primarily the result of new technologies that enable different types of television consumption. For example, the rise of home video recording technology in the 1990s, followed by the emergence of DVDs in the 2000s (and the subsequent ease of marketing entire series on DVD), and then finally the prominence of illegal Internet downloading and subsequent legal online streaming platforms, have made following complex serialised plots easier for audiences, and subsequently more financially viable for networks. Semi-serialised narratives are crucial to the development of so-called ‘quality television’ discourses, which re-emerged in the 1990s and persist through to the present day.<sup>62</sup> This semi-serialised narrative is particularly relevant to cult and genre television. As Catherine Johnson writes, the emergence of mixed plot structures in ‘telefantasy’ series

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<sup>61</sup> Glen Creeber, *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen* (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 4-5.

<sup>62</sup> Although the notion of ‘quality’ or legitimated television is not new, as explained in Robert Thompson’s book, I will refer to ‘quality television’ as the specific re-evaluation of the cultural cache of television in the wake of programmes such as *Hill Street Blues* and *The Sopranos*, which were popularly assumed to bring artistic quality to the culturally denigrated medium of television.

can be mainly attributed to 1990s programmes such as *The X-Files* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, which combined episodic ‘monster of the week’ plots with serialised ‘mythology’ plots, which often related to recurring enemies (in the case of *Buffy*)<sup>63</sup> or a broader conspiracy arc (in the case of *The X-Files*).<sup>64</sup> As Christine Scodari argues, this allows them to combine a masculine approach to genre programming (episodic, self-contained science fiction plots) and a feminine approach (a serialised narrative focusing on emotional relationships), although, as Scodari outlines, this combination of narrational modes was not always harmonious.<sup>65</sup> All of the series I discuss in this thesis use this semi-serialised narrative structure, but there is a great deal of variation between the extent to which each series is episodic and serialised. There is generally a chronological movement from programmes that are primarily episodic with a serialised plot which only recurs occasionally (such as *Star Trek: Voyager*), to an almost entirely serialised programme where ‘episodic’ plots are generally loosely defined, if they exist at all (such as *Westworld*.) This allows a more diverse representation of posthuman existence, as episodes of the week often deal with unique issues which may be elided in a short-form narrative. This also allows these series to combine the masculinised approaches of science fiction television, which privilege scientific extrapolation and forward plot momentum, with the feminised aspects traditionally associated with the soap opera, such as an emphasis on interpersonal relationships. The changing representation of posthuman women is inextricably tied to the changing norms of television programming. As I argue in my second chapter, the semi-serialised narrative complements the multiplicity of the posthuman woman through ensemble casting and mixed focuses. By using multiple subplots focusing on different posthuman characters, these programmes avoid universalising experiences, and allow the series to explore different aspects of posthuman existence.

In my first chapter, I will provide a fuller overview of posthumanist theory, and attempt to lay out a concrete definition of the posthuman woman. I will demonstrate that this character type recurs across various programmes in time, responding to a specific historical and social context, and this character archetype is worth investigating further. In my second chapter, I will explore the role of posthuman multiplicity and embodiment in my case studies, and how television provides a unique space for opening up presentations of non-individuated identities. The third chapter considers how normative notions of femininity work in relation to posthumanism. Sometimes feminine narrative tropes and gender roles work to undermine the representation of the posthuman but, at other junctions, it actually serves to reinforce the radical potential of the posthuman woman. In the fourth chapter, I explore the contexts of the neoliberal confluence of corporate interests, military power and scientific advancement are represented in these programmes. This deepens the cultural relevance of these series,

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<sup>63</sup> Johnson, *Telefantasy*, 116.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

<sup>65</sup> Christine Scodari, ‘Of Soap Operas, Space Operas, and Television’s Rocky Romance with the Television Form,’ in *The Survival of the Soap Opera: Transformations for a New Media Era*, ed. Sam Ford, Abigail de Kosnik and C. Lee Harrington (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 107.

and demonstrates how the posthuman woman relates to wider social anxieties. In my final chapter, I argue that television endings, and particularly the fraught position of the cult television finale, provides a useful nexus for providing ambivalent messages about the posthuman woman's femininity and multiplicity. Throughout this thesis, I hope to demonstrate how contemporary science fiction television works through ambivalent feelings about emergent technology and changing gender roles.

## Chapter One: Defining Posthumanism

Posthumanism is a complex and multi-faceted philosophy which I hope to define over the course of this chapter. Broadly, it concerns how stable notions of human identity, and particularly the valorisation of ‘human’ over ‘non-human’ qualities, are both unjust to non-human and sub-human actors, and increasingly untenable in an age of accelerating technological change. Posthumanism attempts to avert apocalyptic accounts of the end of humanity and instead envisions technology as a way to change how we think of ourselves for the better, in order to ‘create a vision of the human that uses the posthuman as leverage to avoid reinscribing, and thus repeating, some of the mistakes of the past.’<sup>1</sup> In general, the ‘mistakes of the past’ refers to exclusionary definitions of who or what constitutes a legitimate person. Posthumanism considers the human, not as an exceptional mode of being, but as part of a broader spectrum of nature and technology. What we consider to be ‘ourselves,’ posthumanists argue, is in fact deeply indebted to our surroundings. This is why emergent technology is so interesting to posthumanists. Technology such as artificial intelligence demonstrates the potential for non-human sapience, while genetic engineering breaks down the binaries between the natural and artificial. In this thesis, I hope to analyse how these ideas are explored in science fiction television.

Science fiction in particular has a rich history of envisioning the consequences of new technology and modes of being. Science fiction functions as a ‘reflection of society’s anxiety about its increasing technological prowess.’<sup>2</sup> These reflexive tendencies date back to the work of H.G. Wells, as in his ‘sociological science fiction [...] science may operate as a means of displacement from the tyranny of the everyday [...] and thus may de/reconstruct hegemonic ways of knowing and manipulating the world.’<sup>3</sup> It is a truism that science fiction reflects contemporary anxieties, but it is important that posthuman issues are appearing in popular culture, and particularly science fiction, at a time when scientific and technological advancement is potentially surpassing society’s capacity to comfortably contain such change. Jackie Stacey argues that in the post-Dolly the Sheep era, the presence of clones in science fiction cinema reflects a fear of ‘the unnatural and the inauthentic’<sup>4</sup> – the technologically produced. Elaine L. Graham also comments that culture has reacted to technoscience, and its subsequent challenge to ideas of humanity and nature: ‘fictional robots, androids and smart computers offers us intriguing glimpses of machines transforming themselves from tools into sentient beings.’<sup>5</sup> As discussed in the introduction, science fiction not only allows us to process and envision

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<sup>1</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 288.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Tarratt, ‘Monsters from the Id,’ in *Film Genre Reader III*, ed. Barry Keith Grant (Austin: University of Texas Press, 20003), 346.

<sup>3</sup> Anne Cranny-Francis, ‘Feminist Futures: A Generic Study,’ in *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. Annette Kuhn (London: Verso, 1990), 221.

<sup>4</sup> Jackie Stacey, *The Cinematic Life of the Gene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 8.

<sup>5</sup> Elaine L. Graham, ‘Cyborgs or Goddesses? Becoming Divine in a Cyberfeminist Age,’ in *Virtual Gender: Technology, Consumption and Identity*, ed. Eileen Green and Alison Adam (London: Routledge, 2001), 305.

the implications of emergent science, but also provides a veneer of distance from reality in order to critique current systems of oppression and domination. For this and many other reasons, science fiction, and particularly science fiction television, provides a crucial space for exploring posthuman existence. My case study programmes include *Star Trek: Voyager* (UPN, 1995-2001), *Dark Angel* (Fox, 2000-2), *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi, 2003-9), *Dollhouse* (Fox, 2009-10), *Caprica* (Syfy, 2010-1), *Orphan Black* (BBC America, 2013-7), and *Westworld* (HBO, 2016 - ). As I have discussed in the introduction to this thesis, these programmes' representations of technological-organic hybrid women, or posthuman women, draw heavily upon posthumanist ideas. In this chapter, I will look at these philosophies in more detail. By going through some of the key concepts of posthumanism and exploring how these are represented in my case study programmes, I will prove how contemporary anxieties about technology and humanity are being expressed in mainstream entertainment. The first step in defining the posthuman woman is to define the posthuman. I have therefore identified below a few prominent trends of posthumanism that are particularly relevant to my project.

Firstly, posthumanism is a reaction against and criticism of humanism. Humanism can broadly be defined as 'a system of thought in which human values, interests and dignity are considered particularly important.'<sup>6</sup> Humanism also generally values approaching the world with rationality and detachment, prioritises individual liberty and moral responsibility, and understands what constitutes 'the human' to be primarily a matter of the mind, as opposed to the body. Humanism, in its various forms, has been hugely influential in Western philosophy. To understand why humanist assumptions are misguided, it is perhaps helpful to look at the biases of its defenders. John Carroll, for example, writes effusively about the eighteenth-century Enlightenment as the apotheosis of humanist values:

Intellectual progress was the presiding ideal, and it proved brilliantly successful in practice. For the first time the scientific method was abstracted from non-rational interests [...] Mind was applied to the analysis of all things. The aim was [...] to understand the nature of mankind is man [...] Man was unambiguously at the centre, and he was on his own there.<sup>7</sup>

This fairly uncritical account of the significance of Enlightenment assumptions quite accurately reflects the many problems that philosophers have with humanist thinking. Humanism valorises scientific objectivity and rationality as inherently good and posits individuality, self-reliance and freedom from others as an ideal goal. As the repetition of 'man' as a term for 'humanity' demonstrates, humanism is often blind to the ways in which its conception of the human is in fact non-universal, and can be alienating to women and people of colour in particular. Luce Irigaray notes that this notion of subjectivity, even if applied to women, is still based on the same logic of exclusion

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Law, *Humanism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 1.

<sup>7</sup> John Carroll, *Humanism: The Wreck of Western Culture* (London: Fontana Press, 1993), 117-8.

that makes the masculine subject so problematic: ‘if the advent of something “feminine” were to come about, that “feminine” would necessarily be constituted on the same model that masculine “subjects” have put into place historically. A model privileging symmetry as the possibility condition for mastery in the non-recognition of the other. A phallogentric model.’<sup>8</sup> The problem of assimilationist politics is a huge concern for the posthuman woman, as I detail later in this chapter. Furthermore, the humanist model has been criticised on an even more fundamental level. It is impossible to be a free and sovereign individual because we are all the products of broader societal forces. The philosopher Michel Foucault ‘shows how the assumption that individuals have a deep interiority and innermost truth – expressed in concepts such as the soul, psyche and subjectivity – is a coercive illusion [...] even when individuals think that they are most free, they are in fact in the grip of an insidious power which operates not through direct forms of oppression but through less visible strategies of “normalization.”’<sup>9</sup> As I will discuss in this chapter and throughout this thesis, the television programmes that I focus on raise questions about the limitations of normative conceptions of the human. However, they are not entirely able to disavow its assumptions. I hope to chart the ambivalent relationship these narratives have with notions of humanity. They seem keenly aware of its inadequacies for dealing with marginalised identities and posthuman technologies. Despite this, posthuman women often long for recognition within the humanist paradigm, rather than dismantling its oppressive limitations.

The legacy of humanism in posthumanism (and other anti-humanist philosophies) is a contentious one. Rosi Braidotti argues that ‘it is impossible, both intellectually and ethically, to disengage the positive elements of Humanism from their problematic counterparts.’<sup>10</sup> This is because humanism is inherently dismissive of experiences that fall outside of its ideals, as can be seen by the defensiveness of humanist thinking of critiques coming from feminist and non-white perspectives. Radical criticism of humanism provides ‘new alternative ways to look at the “human” from a more inclusive and diverse angle.’<sup>11</sup> Braidotti, then, argues that while the assumptions of humanism are fundamentally exclusionary, there is a possibility for a reclamation of a more open and equitable vision of humanity. Others offer a different approach to confronting humanism’s influence. Neil Badmington argues that, as humanism has become so embedded in Western culture and philosophy, it is pointless to even attempt ‘an absolute break from the legacy of humanism.’<sup>12</sup> It is difficult if not impossible to argue against dominant ideology without being influenced by that ideology. Badmington instead advocates a deconstructive approach which involves ‘reading humanism *in a*

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<sup>8</sup> Luce Irigaray, *The Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 128.

<sup>9</sup> Lois McNay, *Foucault: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 5.

<sup>10</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 28.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>12</sup> Neil Badmington, ‘Theorizing Posthumanism,’ *Cultural Critique* 53, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 21, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cul.2003.0017>.

certain way, against itself.’<sup>13</sup> (emphasis in original) One example he gives of this potential is by discussing humanist philosopher Rene Descartes. Descartes argues that, even if a machine could be designed to replicate a human, it could never be sophisticated enough to actually achieve human-level intellect. Thus, ‘if a machine [...] were constructed in such a way that it had what might be called “an organ for every occasion,” it would, *according to the letter of Descartes’s own argument*, no longer be possible to maintain a clear distinction between the human and the inhuman [...] Reason, no longer capable of “distinguish[ing] us from the beasts,” would meet its match, its fatal and flawless double.’<sup>14</sup> (emphasis in original) This is a similar argument to Sadie Plant’s in *Zeros + Ones*, which is detailed in the introduction. Artificial replication of human-like intelligence is seen as a crucial vector for challenging the underlying assumptions of humanism. These replications are a threat because they prove that humanity is not uniquely gifted with natural and innate superiority over created objects. This opens up a space both to criticise humanism’s biases, but also to conceive of artificial sapience.

Both Braidotti and Badmington show a continued interest in the ‘human’ as a category, even if humanism is flawed. While both allow for the possibility of non-human agency and subjectivity, traits associated with the human (self-awareness and intelligence) are still valued, even if the extreme limitations on who counts as human are disavowed. My case study programmes often follow the same pattern. The appeal for the posthuman woman’s freedom is often predicated on their unfair exclusion from the category of human. This is a common problem with the representation of posthuman characters. Posthuman characters in fiction are often figured as examples of ‘the resilience of the human,’ possessing a ‘natural self.’<sup>15</sup> Therefore, according to Myra J. Seaman’s argument, they valorise and uphold, rather than condemn and critique, the notion of human exceptionalism and superiority. In fact, the posthuman characters often prove themselves to embody human values, generally figured as empathy and goodness, more thoroughly than the characters privileged with human status.<sup>16</sup> These narratives, therefore, can be seen as reinforcing notions of humanism. As discussed, this impulse is also found in posthumanism. It is a broader problem with the ways in which we think about subjectivity. Ideas of what constitutes the human are deeply embedded in our culture.

My case study series are, at points, ambivalent about humanity. However, they are also perversely invested in proving that their posthuman protagonists are essentially human. *Voyager’s* Seven of Nine (Jeri Ryan), for example, is a former agent of a technological collective known as the Borg. Seven is forcibly severed from the collective, and is at first reluctantly allied with the heroic crew of the Federation ship *Voyager*. The programme derives both humour and pathos from Seven’s difficulties in accepting her own humanity. Anne Cranny-Francis argues that this process both

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>15</sup> Myra J. Seaman, ‘Becoming More (than) Human: Affective Posthumanisms, Past and Future.’ *Journal of Narrative Theory* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 259, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41304860>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 268.

demonstrates *Voyager*'s commitment to liberal humanism, while exploring its inherent contradictions: 'The almost comic horror with which she contemplates her reassimilation into humanity provides a deconstructive commentary on the coercive power of liberal humanism; for her, becoming "human" is not a "natural" return to her "true" state. Instead, it is the acceptance of another, different ideology and embodiment. In place of a notion of subjectivity grounded in concern for the good of the whole (Borg/society), Seven of Nine must accept a subjectivity that prioritizes the good of the one.'<sup>17</sup> Seven of Nine's character arc is defined by a need to break away from the collective of the Borg, with the twenty-fifth episode of the fourth series addressing Seven's inability to function on her own. Despite this, her alignment with the Borg continues throughout the series, with several episodes involving Seven's continuing personal connection to her fellow Borg drones.<sup>18</sup> In many ways, despite the overall liberal humanism<sup>19</sup> of the *Star Trek* franchise and the emphasis on Seven regaining her humanity through individualisation, her extensive relationship with other posthumans is more complicated than simply renouncing her former collective identity. As I discuss in Chapter Three, Seven maintains a mental link with her fellow Borg drones, which complicates her status as a lone individual. Nonetheless, the programme does insist on her overcoming her technological heritage and embracing her humanity. *Voyager* is the earliest of my case studies, premiering over twenty years prior to the writing of this thesis, but, as demonstrated by the most recent case study, *Westworld*, we are no closer to reconciling contradictory notions of human existence. In the second series finale 'Passengers,' *Westworld* comes to the conclusion that humans are not capable of free thought. Head programmer Bernard (Jeffrey Wright) says, 'I always thought it was the hosts who were missing something. Who were incomplete. But it's them [the humans]. They're just algorithms designed to survive at all costs. But sophisticated enough to think they're calling the shots. To think they're in control [...] Is there really such a thing as free will for any of us? Or is it just a collective delusion? A sick joke?' Robert Ford (Anthony Hopkins) replies, 'Something that is truly free would need to be able to question its fundamental drives. To change them.' Bernard whispers, 'The Hosts.' The implication is that the Hosts are freer than the humans, because they can alter their own programming. While this appears to challenge the notion that humanity is unique and special, this is a variation of the 'more human than human' qualification that Seaman describes. Furthermore, it is still based on notions of individual self-determination and mastery that underpins the humanist ethos. Nevertheless, exposing the contradictions of human identity by demonstrating that agents classified as non- or sub-human as having human qualities is to a certain extent interesting and useful in and of itself, but it cannot be denied that these programmes struggle to fully deconstruct the notion of the human. The use

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<sup>17</sup> Anne Cranny-Francis, 'The Erotics of the (cy)Borg: Authority and Gender in the Sociocultural Imaginary,' in *Future Females, The Next Generation: New Voices and Velocities in Feminist Science Fiction Criticism*, ed. Marleen S. Barr. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), 158.

<sup>18</sup> For example, see *Voyager* episodes 6.16 ('Collective'), 6.26 ('Unimatrix Zero'), and 7.01 (Unimatrix Zero, Part II).

<sup>19</sup> Anne Cranny-Francis, 'The Erotics of the (cy)Borg,' 153.

of new technology in these programmes helps to subvert these stable categories of human and non-human.

One aspect that distinguishes posthumanism from the larger field of anti-humanist thought is its focus on emergent technology's potential to redefine how we conceive of personhood and identity. Scientific rationality, as explained above, is strongly linked with notions of humanity. However, as has been discussed thoroughly in areas such as science studies, strict notions of rationality are based on privileging masculinised modes of knowledge. The scientific establishment is so invested in humanist narratives of rationality and control that they often project notions that do not fit the facts. Hayles examines the problematic relationship between humanist ideals and technology. She discusses early work in cybernetics, which generally concerns how information is processed by biological and technological processes. Hayles uses Robert Wiener as a particular example of how, despite the fact that autonomous self-regulated machines uncomfortably call into question what differentiates us from the machines, early cybernetics refused to challenge the legitimacy of humanist ideas.

He was less interested in seeing humans as machines than he was in fashioning human and machine alike in the image of an autonomous, self-directed individual. In aligning cybernetics with liberal humanism, he was following a strain of thought that, since the Enlightenment, had argued that human beings could be trusted with freedom because they and the social structures they devised as self-regulating mechanisms. For Wiener, cybernetics was a means to extend liberal humanism, not subvert it. The point was less to show that man was a machine than to demonstrate that a machine could function like a man.<sup>20</sup>

Hayles argues that pioneers of cybernetics intended it to be entirely compatible with humanism, but the realities of technology exposed certain contradictions. Cybernetics was meant to demonstrate the perfect functioning of a closed loop. This mirrors a notion of the human which is closed-off, self-contained, reliant on no one and nothing else to maintain its purpose and sense of self. As cybernetics progressed, it became clear that this model was insufficient to describe how information flows work. The process of receiving and processing information, as was soon apparent, had a profound impact on how the processor worked. As Pramod K. Nayar argues, 'The focus on information flows across human biology and the environment, machine and man in cybernetic theory marked a major blow to the idea of the unified and self-contained humanist subject, the human. Suddenly, information theory had shaped the human differently, and the human's boundaries with the world were not sacrosanct.'<sup>21</sup> Stefan Herbrechter asserts that this is a key element of posthumanist modernity.

We experience the mechanization of the human and the technologization of nature [...]  
further, there is an erosion of species boundaries (thanks to transgenic processes such as, for

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<sup>20</sup> Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Pramod K. Nayar, *Posthumanism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 36.

example, the production of human-animal chimeras used in medical research); there is also the abolishment of clear boundaries of the body (the increasingly internalized process of ‘prosthesis’ [sic], from tool use of external objects [...] towards the integration and ergonomic or bionic fusion with technologies through implants, synthetic drugs, the digitalisation of sensory perception and experience in virtual realities or Bluetooth technologies); and finally, one needs to mention the creation of new personal and digital worlds (digital environments [...]) with the possibility of creating and living out more or less fictive identities in the form of ‘avatars.’<sup>22</sup>

This argument is that emergent technologies inevitably break down the boundaries between the human and non-human. These kinds of technologies play a large role in my case study programmes. Max in *Dark Angel* and the Leda clones in *Orphan Black* are the products of genetic engineering (Max in particular is a part-animal chimera). The Actives of *Dollhouse* have alternate personalities imprinted on their body through mechanical and chemical brain implants. *Caprica*’s Zoe Graystone created a perfect avatar copy of herself, who becomes one of the series’ main characters when the original Zoe is killed in a terrorist attack. These technologies expose the porosity between the outside world and the inner self, the natural and the cultural, and the organic and the technological. However, a full acknowledgement of the way these boundaries are being broken down is beyond these programmes. They often work to shore up traditional binaries, even as these binaries become more and more unrealistic.

As will be discussed in chapters three and five, despite their technological bodies, the posthuman woman is often associated with nature, and particularly with animals. As explained by Valerie Bryson,<sup>23</sup> feminists such as Susan Griffin, Andrée Collard, Adrienne Rich, and Vandana Shiva have argued that women have a natural affinity with the earth, either due to the fact that men have systematically mistreated both or because of innate gender differences. Although there are obvious problems with this model (again, as discussed further by Bryson), there are both progressive and regressive associations with aligning women and nature. In particular, these programmes associate women with animals, both to further critique scientific cruelty, but also in more reductive ways. In the story world of *Orphan Black*, viable human cloning was achieved in 1984, when the Leda and Castor clones were born. In this sense, these human clones take the place of genetically engineered animals in our society, notably Dolly the Sheep and OncoMouse. Several critics have written about our fascination with Dolly, including Stacey,<sup>24</sup> Braidotti<sup>25</sup> and Haraway.<sup>26</sup> Thus, we read

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<sup>22</sup> Stefan Herbrechter, *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 91.

<sup>23</sup> Valerie Bryson, *Feminist Political Theory: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 186.

<sup>24</sup> Stacey, *Cinematic Life of the Gene*, 11.

<sup>25</sup> Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 74.

<sup>26</sup> Donna Haraway, *Modest\_Witness@Second.Millennium. FemaleMan@\_Meets\_OncoMouseTM: Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 75.

the anxieties produced by these animals onto the figures of the human clones, and this informs how we understand their position and selfhood. Chris Hables Gray writes that ‘Dolly is an investment with a much shorter time frame. She is a prototype factory.’<sup>27</sup> The pharmaceutical industry is interested in cloning large mammals so that they can genetically engineer them in ways that will increase their efficacy as test subjects. This is also brought up in *Dollhouse* – Caroline ends up working as an Active because she discovers that the Rossum Corporation is experimenting not only on animals but on humans. The ill treatment of animals is depicted as an indication of future transgressions against women. Although this problematically still privileges the human over the animal (as it places the abuse of animals as foreshadowing the later, morally graver abuse of the woman), the animals and posthuman women are still linked. They share an oppression which is based on their non-human status. In order to re-establish traditional binaries, the programmes often re-associate the posthuman woman with the natural world and, thus, ‘natural’ femininity. The posthuman woman often abandons the technological aspects of herself in order to embrace the ‘natural’ world and her biological femininity. This retreat to ‘an idealized, pastoral world’ initially resembles ‘a feminist, separatist utopia.’<sup>28</sup> However, although women can have a prominent position in this utopia, it is intimately linked to heterosexual reproduction, and reinforces associations that Haraway was trying to combat, as ‘the cyborg skips the step of original unity, of identification with nature.’<sup>29</sup> The relationship of the posthuman woman to nature is complex and interesting, and not, I would argue, entirely regressive.

As I discuss in the final chapter of this thesis, many of my case study programmes involve the posthuman woman retreating into nature in order to negate an external technological threat. In the series finale of *Battlestar Galactica*, the remaining humans and their Cylon adversaries finally make peace and agree to settle on a hospitable planet, which turns out to be our planet Earth in the distant past. To make a success of this colonization, pilot Lee Adama (Jamie Bamber) insists that they abandon their advanced technology and return to an agrarian society. One of the more disturbing aspects of this integration is the presence of a pre-language humanoid precursor race. Scientist Gaius Baltar (James Callis) notes that ‘we can breed with them.’ Later in the episode, we see Hera Agathon (Alexandra Thomas), the only human-Cylon hybrid, descending down a hillside in order to interact with the native species. Her descent, holding a walking stick, recalls Biblical imagery of enlightenment, but there is also the unspoken sexual element of breeding. Hera, we are told, will become the mother of our human race. She is Moses, walking down the mountain to bring knowledge to the precursor race, but is also a prelapsarian Eve. We do not see how she interacts with the indigenous race, but it is interesting how this framing partially refutes and partially affirms the

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<sup>27</sup> Chris Hables Gray, *Cyborg Citizen: Politics in the Posthuman Age* (Hoboken, NJ: Routledge, 2000), 122.

<sup>28</sup> Jan Relf, ‘Women in Retreat: The Politics of Separatism in Women’s Literary Utopias,’ *Utopian Studies* 2, no. 1/2 (1991): 131, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20719032>.

<sup>29</sup> Donna Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,’ in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 276.

prejudices of transhumanist rhetoric. I will go into more detail about the particulars of transhumanism later, but essentially it is a philosophy which states that humans should be able to direct their own evolution with the help of technology. In an introductory video by the British Institute of Posthuman Studies, the narrator claims that ‘we remain shackled by our primitive, Darwinian brains.’<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, throughout the video it uses silhouetted animations of dark-skinned, ‘primitive’ people to illustrate the past that transhumanists hope to liberate us from. Obviously, the rhetorical use of ancient people – implicitly ancient Africans – to demonstrate a backwards, undesirable way of life is incredibly racist. While *Battlestar Galactica* is certainly not entirely free of this thinking, as Lee Adama patronisingly decides that language is acceptable to share with the indigenous life, it is interesting that the humans and Cylons give up their technological advancements in order to live in a different, more agrarian way. Rather than continue to control their lives with technology, they ‘recognise and celebrate finitude.’<sup>31</sup> Having tried to build life artificially, as seen with the Cylons, and failed to ethically interact with the life that they created, they return to nature.

As seen above, notions of progress are embedded in racialized, Othered tropes. This is one of the key ways in which posthumanism criticises the sexism, racism and anthropocentrism of humanism. Posthumanism ‘treats humanism as a politically significant philosophy because it enabled Europeans, upper classes, professionals (like medical doctors or psychiatrists) to categorize some individuals as inhuman or sub-human and confine them or deny them rights.’<sup>32</sup> Humanism, then, is a key site of oppression: its narrow parameters for who and what qualifies for full subjectivity pushes out those who do not meet these strict requirements. Furthermore, this is not merely a theoretical concern, but a very real one. As Nayar notes, the legacy of scientific practices such as pathologising the mentally ill and theories such as eugenics were clearly based on humanist principles. The long history of pathologising physical disability, for example, is keenly linked to humanist notions of exclusion, which I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter. These ideas inflicted, and continue to inflict, very real harm on those considered lesser. As discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis, these programmes place the scientific establishment at the heart of the subjugation of the posthuman woman. However, they also use gendered violence, such as forcible impregnation and sexual assault, to demonstrate how the posthuman woman’s doubled othered status – both non-human due to their technological bodies, and less than human due to their gender – are critically linked. *Battlestar Galactica* uses rape to demonstrate the precarious position of the posthuman woman. In the second series episode ‘Pegasus,’ the rape of Cylon Gina Inviere (Tricia Helfer) and the attempted rape of Sharon ‘Athena’ Agathon (Grace Park) are used to show how cruel humans can be towards Cylons. This is justified because they are non-human androids, as Colonel Jack Fisk (Graham Beckel) argues

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<sup>30</sup> ‘PostHuman: An Introduction to Transhumanism,’ British Institute of Posthuman Studies, YouTube, published on 5 November 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTMS9y8OVuY&feature=youtu.be>.

<sup>31</sup> Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 5.

<sup>32</sup> Nayar, *Posthumanism*, 12.

‘you can’t rape a machine.’ The use of rape in *Galactica* encourages the audience to empathise with the rape victims. Roz Kaveney refers to the use of rape in *Galactica* as ‘paradoxical,’<sup>33</sup> as the military insists that they are using rape because the Cylons are non-human, but rape is only effective as a tool if the subject is broken down emotionally. Sarah Hagelin argues that this scene fully confirms Cylons as people, and more specifically women. This leads to the problematic implication that ‘Sharon’s and Gina’s vulnerability to rape makes them women, which therefore makes them human.’<sup>34</sup> While the oppression inflicted upon the posthuman woman is directly a result of their perceived non-human status, the fact that they suffer is offered as proof that they are sufficiently vulnerable to count as human. As mentioned above, these programmes often rely on the simultaneous disavowal of the exclusionary processes of humanism, but also the need to prove their characters worthy of our sympathies by reinscribing them along normative lines.

One of the interesting ways the posthuman woman both reclaims and demurs from their posthuman status is through the evocation of the figure of the monster. Posthumanism often points to monstrous others as key sites of humanist tension. Humanist accounts are often simultaneously repulsed and intrigued by the notion of monstrosity. Graham figures posthuman monsters as ‘gatekeepers between identity and difference – gendered, racialized.’<sup>35</sup> The case study programmes often allude to the monstrosity of their posthuman women. In *Dark Angel*, transgenic super-soldier Max Guevara (Jessica Alba) refers to herself as ‘a teenage Frankenstein,’ while *Orphan Black* includes intertextual allusions to works such as H.G. Wells’s *The Island of Dr Moreau*, which follows a mad scientist who creates part-human part-animal monstrosities. Both of the texts, *Frankenstein* and *Dr Moreau*, form part of a Victorian corpus which worried about the increasing sophistication of biological sciences, the fine line between human and inhuman, and the potential of the human race to degenerate to a less sophisticated state. *Dark Angel* and *Orphan Black* are, in many ways, concerned with similar issues. The allusions to these earlier texts suggest a distrust of biological sciences, which will be explored further in chapter four. Much like *Frankenstein* and *Moreau*, the moral blame for the existence of the monsters is placed on the creators, not on the creations themselves. Television in particular has a long tradition of ‘blurring the lines between the monster and normality.’<sup>36</sup> As I will discuss later in this chapter, the television medium in particular works to normalise the posthuman woman.

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<sup>33</sup> Roz Kaveney, ‘The Military Organism: Rank, Family and Obedience in *Battlestar Galactica*,’ in *Battlestar Galactica: Investigating Flesh, Spirit and Steel*, ed. by Roz Kaveney and Jennifer Stoy (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 111.

<sup>34</sup> Sarah Hagelin, ‘The Violated Body After 9/11: Torture and the Legacy of Vulnerability in *24* and *Battlestar Galactica*,’ in *Reel Vulnerability: Power, Pain, and Gender in Contemporary American Film and Television* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 139.

<sup>35</sup> Elaine L. Graham, *Representations of the Post/human: Monsters, Aliens, and Others in Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 227.

<sup>36</sup> Lorna Jowett and Stacey Abbott, *TV Horror: Investigating the Dark Side of the Small Screen* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013), 202.

While the programmes often allude to the monstrous potential of the posthuman woman, I would argue that they are not actually all that monstrous. The protagonists of almost all of my case study programmes are not physically deformed or othered. *Voyager*'s Seven of Nine is the one who comes closest to this description, with her noticeable technological implants. However, one only needs to contrast her initial appearance – with grey, mottled skin and a more technological, androgynous appearance – with her appearance during the bulk of her appearances – with minimal technological interference, soft blonde hair and clear skin – to see how her more overt monstrosity is discarded when she becomes a series regular. The latent fear of monstrous contamination cannot be expressed in the protagonists, lest the audience be repulsed by them. As I have argued earlier, posthumanism as a whole, and the posthuman woman in particular, has not quite managed to rid itself of the desire for humanity. Although there are hints at impure contamination caused by their posthuman bodies, this is expressed internally. *Dark Angel*'s Max's faulty genetic code causes her to have seizures, while *Orphan Black*'s Leda clones are infected with a fatal uterine disease. The flaws of the genetic engineering are expressed via illness and contamination, but not via external deformity. This is often displaced onto other characters. Even if the body is inwardly sick, they look human. In the fifth episode of the fourth season, *Orphan Black* follows scientist clone Cosima (Tatiana Maslany) into the laboratory of a private eugenics clinic. There, she witnesses the birth of a baby with a deformed face. The existence of this deformed child is evidence of the moral rot and scientific negligence of the Brightborn corporation. *Orphan Black* is littered with the spectre of deformed children. In the sixth episode of the second series, Sarah (Tatiana Maslany) investigates the history of the Dyad Institute, it turns out that the Leda clones are the only successful clones in a long history of twisted, broken infants. Furthermore, while there is a disabled clone, Charlotte (Cynthia Galant), she is often marginalised in favour of the able-bodied clones. *Dark Angel* also positions Max as a relatively successful creation, as opposed to her monstrous predecessors. The second series of *Dark Angel* introduces Joshua (Kevin Durand) and other earlier transgenics. While Max is part-cat, Joshua and the other early transgenics are more clearly part-animal. While Max can 'pass' for human, Joshua and the other transgenics are forced into hiding. The series comments on the different treatment of the human-like and animal-like characters. In the third episode of the second series, Alec (Jensen Ackles) is forced to hunt down and kill three of his fellow transgenics. He enters a fight with a female part-cat transgenic. This is clearly an allusion to Max, who is also part-feline. However, the female cat transgenic is forced to live in the sewers, while Max has a relatively normal life. Furthermore, Alec finds it much less difficult to kill the animalistic transgenic than the more human-like ones. Despite this moment of self-awareness, *Dark Angel* still chooses to follow mainly human-like transgenics. Monstrousness and disability are displaced in order to centre the more palatable attractive human-looking women. This belies a lack of imagination for who an audience will sympathise with. Building empathy for the posthuman woman in the audience is a crucial aspect of how these characters are normalised. I interpret this through the mode of parasocial relationships.

Jason Mittell describes ‘parasocial relationships’ between viewers and characters which are a crucial aspect of the success of complex television drama:

We should not presume that caring deeply about characters is a sign of unhealthy boundaries but embrace it as a central component of storytelling – we temporarily give part of ourselves over to a fiction to produce intense emotional affect [...] Smith’s approach to engagement highlights how films cue us to recognize, align with, and forge alliances with characters.<sup>37</sup>

Mittell discusses the various ways in which the viewer engages with television characters, especially over long periods of time, resulting in ‘sincere emotional attachments’<sup>38</sup> to the characters in question. This is key to representing posthumanism. As Michael Hauskeller, Thomas D. Philbeck and Curtis D. Carbonell write, these characters ‘make [...] immediate’<sup>39</sup> the implications of posthuman technology, and their personal struggles and embodied forms make the theories of posthumanism alive for the viewers. A striking example of this process can be found in episode five of *Caprica*, ‘There Is Another Sky.’ A major plotline follows the first Cylon, a large metal robot designed for slave labour by Daniel Graystone (Eric Stoltz). Daniel attempts to download the virtual avatar of his dead daughter Zoe into the Cylon. Although Daniel initially believes that this has failed, the viewer knows that Zoe is still ‘alive’ in the robot body. Subsequent episodes intercut images of the CGI Cylon and the actor playing Zoe, thus representing both the robot body and her human mind. This allows for a greater emotional attachment to Zoe, as the CGI robot is impassive and expressionless – merely representing her ‘outer’ appearance would make engaging with her character more difficult. The play between the embodied representation of her interiority and her mechanical exterior often results in moments of dramatic irony. A particularly disturbing instance of this occurs when Daniel demonstrates the Cylon’s obedience in front of his company’s board members. The Cylon walks around the room, which is intercut with Zoe making silly faces at the board members, the impassive exterior of the robot contrasting with the actor’s girlish irreverence; the viewer sees Zoe’s pride when her father praises the Cylon’s intelligence. To demonstrate the Cylon’s complete obedience, Daniel orders it to rip its arm off. Zoe is obviously distressed by this order, but is unable to refuse him. There are a few rapid cuts between the actor pulling at her arm and the CGI Cylon ripping it off completely. Although we do not see the injured body of the actor, this juxtaposition makes it easy to imagine. *Caprica* uses the body (particularly a small, female body) to illustrate the cruelty of humans towards their robot slaves. The audience may not feel particular empathy towards a large expressionless CGI robot, but combining it with the vulnerability of a teenage girl, perhaps problematically, ensures that the

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<sup>37</sup> Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: NYU Press, 2015), 127.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 128.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Hauskeller, Thomas D. Philbeck and Curtis D. Carbonell, ‘Posthumanism in Film and Television,’ in *The Palgrave Handbook of Posthumanism in Film and Television*, ed. Michael Hauskeller et al. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 4.

audience will understand the moral point. This relies, on the one hand, on normative notions of who we empathise with. On the other, it is an interesting exercise in questioning assumptions about technology and subjectivity.

The importance of the posthuman woman's simultaneously normalised and pathologised body belies how important embodiment is to notions of identity. Part of how liberal humanism discriminates against marginalised people is through the denial of the importance of the body, when the body is 'the foundation of women's real, lived experience.'<sup>40</sup> This importance of the body is one of the key areas where posthumanism is differentiated from the similarly named transhumanism (also known as technological posthumanism,<sup>41</sup> analytic post-humanism,<sup>42</sup> popular posthumanism or liberal posthumanism).<sup>43</sup> Transhumanism and posthumanism share an interest in the potential of technology to fundamentally alter human existence: transhumanism 'promotes an interdisciplinary approach to understanding and evaluating the opportunities for enhancing the human condition and the human organism opened up by the advancement of technology.'<sup>44</sup> Transhumanism differs from posthumanism in that it figures itself as a continuation of secular humanism, and reiterates much of its ideologies of human mastery of nature through technology.<sup>45</sup> Some transhumanist thought expresses a desire to escape the limits of physicality, which Stefan Herbrechter deems 'a technologically radicalized form of body hatred.'<sup>46</sup> These elements of transhumanism are conservative: Joshua Raulerson discusses how transhumanist ideas of moving beyond the body and escaping the Earth are pro-capitalist and anti-conservation,<sup>47</sup> ideas antithetical to the nature-human-tech spectrum advocated by posthumanists. In my case study programmes, transhumanist ideologies are often given to villainous characters, who seek to exploit their technological advances to advance their own nefarious agendas. As will be explored further in the fourth chapter of this thesis, the programmes often feature a transhumanist organisation. Most of these are corporate entities, such as the Rossum Corporation in *Dollhouse*, Dyad Institute in *Orphan Black*, the Delos Corporation in *Westworld*. However, sometimes, as with the Borg in *Star Trek: Voyager*, this functions more metaphorically, as the Borg seeks to assimilate organic life into its technological collective. The villainy of these technological

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<sup>40</sup> Elaine L. Graham, 'Cyborgs or Goddesses?', 315.

<sup>41</sup> Robert Ranisch and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner, 'Introducing Post- and Transhumanism,' in *Post- and Transhumanism: An Introduction*, ed. Robert Ranisch and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner (Frankfurt Am Main: Peter Lang Edition, 2014), 14.

<sup>42</sup> Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 42.

<sup>43</sup> Sherryl Vint, *Bodies of Tomorrow: Technology, Subjectivity, Science Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 6.

<sup>44</sup> Nick Bostrom, 'Human Genetic Enhancements: A Transhumanist Perspective,' *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 37, no. 4 (December 2003): 493, <https://doi-org.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2443/10.1023/B:INQU.0000019037.67783.d5>.

<sup>45</sup> Nick Bostrom, 'A History of Transhumanist Thought,' *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 14, no. 1 (April 2005), <http://jetpress.org/volume14/bostrom.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Herbrechter, *Posthumanism*, 97.

<sup>47</sup> Joshua Raulerson, *Singularities: Technoculture, Transhumanism, and Science Fiction in the Twenty-First Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 47-54.

corporations are based on exploitation of technological creations for profit or self-benefit. The posthuman woman is owned by this technological organisation. Criticism of capitalism is common in posthumanism. Hayles argues that one of the reasons why the cyborg is such a revolutionary figure is because it 'figures [...] a rational subject who is always already constituted by the forces of capitalist markets.'<sup>48</sup> Humanist individualism is based on self-control and self-ownership; therefore, an owned object which turns out to be a thinking subject challenges both the definition of the human and the morality of capitalism. The posthuman woman's objecthood is demonstrated as inherently dehumanising, which is often expressed by them being reduced to a number. Seven of Nine's name comes from her work designation as a Borg drone; Max and the other transgenics carry bar codes; the Cylons of *Battlestar Galactica* were designed to be slaves (as seen in the prequel series, *Caprica*) until they overthrew their human masters; the Actives of *Dollhouse* are indentured servants who sign away their free will to a corporation; and the clones of *Orphan Black* have their status as intellectual property embedded into their genetic code. Their attempts to free themselves from their objecthood are predicated on asserting their individualism and right to self-determination, in some ways based on humanist ideas of subjectivity. However, the posthuman woman is rarely content merely to save herself and is almost always involved in an attempt to liberate other posthumans. This concern with others marks her as more than just an individual.

Of course, one of the most prominent instances of thinking subjects being owned as property is the transatlantic slave trade. The unequal treatment of women of colour is both an important element of posthumanist thought, and a major blind spot in representations of posthuman women. As discussed above, the scientific establishment pathologised those labelled as 'other.' This led to a long history of medical experimentation that disproportionately affects people of colour. Women of colour were targeted by eugenicists due to their 'undesirable' racial traits, as 'advocates of racial purity addressed the problem of "tainted" reproductive capacity by enacting selective immigration policies, antimiscegenation laws, and state-enforced sterilization laws.'<sup>49</sup> Some of the most notorious cases of unethical medical experimentation in the United States have been committed against women of colour, such as the extraction of the HeLa cells from Henrietta Lacks<sup>50</sup> and the testing of early contraceptive pills on Puerto Rican women.<sup>51</sup> These legacies are explored in these television programmes. Despite the specifically racialized history of scientific experimentation, these programmes tend to focus on white posthuman women. Robin Roberts argues that Seven of Nine represents an example of the 'tragic mulatta' figure, despite the fact that she is played by a white

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<sup>48</sup> Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 86-87.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>50</sup> Rebecca Skloot, 'Cells That Save Lives Are a Mother's Legacy,' *New York Times*, published 17 November 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/11/17/arts/cells-that-save-lives-are-a-mother-s-legacy.html>.

<sup>51</sup> Ray Quintanilla, 'Puerto Ricans recall being guinea pigs for "magic pills,"' *Chicago Tribune*, published 11 April 2004, [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2004-04-11/news/0404110509\\_1\\_gritty-village-pill-humacao](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2004-04-11/news/0404110509_1_gritty-village-pill-humacao).

actor.<sup>52</sup> Roberts discusses this whiteness as deconstructing the performativity of race, but using white characters to discuss racial issues is a hotly contested area. However, some of these programmes cast women of colour to highlight this history. *Dark Angel* features the Latina Jessica Alba as the main character, and all of her fellow X5s are played by women of colour (although some female transgenics are white, as are almost all of the male transgenics). Ramona Fernandez argues that:

Dualistic themes such as, wo/man versus machine, wo/man versus alien (as in extraterrestrial), wo/man versus animal, female versus male, gender versus sexuality, body versus mind, wo/man versus monster, white race versus other race, enabled versus disabled, and probably many others, can be crammed into representations of bodies, telegraphing multiple signs instantaneously.<sup>53</sup>

When a woman of colour is cast as a posthuman woman (as happens in *Dark Angel*, *Battlestar Galactica*, *Dollhouse* and *Westworld*), these programmes draw attention to the many dualisms contained in cultural constructs of the self and Other. The posthuman woman collapses other distinctions: namely, those between human/animal and human/nature, but overall human/technology. Posthumanism, as previously discussed, is interested in these false dichotomies. Braidotti argues that these boundaries can no longer be used to exclude Others from considerations of humanity: ‘Sexualized, racialized and naturalized differences, far from being the categorical boundary-keepers of the subject of Humanism, have evolved into fully fledged alternative models of the human subject.’<sup>54</sup> By collapsing several differences into one figure, as Fernandez argues, the posthuman woman illustrates the potential for new ways of thinking about subjectivity. There are ways in which these programmes elide the specifically racialized aspects of medical experimentations, and appropriate the suffering of women of colour in order to allow the audience to sympathise with its white protagonists.

*Orphan Black*’s science fiction conspiracy plot draws a lot of its pathos and drama from the sexual and reproductive exploitation of its white female clones. In the second season, the clone Helena is held captive by a highly religious family. The patriarch Henrik Johansson (Peter Outerbridge) is obsessed with Helena – although he is part of the Prolethean cult, who believe that clones are abominations, Henrik sees Helena’s genetic material and unplanned fertility as miraculous. In the third episode of the second season, Henrik and Helena are bound in an odd religious ceremony. Henrik then carries Helena, who is wearing a white dress, to a room where he harvests her eggs. The

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<sup>52</sup> Robin A. Roberts, ‘Science, Race and Gender in *Star Trek: Voyager*,’ in *Fantasy Girls: Gender in the New Universe of Science Fiction and Fantasy*, ed. Elyce Rae Helford (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 208.

<sup>53</sup> Ramona Fernandez, ‘The Somatope: Bakhtin’s Chronotope to Haraway’s Cyborg via James Cameron’s *Dark Angel* and *Avatar*,’ *The Journal of Popular Culture* 47, no. 6 (December 2014): 1124, <https://doi-org.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk/2443/10.1111/jpcu.12201>.

<sup>54</sup> Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 38.

ceremony and the image of Henrik carrying Helena invokes wedding imagery, but the blurred focus and unsteady camerawork used in this sequence reveal that Helena has been drugged. The non-consensual harvesting of Helena's eggs is likened to marital rape, despite the fact that, as far as Helena or the viewer is aware, no sexual contact occurred. In a later episode, Helena agrees to return to the farm to be impregnated, but she is unaware that Henrik is not only implanting her eggs into her, but is planning to do the same to other women. Henrik considers the eggs, which he stole from Helena, as his property to do with as he wishes. While, obviously, male exploitation of female reproduction is a serious concern, forced breeding is historically associated with American Black women. Rickie Solinger writes that 'there is no single history of reproductive politics that describes the experience of all – or even most – women in the United States [...] Race and class have always been key to the ways that women experience their own fertility.'<sup>55</sup> During the era of slavery, 'slave owners were very eager to maximize slave reproduction. Owners typically devised "breeding schemes" to achieve their goals, especially during the time of booming cotton profits after 1820. Many owners personally impregnated enslaved girls and women, often through rape.'<sup>56</sup> *Orphan Black* draws upon the continuing exploitation of women of colour. Sarah's birth mother, Amelia (Melanie Nicholls-King), is a Black woman who was drawn into surrogacy for the money. However, Amelia appears in only one episode before she is murdered in order to motivate Sarah and Helena's rivalry. *Orphan Black* is not alone in how it centres white women's experiences. While *Westworld*'s Maeve Millay (Thandie Newton) is an interesting and nuanced biracial woman, the programme is notably different in how it treats Dolores' (Evan Rachel Woods) sexual exploitation and how it treats Maeve's. Dolores's rape at the hands of the Man in Black (Ed Harris) is the centrepiece of its first episode, and the desire for vengeance against him fuels Dolores' rebellion against her human creators in the first series finale. While Maeve is also part of the *Westworld* park, and also subject to regularised sexual violence, her positioning as a sex worker minimises her experiences of sexual violence. Although Maeve is programmed to consent, and therefore cannot truly consent, her experiences are rarely framed as rape. In the sixth episode of the first series, Maeve actually encourages a customer to choke her to death. The dark humour we are meant to derive from this scene stands in stark contrast with the emotional pathos reserved for white, virginal Dolores. While, as discussed above, the framing of rape as proof of humanity is problematic in and of itself, the exploitation of a biracial woman is not seen as a tragedy. Although there are certainly moments in these programmes which capitalise on race, in general they have a colour-blind approach to the posthuman woman which obscures the power of their metaphors. This is despite recent public interest in intersectionality, or the idea that 'when it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of

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<sup>55</sup> Rickie Solinger, *Pregnancy and Power: A Short History of Reproductive Politics in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 17.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other.<sup>57</sup> The posthuman woman is not as good at seeing the intersections.

Posthumanist conceptions of identity often concern the body as a key site of identity.<sup>58</sup> Hayles points out the link between liberal humanism and disdain towards the body, and warns against posthumanism replicating this:

Identified with the rational mind, the liberal subject *possessed* a body but was not usually represented as *being* a body. Only because the body is not identified with the self is it possible to claim for the liberal subject its notorious universality, a claim that depends on erasing markers of bodily difference, including sex, race, and ethnicity.<sup>59</sup> (emphasis in original)

Those whose bodies are marked as other by humanism – which, as discussed above, include women, the disabled, and people of colour – have their identities defined by their bodies. Posthuman centres the importance of the body an important element of identity. Furthermore, posthumanism is interested in the multiplicity of identity – rather than being self-contained individuals, our identities are always necessarily contingent on others. In the next chapter, I will discuss the representations of posthuman multiplicity and embodiment in more detail. In that chapter, I will continue to demonstrate the impact of posthumanist thinking on these programmes' narratives.

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<sup>57</sup> Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), 11.

<sup>58</sup> Elaine L. Graham, 'Cyborgs or Goddesses?,' 315.

<sup>59</sup> Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 4-5.

## Chapter Two: Multiplicity and Embodiment

The posthuman woman combines a multiplicity of identities with a grounding in the physical body. This is one of the clearest links this figure has to posthumanist ideology. In the previous chapter, I explored some of the key tenets of posthumanism and how they were represented in a number of case study programmes. Rather than the technological threat of these characters being tempered by their femininity, ideas of embodiment and female solidarity in fact emphasise these figures' technological posthumanity. This is accomplished through various forms of multiplicity. Aviva Dove-Viebahn argues, 'while hybridity stems from the functional or physical *amalgamation* of differing elements in a singular entity [...] diversity refers to a *multiplicity* of elements and their difference, not how these differences are merged to create a singular form. Hybridity could be described as embodied diversity – diversity circumscribed and blended.'<sup>1</sup> (emphasis in original) By looking at the case study programmes of *Dollhouse* (FOX, 2009-10), *Caprica* (SyFy, 2010-1) and *Orphan Black* (BBC America, 2013-7), I will argue that these programmes reject the notion of woman as a self-contained individual, departing from the logic of individualistic humanism and liberal feminism and post-feminism. The posthuman woman works in a collective, rather than alone, and her subjectivity is figured as multiple, rather than singular. Posthumanism presents a 'critique of the individual as a rationally self-determining, self-defining being, and of individual identity as the source of agency.'<sup>2</sup> Posthumanism is not unique in this criticism, but the disruptive potential of technology plays an important role in destabilising ideas of individualism. Donna Haraway's cyborg, for example, is a metaphorical figure who symbolises the potential radical nature of emergent technology to destabilise binaries of gender and humanity. While many feminist science fiction critics have considered the cyborg in its more striking guise as an artificial-organic non-woman, the science-fictional utopian imagination of the cyborg is only half of Haraway's equation. Haraway's cyborg is born out of the failure of identity politics. More precisely, feminism as a whole is based on the assumption that 'women were an oppressed group, that women's problems were political.'<sup>3</sup> While this is, of course, true, it leads to a totalising tendency in feminism, which often implicitly comes from a place where the experience of white middle-class feminists are regarded as universal. This cyborg multiplicity draws upon, and has obvious implications, for intersectional understandings of feminism. As Anna Carastathis writes, intersectionality is important because 'homogenizing, essentialist, and exclusionary models of identity [...] are unjust and inadequate to building truly emancipatory theories

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<sup>1</sup> Aviva Dove-Viebahn, 'Embodying Hybridity, (En)Gendering Community: Captain Janeway and the Enactment of a Feminist Heterotopia on *Star Trek: Voyager*,' *Women's Studies* 36, no. 1 (2007): 608-9, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00497870701683894>.

<sup>2</sup> Naomi Jacobs, 'Posthuman Bodies and Agency in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis*,' in *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, ed. Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (New York: Routledge, 2003), 91.

<sup>3</sup> Judith Grant, *Fundamental Feminism: Contesting the Core Concepts of Feminist Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 4.

and political movements.’<sup>4</sup> As Haraway asserts, ‘gender, race, and class cannot provide the basis for belief in “essential” unity. There is nothing about being “female” that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as “being” female, itself a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices.’<sup>5</sup> Chela Sandoval contends that the cyborg draws upon the work of third-world feminists, who regard the ‘possibilities of affinity-through-difference’<sup>6</sup> as a potential way forward for the feminist movement. As I have discussed earlier in this thesis, Haraway borrows from Sandoval and postcolonial feminists. The term ‘woman of colour’ was intended as a way to emphasise the common political interests of marginalised races without erasing their differences. Haraway sees the cyborg as functioning similarly, providing a communal identity which does not universalise experience. Naturally, this function is somewhat problematic, as it removes the central organising principle of race that unites ‘women of colour.’ This can be seen in these programmes, which tend to follow white women. Nonetheless, the cyborg has its own relevance. Haraway further argues that the ‘self’ cannot be thought of in merely individualistic terms, due to the networked nature of contemporary technocapitalism:

The actual situation of women is their integration/exploitation into a world system of production/reproduction and communication called the informatics of domination. The home, workplace, market, public arena, the body itself – all can be dispersed and interfaced in nearly infinite, polymorphous ways, with large consequences for women and others [...] The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. It is the self feminists must code.<sup>7</sup>

The posthuman woman literalises these coalitions and technological interpellations through science fiction tropes.

The posthuman woman engages in these coalitions, both literally by allying themselves with other people who are oppressed in different but similar ways, and more metaphorically through the repeated iterations of their various ‘selves.’ *Dollhouse*, *Caprica* and *Orphan Black* highlight the technology that allows the multiplicity of the posthuman woman – both the technological intervention that created them within the diegesis, and, in some cases, the spectacle of computer effects necessary to represent this multiplicity. In *Dollhouse*, many of the main characters are Actives, or people who are under contract with the nefarious Rossum Corporation. Their minds are implanted with so-called

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<sup>4</sup> Anna Carastathis, *Intersectionality: Origins, Contestations, Horizons* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Donna Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,’ in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 283.

<sup>6</sup> Chela Sandoval, ‘New Sciences: Cyborg Feminism and the Methodology of the Oppressed,’ *Cybersexualities: A Reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs and Cyberspace*, ed. Jenny Wolmark (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 254.

<sup>7</sup> Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto,’ 297.

Active architecture technology, which allows the Actives to be imprinted with different personalities. Normally, when the Actives are not imprinted, they exist in a childlike state referred to as the *tabula rasa*, or the blank slate. One Active, codenamed Echo (Eliza Dushku), begins to take on some aspects of her imprinted personalities in her *tabula rasa* state. At the end of the first series, she is forcibly imprinted with several personalities. This process usually drives the Active to madness, such as with the villainous Alpha (Alan Tudyk). Due to a genetic anomaly, Echo's mind is able to withstand this process. The personalities eventually synthesise into her coherent Echo personality. She is able to access the characteristics and skills of these different personalities, which allows her, along with a group of posthuman and non-posthuman allies, to overthrow Rossum, thereby freeing themselves from their exploitative contracts. *Caprica*, a prequel to *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi, 2003-9), explores the technological multiplicity of Zoe Graystone (Alessandra Torresani), who is the predecessor of the Cylon androids of *Battlestar Galactica*. Zoe Graystone is the daughter of Daniel Graystone (Eric Stoltz), a wealthy computer genius who is tasked with creating fighter drones for the military at the beginning of the programme. Zoe resents both her father and mother, Amanda (Paula Malcomson), for their superficiality. Zoe becomes interested in a monotheistic religious cult, and is killed in the pilot episode when her zealous boyfriend carries out a suicide bombing on a crowded train. Before she died, Zoe wrote an algorithm that created an exact replica of her personality in a virtual reality world. In his grief, Daniel tries to download Zoe's avatar onto a robotic Cylon. He initially believes that this has failed, accidentally erasing the avatar along with the algorithm. However, it is revealed to the viewer that Zoe has been successfully copied onto the Cylon, but refuses to expose herself so she can escape her father's control.<sup>8</sup> Finally, in *Orphan Black*, the Leda clones are the result of a secret cloning conspiracy ultimately controlled by the transhumanist Neolution cult. The Leda clones are all played by Tatiana Maslany and her body double, Kathryn Alexandre. In the multiple scenes where the clones have to interact, Tatiana Maslany acts out all of the parts in succession and they are digitally spliced together. A small group of clones (primarily Sarah Manning, Alison Hendrix, Cosima Niehaus and Helena), along with a broader alliance of friends and allies referred to as Clone Club, work together in order to free the clones from corporate ownership. In all these programmes, posthuman women are defined by their technological multiplicity, which is both the result of patriarchal capitalism and allows them to resist its power.

The posthuman woman is defined by multiple versions of herself – through identical clones or copies, or by combining multiple personalities in one body. These iterations are initially imposed upon them through unwanted technological intrusion. The posthuman woman fashions these coalitions as a form of resistance. To paraphrase Haraway, they code themselves with their creator's tools. As I will detail in this chapter, these coalitions are grounded in femininity and radical feminist

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<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, I will refer to the Zoe that died on the train as Human Zoe, the Zoe that we see in the virtual world as Avatar Zoe, and the Zoe that is encased in the robot as Cylon Zoe.

language while also troubling gender boundaries and individuality. While Claudia Springer appears to reject the idea that visual representations of cyborgs can be radical, arguing that most visual representations of cyborgs are ‘fundamentally human,’<sup>9</sup> I argue that it is precisely the visual and televisual elements of the medium which express the posthuman woman’s multiplicity. I will in particular look at CGI, camera effects, and performance as crucial elements of portraying the posthuman woman’s multiplicity. The body of the actor – whether shared across several Leda clones as in *Orphan Black*, portraying multiple versions of the same consciousness as in *Caprica* or containing multiple personalities as in *Dollhouse* – is an essential vehicle for demonstrating the characters’ multiplicity and alignment. Although the posthuman woman is, indeed, gendered female, the shared body of the actor illustrates a version of the posthuman which is at once multiple and grounded in their physicality and embodiment.

As discussed in the first chapter, the humanist concept of the individual is generally focused on, first, the entirely self-contained bounded self, and second, the privileging of the mind over the body, and this dichotomy is replicated even in supposedly technology-friendly progressive movements such as transhumanism. N. Katherine Hayles states that ‘the erasure of embodiment is a feature common to *both* the liberal humanist subject and the cybernetic posthuman. Identified with the rational mind, the liberal subject *possessed* a body but was not usually represented as *being* a body. Only because the body is not identified with the self is it possible to claim for the liberal subject its notorious universality, a claim that depends on erasing markers of bodily difference, including sex, race, and ethnicity.’<sup>10</sup> (emphasis in original) Therefore, Hayles goes on to argue, embodiment is crucial to maintaining marginalised identities. Further, as Stefan Herbrechter explains, ‘posthuman bodies with their multiple possibilities precisely accentuate the precariousness of traditional characteristics of body-related identities like gender, sexuality but also ethnicity or race [...] This does not constitute a disappearance of the body but, on the contrary, makes the body omnipresent but in increasingly hybridized, mediatized and consumptional form.’<sup>11</sup> The cybernetic posthuman – which, as explained in the first chapter, I regard in the context of transhumanism – is based on a liberal humanist idea that the mind is more important to one’s self-conception than the body. While not accepting gender essentialism, embodied posthumanism demonstrates the importance of the body as an aspect of the subject. This emphasis on embodiment is important as a rejection of humanism and a reification of alternate, feminine ways of being. These programmes insist that the person is not merely a thing of the mind, but of the body. The body is the arena where masculine control over feminine subjects breaks down. The unwanted patriarchal technological intervention discussed earlier is exactly

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<sup>9</sup> Claudia Springer, ‘The Pleasure of the Interface,’ in *Cybersexualities: A Reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs and Cyberspace*, ed. Jenny Wolmark (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 46.

<sup>10</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 4-5.

<sup>11</sup> Stefan Herbrechter, *Posthumanism: A Critical Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), 99.

what gives the posthuman woman the skills to build coalitions and reject patriarchal hierarchies. Although this emphasis on essential femininity and embodiment does not sit particularly well with the dreams of the cyborg, it is crucial to understanding how the posthuman woman operates as a potential figure of resistance. In this chapter, I will first explain how the programmes figure the posthuman woman's non-individualistic subjectivity. Then, I will discuss the importance of embodiment to the posthuman woman's criticism of patriarchal humanism. Finally, I will demonstrate how the specific televisual qualities of performance and narrative work to support the representation of the posthuman woman's multiplicity. These posthuman women use their multiplicity to resist masculine control – they defy patriarchal attempts to use them for profit, instead creating their own communal identities and taking control of their own lives.

### Subjectivity and Replication

*Dollhouse*, *Caprica* and *Orphan Black* take a literal approach to multiplicity, featuring characters who are different versions of the same person. Many posthumanist writers have discussed a more metaphorical form of multiplicity – that is, the non-singularity of subjectivity. According to Nick Mansfield, subjectivity is different from conventional understandings of selfhood because the term subject 'proposes that the self is not a separate or isolated entity, but one that operates at the intersection of general truths and shared principles.'<sup>12</sup> While the self, in liberal humanist understandings, is a self-contained inherent quality of a person, many schools of thought have rejected this notion. For example, Michel Foucault asserts the individual is 'an effect of power'<sup>13</sup> rather than an originary state. Furthermore, Luce Irigaray argues that the emphasis on singular, bounded ideas of selfhood are essentially masculine, while femininity is more open to fluidity and multiplicity.<sup>14</sup> Posthumanism borrows from these ideas, but also emphasises that technology offers a concrete challenge to the idea of unitary selfhood. As Constance Penley writes, science fiction's challenges to issues of subjectivity and technology 'come not only from poststructuralist criticism, with its highly constructed and unstable subject, but also from "advances" in genetic engineering, bioengineering, and cybernetics.'<sup>15</sup> Again, I return to the idea of hybridity and multiplicity. As quoted above, Dove-Viebahn draws a distinction between hybridity which is bounded in a single person, and a communal diversity, or multiplicity, among different actors. Both multiplicity and hybridity are present in these case study programmes. For example, in *Dollhouse*, Echo is a hybrid: her status as Active is determined both by her organic body and the technological interruption of her mind. The appeal of the

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<sup>12</sup> Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (St Leonard's: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Michel Foucault, 'Two Lectures,' in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), 98.

<sup>14</sup> Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985), 26.

<sup>15</sup> Constance Penley, 'Introduction,' in *Close Encounters: Film, Feminism, and Science Fiction*, ed. Constance Penley et al. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), vii.

Active as a product is that it is an empty body that can be programmed however the consumer wishes. This is representative of the humanist fallacy of the mind/body split. Echo's body is not pliant to the consumers' wishes, and in fact becomes the site of her own diverse subjectivity. She describes how her personality post-implants functions in the ninth episode of the second series, saying 'I can slip back and forth [between imprints] without thinking [...] You're always talking to Echo. But Roma Klar and Eleanor Penn are duking it out in the background.' The different selves interact – maintaining their distinctiveness yet also combining and influencing each other. Echo's new, 'self-created' personality is in many ways more authentic than her original personality, Caroline Farrell. As Mansfield argues, 'the modern era has been saturated by a dream that social life is a place of compromise and debasement, but that – somewhere – your true self remains hidden, free and available [...] the individual is self-contained and complete, and society presses in on it from the outside, frustrating its dreams and restricting its ability to express itself.'<sup>16</sup> *Dollhouse* privileges the profane, societal self of Echo over the original, self-contained Caroline personality. In the eleventh episode of the second series, Echo needs to recover and implant her original personality in order to discover the identity of Rossum's secret co-founder. Echo has no desire to return to her so-called true self, and is initially willing to sacrifice Caroline to maintain her new, technological subjectivity. Finally, the portable hard drive with Caroline's personality on it is repaired. Dollhouse Programmer Topher Brink (Fran Kranz) is uncertain about what will happen to Echo if Caroline's personality is restored to her/Echo's body:

TOPHER: We don't actually know what dumping Caroline into Echo's brain will do. Your original self comes home to find the house party that's going on inside your head. She might fight back.

ECHO: She'd lose.

Topher frames Caroline's return to a form of property ownership – Echo's body and mind are compared to a house. Again, this is an example of an overly simplistic notion of the mind/body split. This exchange draws upon three recurring themes in these programmes: firstly, the idea that the body is an empty vessel which is entirely separate from the mind; secondly, the body of the posthuman woman as a capitalist commodity; and thirdly, the validity of identities which are derived from capitalist and patriarchal oppression. The first two will be discussed at more length in the next section of this chapter. At the moment, I want to discuss the self-fashioning posthuman woman. This new, created self is more powerful than the original, born personality. Caroline is incorporated into the society that is Echo – the alleged true self becomes only one more element of Echo's multiplicity.

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<sup>16</sup> Mansfield, *Subjectivity*, 54.

Echo determines her own existence in the face of all threats. While Bronwen Calvert sees *Dollhouse* as ultimately affirming the ‘authentic self,’<sup>17</sup> the constructed self is presented as equally valid.

One distinctive feature of the posthuman woman is that they are in many senses responsible for their own creation. For example, in *Caprica*, Avatar Zoe is created by Human Zoe. Human Zoe developed an algorithm which takes publicly available information to create a lifelike virtual reality doppelganger. Furthermore, it is later revealed that Daniel Graystone’s Cylons are based on Zoe’s childhood drawings, suggesting that she was the ultimate originator of the concept. While I discuss the relationship between the posthuman woman and her patriarchal creators in chapter four, *Caprica* is careful to point to Zoe as the originator of her father’s designs. While he may seek to control her and take credit for the Cylons, it is Zoe who is the first author of robotic body she comes to inhabit. Much like Echo is greater than Caroline, Avatar Zoe eventually takes over as the primary version of Zoe. Human Zoe is, as mentioned above, killed in the pilot episode of the programme. Following Human Zoe’s death, Avatar Zoe claims, ‘I’m her. I’m all that’s left of her.’ Avatar Zoe eventually supersedes her identity as merely a creation or reflection of Human Zoe. Avatar Zoe believes Human Zoe was a willing suicide bomber, rather than an unknowing accomplice, and she feels guilty about her human counterpart’s actions. In the twelfth episode of *Caprica*, Avatar Zoe finds Tamara Adams (Genevieve Buechner), a girl who was killed in the terrorist attack but who was resurrected as an avatar via Human Zoe’s algorithm. Tamara condemns Zoe, holding her responsible for her human counterpart’s actions. Avatar Zoe masochistically suffers for her creator’s sins. Zoe is visited by a Messenger, a semi-mystical Cylon projection, who convinces her that she is not responsible. The Messenger says, ‘Now, are you gonna lie down and pay for her [Human Zoe’s] sins, or are you gonna own yourself?’ This speech allows Avatar Zoe to conclude that she has a right to her own life, and convinces Tamara to work with her to improve the Virtual World. ‘Owning oneself’ is an interesting phrase to use here – it means to have responsibility for one’s own actions, but can also be interpreted literally. Avatar Zoe’s adventures in the Virtual World in the second half of *Caprica* are the result of her attempting to escape from her father’s corporate control. N. Katherine Hayles writes:

By the mid-twentieth century, liberal humanism, self-regulating machinery, and possessive individualism had come together in an uneasy alliance that at once helped to create the cyborg and also undermined the foundations of liberal subjectivity [...] should a cybernetic machine, sufficiently powerful in its self-regulating processes to become fully conscious and rational, be allowed to own itself? If owning oneself was a constitutive premise for liberal humanism, the cyborg complicated that premise by its figuring of a rational subject who is always already constituted by the forces of capitalist markets.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Bronwen Calvert, *Being Bionic: The World of TV Cyborgs* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 180.

<sup>18</sup> Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 86-7.

The posthuman woman is owned by corporations. As Hayles argues, this has relevant impact on their viability as subjects. These programmes use this paradox to challenge both conventional ideas of subjectivity and the logic of the free market. Zoe is, in the ninth episode, forced to escape from her Cylon form in order to truly ‘own herself.’ As a Cylon, she is effectively powerless, as the Cylon is ostensibly programmed to obey Daniel’s every order. While Zoe is physically capable of disobeying him, she believes that she has to hide her presence in the Cylon to prevent her father from exploiting her. Thus, she follows a series of highly unpleasant directives from him, including ripping off her own arm and shooting her dog. Her lack of freedom under her father’s control is both due to his literal ownership of the Cylon chassis as well as an extension of his paternal control of her. Zoe feels doubly bound both as a robot and as a girl: she says dismissively of her father, ‘at the end of the day, he just used me to save his big fat military contract. Business first, same old daddy.’ While this might read as childish petulance, it illustrates the entanglement of capitalism and patriarchy. Either way, Zoe expresses the notion that her father sees her as an asset, rather than as a person worthy on her own terms. Avatar Zoe also demonstrates a remarkable degree of control over the code constituting this world. When her parents attempt to pursue her in the eighteenth episode of the first series, Zoe creates significant obstacles for them. Her parents cannot reconcile with her until they accept that she is their equal intellectually. By the end of the programme, Avatar Zoe is recognised for her technological brilliance by her parents, and works with them as a co-partner to create a more human-like body for herself. Zoe has to demonstrate her technological mastery in order to return to the physical world. Although, in general, control over technology is coded as masculine, in the case of the posthuman woman reclaiming the power of the technology that has isolated her is a crucial step in resisting patriarchal interference and regaining control over their own fate.

Part of ‘owning oneself’ is taking control of the technology that created and victimised the posthuman woman. Zoe eventually gets what she wants when her father recognises that she is not just his spoiled daughter, but a brilliant programmer in her own right. Echo does not directly learn how to imprint herself, but over the course of the series she becomes more comfortable with directing which personalities she wants to inhabit. In the ninth episode of the first series, Echo orders Topher to imprint her with a spy hunter personality in order to discover a mole in the Dollhouse. The Actives are designed to be bought and sold, with a personality pre-determined by the customer. However, these personalities often go wrong in the early episodes of *Dollhouse*, and Echo eventually gains complete control over her imprints. Echo resists the capitalist drive to be a reliable, neat product, and recovers ownership of her body. Her multiplied identity is fundamental to her resistance of patriarchal ownership. *Orphan Black* also features the clones reclaiming science for their own ends, ensuring their continued existence. One of the clones, Cosima Niehaus, is a biologist, and her knowledge is often useful in the clones’ struggle against the scientific organisations that seek to control them. One example of this is Cosima’s work on the uterine disease which was intended to sterilise the clones but

is inadvertently killing them. Cosima's attempt to cure this disease ensures that the clones have the right to exist outside of corporate control. The potential for new technology, particularly reproductive technology, holds a great deal of appeal for some groups of women, especially lesbian and queer women. Jacquelyne Luce, for example, describes legal attempts to prevent female same-sex couples from accessing in vitro fertilisation as reacting to fears of 'male redundancy and female-only reproduction.'<sup>19</sup> Reproductive technology represents the possibility of life free from men. Famously, Shulamith Firestone argued that only equal access to reproductive technology could allow for the end of patriarchy, as 'reproduction and production would both be, simultaneously, recognized in a non-oppressive way.'<sup>20</sup> Therefore, Cosima's attempts to cure the clones does not merely represent the treatment of her own illness, or even her own ability to reproduce, as she personally shows little desire for children. Instead, just as for Luce and Firestone IVF represents a future without men, the ability to cure the uterine disease represents the ability of the clones to have a future outside of patriarchal control. Therefore, Cosima's connection to her identical clones is symptomatic of the political potential of multiplicity: she deploys her particular mastery of science in order to protect the collective from the unwanted technological imposition of the patriarchal corporation. *Orphan Black* both hints at the political importance of this multiplicity by referring to the clones as 'sisters,' a term closely associated with radical feminisms. However, this notion of biological sisterhood can also be read as an attempt to rewrite challenging multiplicity within the more ideologically conservative notion of the family.

Refiguring multiplicity as sisterhood is indicative of a desire to contain and normalise the posthuman woman's identities. However, while other modes of femininity are mobilised to negate the posthuman woman's otherness,<sup>21</sup> sisterhood is not quite as successful at hiding these characters' challenges to the humanist patriarchal order. First of all, sisterhood is more explicitly linked with radical feminist politics. bell hooks writes that in order for feminism to succeed, 'we must learn to live and work in solidarity. We must learn the true meaning and value of Sisterhood.'<sup>22</sup> Unlike motherhood and heterosexual partnership, sisterhood poses an unequivocal threat to patriarchy by valuing women's relationships to each other over their relationships with men. Second of all, the expression of biological or normative sisterhood is consistently problematised within the programmes. In *Orphan Black*, the idea that the clones' relationship to each other is akin to normal sisterhood is constantly challenged by Maslany's replicated body, as will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. The programme often shows its characters struggling to fit the existence of clones into a heteropatriarchal familial framework. In the first series, the clones are implicated in a murder

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<sup>19</sup> Jacquelyne Luce, *Beyond Expectation: Lesbian/bi/queer Women and Assisted Conception* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 13.

<sup>20</sup> Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectics of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (London: Verso, 2015), 216.

<sup>21</sup> This is discussed further in chapter three.

<sup>22</sup> bell hooks, *Feminist Theory From Margin to Center*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 43.

investigation as one of them, the deceased Beth Childs, murdered a woman called Maggie Chen (Uni Park). The police officers Art (Kevin Hanchard) and Angela (Inga Cadranel) struggle to account for forensic evidence that suggests the existence of multiple identical women. In the eighth episode of the first series, Angela speculates, 'Say Beth's a triplet, separated at birth.' Art rolls his eyes in frustration, and Angela says, 'Come on, humour me.' The apparent ludicrousness of this theory is a source of frustration for the otherwise rational detectives, demonstrating the fundamental difference between conventional notions of sisterhood and the technological multiplicity of the clones. Furthermore, intimate familial relations are incredibly fraught for the clones. In order for all of the clones to visit Felix's art show in the eighth episode of the final series, Felix is forced to pretend that the clones are one woman who is doing performance art as different women. Paula Rabinowitz has argued that the space of performance is vital to creating a posthumanist feminism: if second-wave feminism is based on consciousness-raising and 'truth-telling' in order to prove that women are legitimate subjects, then lying and performing can demonstrate the deeper truth that the self is always a fiction.<sup>23</sup> By trying to hide the clones' posthuman truth through a series of lies – first sisterhood, then performance – *Orphan Black* demonstrates the limitations of the humanist self. Although *Orphan Black* attempts to position the clones as sisters, the fiction that they are a normal family is difficult to maintain. *Caprica* also flirts with figuring Human Zoe and Avatar Zoe as sisters. In the pilot, when explaining her relationship with Human Zoe to Daniel, Avatar Zoe says, 'She was like my twin sister. No, that's not right – she was more than that. We were like echoes of one another.' Avatar Zoe moves from the separate identities of 'she' and 'me' when classifying them as sisters to a more mutual 'we' and 'one another' when discussing them as 'echoes.' Zoe realises that the separation implied by twin sister is not correct – so even the closest possible familial relationship is not enough to explain what she and Human Zoe were to each other. The term 'echo' is interesting, because it appears in *Dollhouse* as well. The idea of the echo is thematically resonant because it is a replication of the original sound which takes on its own peculiar sonic identity. The echo functions as a metaphor for a shared or multiple subjectivity – they are different yet connected. However, the echo is also a form of replication, a copy which disturbs the original sound and creates new meanings.

Replication is a concept that is closely associated with the posthuman woman in a number of ways. Alison Peirse, when discussing *Battlestar Galactica*, argues that 'the presence of the double calls into question the authenticity of either individual, and undermines any security one feels in dealing with others.'<sup>24</sup> The double disrupts the idea of the singular self in these programmes, but does not function as entirely horrific, instead emphasising slippage between strict boundaries of self and Other. The presence of unnatural doubles is common in science fiction. As J.P. Telotte writes, 'in

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<sup>23</sup> Paula Rabinowitz, 'Soft Fictions and Intimate Documents: Can Feminism Be Posthuman?' in *Posthuman Bodies*, ed. Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 98.

<sup>24</sup> Alison Peirse, 'Uncanny Cylons: Resurrection and Bodies of Horror,' in *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica*, ed. Tiffany Potter and C.W. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2008), 119.

these images of human replication are bound up all our qualms about artifice – science, technology, mechanism – and, what is more important, about our nature *as* artificers, constructors of the real, and of the self – *homo faber*.<sup>25</sup> (emphasis in original) Crucially, the posthuman woman is both artifice and artificer, both maker and made. Thus, replication in these programmes necessarily challenges the conventional notion of individual subjectivity and offers a viable alternative in posthuman multiplicity. The presence of the double does not destroy the self, but allows for a new way of being. In *Caprica* and *Orphan Black*, the theme of replication is expressed via identical characters, whereas in *Dollhouse*, it is a more incidental usage of similar personalities placed in different bodies. This replication effect creates a number of thematic resonances. As Peirse suggests, this serves to disturb the idea of these women as ‘natural’ humans. While the programmes, as explained in the next chapter, take a great deal of effort to naturalise the posthuman woman via normative femininity and visual affinity with nature, the replication effect makes this difficult. Replication foregrounds the technological over the natural.

While the posthuman woman is often normalised through motherhood, the use of young girls as part of this replication interrupts normative human reproduction. In *Orphan Black*, both Sarah’s daughter Kira and Helena’s pregnancy are used as mechanisms to represent their rebellion against a male social order that seeks to control them. In the next chapter, I will argue that motherhood can function in these narratives to reinforce gender essentialism. However, these children are also, to a certain extent, alienating rather than normalising. While the posthuman mothers might be contained within normative discourses of maternalism, their children appear to further a different source of tension. This is largely because the children are themselves posthuman or unnatural. Kira has an uncanny empathic connection with the other clones. In the fifth episode of the fourth series, Kira says to her mother, ‘Your sisters... I know how they feel sometimes. Like, Cosima when she’s sad. Helena, when she’s lonely. Rachel’s the angriest.’ While *Orphan Black* often attempts to provide at least a plausible explanation for its more outré scientific phenomena, there is little to no explanation about why Kira has this psychic connection. This belies the assertion that the clones are merely her ‘aunts,’ yet again disrupting the fiction that this is a normal biological family. Kira represents their shared subjectivity, as she is the literal embodiment of their connection. While motherhood often works as a normative corrective to the posthuman woman, children are also used to emphasise the unnaturalness of the clones. Marion Bowles (Michelle Forbes), a Dyad executive, managed to restore some of the lost clone genome. This resulted in the creation of a clone, Charlotte (Cynthia Galent), who is significantly younger than the main Leda line. Therefore, when Sarah and Cosima meet Charlotte, they come face to face with their younger selves. The presence of the younger clone emphasises the interrupted life cycles of the clones. *Dollhouse* features a similar interruption. In

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<sup>25</sup> J.P. Telotte, *Replications: A Robotic History of the Science Fiction Film* (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 4.

‘Epitaph One’ and ‘Epitaph Two: Return,’ the first and second series finales respectively, the programme flash-forwards to a post-apocalyptic future where Active technology has proliferated out of control, meaning that anyone can be imprinted or wiped. In this future, a group of survivors find Caroline’s wedge and imprint it on a young girl, Iris (Adair Tishler). When Echo encounters Iris/Caroline, she refers to her as ‘Mini Me.’ Once again, the use of the young girl as a vessel for a grown woman’s consciousness is used to illustrate the disruptive imprinting technology. While posthuman multiplicity in these programmes is often unsettling and uncanny, it is never quite horrific, demonstrating a potentially more accepting attitude towards the breakdown of stable identities.

Representations of the posthuman woman are divided between the impulse to neutralise the threat of her technological body and the accidental exposure of the problems of humanism. This is epitomised in its complicated relationship to replication and reproduction. Helena’s pregnancy is similarly unsettling for a number of reasons, because she was forcibly impregnated through in vitro fertilisation and has never had sex.<sup>26</sup> The lack of sexual reproduction, and the quasi-blasphemous use of a virgin mother, calls to mind Hayles’s assertion that ‘the narratives of life cycles [...] bring into focus a crucial area of tension between the human and posthuman.’<sup>27</sup> Although Helena’s pregnancy is, unlike the narratives Hayles explores, technically biological, rather than the explicit abiotic creation narratives of cyborgs, the unnatural insertion of technology still renders the life cycle interrupted. This represents some of the more histrionic claims of gender essentialist technophobic activist groups such as FINNRAGE (Feminist International Network of Resistance to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering). Founded in the 1980s, FINNRAGE argued that growing use of reproductive technology was symptomatic of masculine desire for control over the so-called power of female reproduction. They believed that ‘the female body is being expropriated, fragmented and dissected as raw material, or providing “living laboratories” as Renate Klein puts it, for the technological production of human beings.’<sup>28</sup> Despite the unsettling potential of reproductive technology, Helena is largely nonplussed by the unusual circumstances of her impending motherhood. In the third series finale, Helena calmly explains her situation to her love interest, a confused trucker named Jesse (Patrick J. Adams). Helena says, ‘I have science baby inside of me, but you are my first.’ Furthermore, she talks to the tank of unimplanted embryos as if they were her children, calling them her ‘babies.’ Thus, the fears that reproductive technology will ‘disconnect the foetuses from a woman’s body,’<sup>29</sup> irrevocably changing the relationship between mother and child, seems unfounded. The programme implies that in vitro

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<sup>26</sup> I discuss the full circumstances of Helena’s impregnation in the first chapter.

<sup>27</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, ‘The Life Cycle of Cyborgs: Writing the Posthuman,’ in *Cybersexualities: A Reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs and Cyberspace*, ed. Jenny Wolmark (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 158.

<sup>28</sup> Judy Wajcman, *Feminism Confronts Technology* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 59.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 59.

fertilisation on a wider scale must still be contained. Hayles argues that the reproductive replication of cyborgs challenges ideas of femininity and humanity:

Reproduction is slow, individual, and in humans usually monozygotic. It takes place within the female body, progressing under the sign of woman. By contrast, production is predictable and geared toward turning out multiple copies as fast as possible. Traditionally taking place within factories controlled by men, it progresses under the sign of man.<sup>30</sup>

The masculine factory-like replication of the clones is replaced with Sarah's and Helena's natural or semi-natural reproduction, and Delphine (Évelyne Brochu) and Cosima's secret treatment of all the clones increases the potential of natural proliferation of the clones' bloodline. The propagation of life is taken away from the unnatural and technological to the natural and biological. Fundamentally, with Helena as a significant exception, the technological control of reproduction by masculine corporate forces is undesirable, and reproduction as located in the body is necessary for the clones to be truly free. As will be discussed in the next section, embodiment is crucial to the posthuman woman. This focus on the body further illustrates the tension between challenging humanist ideology and reifying conventional notions of womanhood.

### Embodiment

Embodiment is a particularly thorny issue within posthumanism and feminism, especially as it may seem to run counter to notions of multiplicity. Both of the movements see the body as central to selfhood, but also understand the body as a cultural construct, rather than a merely natural phenomenon. As I have discussed in chapter one and will revisit in chapter four, posthumanism defines itself at least partially in contrast to the disembodied transhumanism of Hans Moravec and others. In the first chapter of *How We Became Posthuman*, Hayles discusses the idea, originated by Moravec but espoused by other technophiles and proliferated in the popular culture, that a human mind could be unproblematically transferred into a machine.<sup>31</sup> Hayles argues that, while there is a superficial appeal in the idea that personality and memory are merely information which 'can be free from the material constraints that govern the mortal world,' in actual fact, information 'must *always* be instantiated in a medium.'<sup>32</sup> (emphasis in original) A brain which is transferred to a computer has not lost a body, but is merely imprinted on a different material. Furthermore, materiality has a reciprocal relationship with the ways information is formed. This is, notably, not merely a theoretical concern, but is also supported by scientific research. In the fourth chapter of this thesis, I discuss the theory of neuroplasticity. The brain, rather than being a 'blank canvas,' constantly changes its

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<sup>30</sup> Hayles, 'The Life Cycles of Cyborgs,' 171.

<sup>31</sup> Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

physical properties in response to new stimuli.<sup>33</sup> The physical properties of the brain, therefore, have a significant impact on how we think and retain information, which cannot be replicated in a disembodied, or differently embodied, form. As Sheryl Vint argues, ‘we need an embodied notion of posthumanism if we are to return ethical responsibility and collectivity to our concept of self. The body occupies the liminal space between self and not-self, between nature and culture, between the inner “authentic” person and social persona.’<sup>34</sup> The body is central to avoiding the solipsism of humanism and transhumanism, where the self is regarded as something entirely separate from the world. By re-centring identity on the body, Vint asserts that we can create a more ethical mode of selfhood that incorporates not only traditionally marginalised groups, but a broader understanding of the agency of non-human actors.<sup>35</sup> Thus, while it may seem that the emphasis on embodiment precludes broader understandings of identity as multiple and shared, it is actually crucial to resisting individualist humanist notions of the self. While posthumanism acknowledges embodiment as important, it seeks to avoid unduly reifying the body. The importance of the body is due to the ways in which it is read by society, which are not inevitable or natural. Hayles, for example, has been criticised for precisely this. Kim Toffoletti asserts that Hayles endorses ‘an unproblematised notion of material reality.’<sup>36</sup> Hayles herself acknowledges this problem in her later work. In her 2005 book *My Mother Was A Computer*, Hayles revisits her 1999 theories and concludes that ‘this stark contrast between embodiment and disembodiment has fractured into more complex and varied formations.’<sup>37</sup> I will return to this point later in this chapter, but at the moment I want to draw attention to the difficulty of thinking through the importance of embodiment in various contexts.

Embodiment is a difficult and important issue within feminism as well, and one with a slightly darker history. The importance of embodiment to female experience has often been used to exclude people whose bodies are not defined as properly or fully female. Feminism’s emphasis on the white female body has historically been used to exclude disabled women, trans women, and women of colour. As Judith Grant writes of Alice Walker’s inclusive womanism, ‘black women are exhorted to assert that they *are* women [...] white women have no need for womanism, as feminism already defines them as women.’<sup>38</sup> (emphasis in original) However, this is changing: as Pramod K. Nayar writes, ‘Contemporary feminism is keen on exploring relations (gender, class, race – and thus

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<sup>33</sup> Michael M. Merzenich, Thomas M. Van Vleet, and Mor Nahum, ‘Brain Plasticity-Based Therapeutics,’ *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 27 June 2014, <http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fnhum.2014.00385/full>.

<sup>34</sup> Sheryl Vint, *Bodies of Tomorrow: Technology, Subjectivity, Science Fiction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 16.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>36</sup> Kim Toffoletti, *Cyborgs and Barbie Dolls: Feminism, Popular Culture and the Posthuman Body* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 16.

<sup>37</sup> Hayles, *My Mother Was A Computer: Digital Subjects and Literary Texts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>38</sup> Judith Grant, *Fundamental Feminism: Contesting the Core Concepts of Feminist Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 65.

contexts) that create specific kinds of subjectivities for women.<sup>39</sup> My understanding of the body and gender is based on Judith Butler's assertion that 'one is one's body from the start, and only thereafter becomes one's gender. The movement from sex to gender is internal to embodied life, i.e. a move from one kind of embodiment to another.'<sup>40</sup> The sexed body is not merely a natural thing, but is subject to cultural formation, which includes, but is not limited to, social ideas of gender. When the body comes into contact with technology, the artifice of gender and other social constructions around the body becomes particularly apparent.

Several modes of feminist thought have a deep distrust of technology, instead focusing on reclaiming women's traditional association with nature. Despite this, there is also a strong history of feminist writing engaging with the transformative possibilities of technology, and how it can be usefully harnessed to further the cause of women's liberation. As Susanna Paasonen summarises, 'While radical and cultural feminists (such as Mary Daly) emphasized connections and alliances between women and nature (as opposed to men and technology), Firestone wanted to overcome such distinctions in her model of socialist cybernation.'<sup>41</sup> Firestone is the most prominent radical feminist to consider technology as a possible avenue for a feminist socialist utopia. Part of this is due to her disdain for the so-called limitations of the human body. Firestone argues that 'it has become necessary to free humanity from the tyranny of its biology.'<sup>42</sup> She believes that the biological inequality of the male and female body, particularly in regards to childbirth, is the underlying cause of sexual oppression. Paasonen connects Firestone's interest in technology to 1990s cyberfeminism. This is a movement which Paasonen argues includes theorists such as Haraway and Hayles, but is epitomised by Sadie Plant. In *Zeros + Ones*, Plant outlines the various points of connection and affinity between women and computing technology throughout history, and their capacity to cause gender troubles. While Plant argues that these affinities are directly a result of women's social experiences and even their biology, she does not believe in straightforward gender essentialism. Plant uses examples which include the varying effects of different hormones and the prevalence of chromosomal anomalies to disrupt the narrative of binary sex categories.<sup>43</sup> Paasonen describes the difference between Firestone's approach and Plant's: 'For Firestone, a socialist feminist future requires the overcoming of the limitations of biology and the materiality of bodies. For Plant, however, the irreducible complexity of the biological represents a way *out* of masculine culture.'<sup>44</sup> (emphasis in original) Firestone makes the same mistake as the transhumanists in, first, believing that the body can be unproblematically

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<sup>39</sup> Pramod K. Nayar, *Posthumanism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 19.

<sup>40</sup> Judith Butler, 'Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *Second Sex*,' *Yale French Studies* 72, no. 1 (1986): 39, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2930225>.

<sup>41</sup> Susanna Paasonen, 'From Cybernation to Feminization: Firestone and Cyberfeminism,' in *The Further Adventures of The Dialectic of Sex: Critical Essays on Shulamith Firestone*, ed. by Mandy Merck and Stella Sandford (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 66.

<sup>42</sup> Firestone, *Dialectic of Sex*, 175.

<sup>43</sup> Sadie Plant, *Zeros + Ones: Digital Women and the New Technoculture* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998), 215.

<sup>44</sup> Paasonen, 'Firestone and Cyberfeminism,' 70.

overcome and second, that this is necessary and desirable. Nonetheless, Plant's belief that women are somehow naturally inclined towards technological manipulation seems wrong as well. These forms of feminism negotiate different stances towards the body and technology, and occasionally run the risk of uncritically repeating either gender essentialist or overly optimistic technophilic arguments. Again, I return to Hayles's acknowledgement that relationships between technoculture and bodies need to be considered in various and complex ways. The posthuman woman is only one way these anxieties are expressed. True, this figure does not entirely fill the revolutionary potential of posthuman science fiction which, according to Vint, could function as 'a space in which models of possible future selves are put forward as possible sites for identification.'<sup>45</sup> Although I do think this figure questions some very important assumptions, there are still problems with their representation, as I outline in the third and fifth chapter of this thesis. The posthuman woman is not entirely transformational, as they are usually (although not always) conventionally beautiful able-bodied cisgender white women. Their narratives are, as I have argued throughout this thesis, largely based on conventional assumptions of womanhood. Crucially, the posthuman woman explores the importance of posthuman female embodiment without entirely endorsing gender essentialism. Therefore, the posthuman woman explores a Haylesian expression of subjectivity that is grounded in physicality, but without treating biology as inviolate destiny.

The posthuman woman is always, to some extent, embodied. Even in *Caprica*, where the virtual world offers some of the promises of Moravec's fantasies of disembodied information, complicates this idea significantly. As Calvert writes of *Caprica*'s predecessor, *Battlestar Galactica*, and its approach to cyborg embodiment, 'the humanoid Cylons overturn the notion that the human body might be so improved upon that, as Moravec suggests, it can be discarded for a disembodied cybernetic future. These Cylons, so like humans that they can masquerade as humans and, on occasion, believe that they *are* humans, seem to have no wish to transcend embodiment.'<sup>46</sup> (emphasis in original) *Caprica* consistently engages with discourses of patternism in order to refute them. Patternism, as defined by Joshua Raulerson, describes Moravec's theories that 'a person is a pattern of information, an algorithm that might be crunched on whatever processing engine one cares to install it.'<sup>47</sup> However, in reality, the human brain is much more than an algorithm, as shown by the fact that even the most complicated artificial intelligence struggles to complete tasks which come easily to humans. While applied AI – artificial intelligence designed to do one task, such as play test – can be quite sophisticated, generalised AI – the sort of intelligence that mimics the breadth of the human

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<sup>45</sup> Vint, *Bodies of Tomorrow*, 20.

<sup>46</sup> Bronwen Calvert, 'Cylons/cyborgs in *Battlestar Galactica*,' in *The Cult TV Book*, ed. Stacey Abbott (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 118.

<sup>47</sup> Raulerson, *Singularities*, 43.

mind, and often features in science fiction media – has not yet been mastered.<sup>48</sup> Even in *Caprica*'s science fictional setting, the programme demonstrates the problems of brain transfer and artificial intelligence in a more nuanced way than most fictional treatments of the issue. In the first episode, Avatar Zoe explains to her father that the human brain is more complex than a machine: 'The human brain contains roughly a hundred terabytes of information [...] the question isn't how to store it, it's how to access it. You can't download a personality. There's no way to translate the data.' Despite *Caprica*'s setting's advanced technology, at the beginning of the programme they have not found a way to overcome the difficulties of brain transfer. Even Avatar Zoe is a simulacrum of Human Zoe based on publicly available information about her, rather than a true copy as in Moravec's writing. This is in line with current technological stumbling blocks in the development of true artificial intelligence. Murray Shanahan, for example, argues that one of the reasons for the failure to create human-like artificial intelligence could be that 'embodiment is a methodological necessity.'<sup>49</sup> Whole brain emulation – a perfect copy of a human mind – requires three steps: mapping, simulation and embodiment. The problem with these various steps is that technology cannot adequately map the biological processes instrumental to the functioning of the human brain. Shanahan uses the theoretical example of a mouse simulation, which would require the dissection of the mouse's brain and the imaging of each bit of the brain. These images would then be assembled into a blueprint for the emulation. Shanahan points out that even these images may not be sufficient for emulating the mind, because much of what constitutes the brain's activity is actually captured in electronic signals sent between different areas of the brain.<sup>50</sup> This is only one example of many where the biological brain succeeds in a way that would be difficult for a technologically replicated replacement. Embodiment is key. *Caprica* shows the importance of embodiment in a variety of ways. Daniel Graystone tries to resurrect his daughter by placing Avatar Zoe into a Cylon chassis. In the pilot episode, Daniel's Cylons function clumsily. The Cylons are designed to be robotic soldiers, but during a shooting test, their reactions are slow and inaccurate. Cylon Zoe passes the test with ease. Again, as mentioned above, artificial intelligence struggles with a task that human consciousness has already mastered. However, her success cannot be replicated. In the second episode, Graystone and his engineers discover that Zoe's hard drive functions only in the Cylon she is initially placed in. Again, despite Zoe's virtual personality representing some of the ideas of patternism, she is inextricably linked to her new body, which cannot be transferred. Nonetheless, it is not only Cylon Zoe who demonstrates the importance of physicality.

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<sup>48</sup> Bernard Marr, 'The Biggest Challenges Facing Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Business and Society,' *Forbes*, 13 July 2017. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2017/07/13/the-biggest-challenges-facing-artificial-intelligence-ai-in-business-and-society/3/#506eecd77b6a>.

<sup>49</sup> Murray Shanahan, *The Technological Singularity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), 4.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

Avatar Zoe is, uniquely for a virtual programme, embodied in a number of ways. Human Zoe programmed Avatar Zoe with a biometric feedback programme, which means that Avatar Zoe feels what Human Zoe felt, including her death. When, in the pilot, Lacy (Magda Apanowicz), Zoe's friend, attempts to find Avatar Zoe following Human Zoe's death, she discovers Avatar Zoe in an obvious state of shock, covered in blood. This blood is not from any actual injury that Avatar Zoe has suffered, but is an outward expression of her trauma and pain at feeling Human Zoe's death. This becomes apparent when the blood disappears after Lacy, previously skeptical of Avatar Zoe's authenticity as a subject, embraces Zoe as her friend. Furthermore, it is implied that Human Zoe's attention to her avatar counterpart's embodiment is crucial to why Avatar Zoe is so well-adjusted. In the pilot, Tamara Adams, a casualty of Human Zoe's terrorist attack, is recreated via Human Zoe's algorithm. Unlike Avatar Zoe, who was talked through her virtual creation by Human Zoe, Tamara regains her consciousness alone. When her father Joseph Adams (Esai Morales) goes into virtual reality to talk to her, Tamara is clearly on the verge of a breakdown. She demands of him, 'Why isn't my heart beating?' Tamara's difficult transition into virtual reality is figured in terms of her missing embodiment. Trauma is often associated with the body. Judith Herman argues that 'traumatic events generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death.'<sup>51</sup> Therefore, it is interesting that, while Avatar Zoe and Tamara are technically bodiless, their traumatic encounters with death are figured in terms of lost or metaphorical embodiment. Like trauma, consciousness is expressed, at least partially, through the body. Human Zoe's physical tics and reactions to sensory input are carried over to Cylon Zoe. In episode eight, Daniel begins to suspect that Zoe is still in the Cylon. Daniel decides that he will be able to determine Zoe by her 'tell' – a physical giveaway of her internal emotions. The tell, which is a poker term, is, according to Daniel, 'an unconscious gesture. A look or a twitch that gives away the strengths and the weaknesses of the card player's hands.' Daniel argues that Cylon Zoe has revealed her tell, and says to her that 'you as much as yelled at me, "I'm in here, daddy!"' Rather than the mind being entirely separate from the body, Zoe's trauma is usually expressed through her body. Daniel attempts to force Cylon Zoe to reveal herself again by surrounding her with fire, knowing that Human Zoe suffered from an extreme phobia of fire. Zoe's fear of fire is supposedly expressed by flinching. Cylon Zoe manages to prevent herself from giving her true nature away, but only through complete physical self-control. As the fire burns around her, the camera cuts between the impassive Cylon chassis and Torresani holding her body completely still. Although, from Torresani's pained expression, the viewer knows that she is afraid of the fire, her control over her body prevents her from being discovered. Zoe's body is capable of expressing what she does not consciously want to reveal. In a sense, the body can 'talk.'

In his essay on sex slavery and *Dollhouse*, Lewis Call makes the provocative argument that, while it may seem that the Actives are prostituted against their will, they are actually engaging in a

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<sup>51</sup> Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery* (New York: Basic Books, 1992), 33.

consensual form of dominance and submission, and that their bodies, although empty of their original personalities, are making decisions of their own. Call argues that, in *Dollhouse*, ‘bodies are quite capable of making ethical choices and leading ethical lives.’<sup>52</sup> Call’s argument is framed primarily in terms of kink culture and BDSM, which often limits its nuances. For example, in attempting to portray the Dollhouse as a place of ethical play slavery, Call often overlooks the more ambivalent attitude the programme takes towards the business of operating Actives. An instance of this can be witnessed in the sixth episode of the first series, where Sierra (Dachen Lichman) is raped by her handler, Hearn (Kevin Kilner). Furthermore, the Actives are often sent on morally dubious and physically dangerous assignments. Therefore, not everything that happens to the Actives is fully consensual or harm-neutral. However, by using ideas of posthumanism, Call draws attention to the importance of the body as a site of subjectivity. If *Caprica* touches upon this with the tell sequence, *Dollhouse* makes explicit the equal importance of the body and the mind as the centre of selfhood by showing how Echo’s essence persists across multiple wipes. The second episode of the first series features an athletic outdoorsman, Richard Connell (Matt Keesler), whose personal motto is ‘shoulder to the wheel.’ This phrase is accompanied with knocking his fist against his shoulder. Although Echo only encounters Richard when she is imprinted, the episode concludes with her copying the gesture while in her tabula rasa state. This is one of the earliest indications that Echo is on some level recollecting the experiences of her imprints. Again, as Echo’s mind has not yet been overloaded with her multiple imprints, this suggests that her memory is somewhat bodily, or, to be more exact, that the notion of a mind/body split is fundamentally flawed. After all, the brain is a physical organ, and responds to outside stimulus like any other part of the body. As I discussed earlier, the brain’s physical shape retains what we think of as ephemeral concepts such as thoughts and memories. *Dollhouse* introduces the idea that personalities cannot truly be wiped in its pilot episode. In a flashback sequence, Adele discusses the process of becoming an Active with Caroline. When Adele mentions the blank state status, Caroline testily replies, ‘You ever try and clean an actual slate? You always see what was on it before.’ Caroline is ultimately proved correct. Even though Echo’s body’s genetic mutation is responsible for her being able to handle different implants, she is not the only Active who has some form of body memory. Sierra and Victor (Enver Gjokaj) have a special romantic connection which exists in their tabula rasa state and persists across their various imprints. Although this connection is at first shown through Victor’s spontaneous erections in his tabula rasa state, over the course of the series it becomes clear that their relationship is based on love, rather than lust. When Sierra is imprinted with Priya, her original personality, in the fourth episode of the second series, she spots Victor across the Dollhouse. She points at him and says to Topher, ‘I love him... Is that real?’ Topher replies, ‘Yes, it’s real. He loves you back.’ Sierra and Victor’s relationship is based on an

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<sup>52</sup> Lewis Call, “‘It’s About Trust’: Slavery and Ethics in the Dollhouse,” in *BDSM in American Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 183.

emotional pull which is contained in their bodies, rather than their minds. Furthermore, Victor and Sierra are not the only Actives to have this type of connection. In the seventh episode of the second series, a senior Dollhouse executive, Clive Ambrose (Philip Casnoff), mentions that this is a relatively common occurrence, and that the only way to end the connection is to separate the Actives. Although Echo is especially resistant to wipes due to a quirk of her biology, her bodily subjectivity is not entirely unique. While Echo's posthumanism manifests as an ostentatious, TV-friendly superhero ability, it is apparent that the other Actives also experience a posthuman subjectivity as expressed in the body. This subjectivity is a more plausible challenge to body/mind duality.

*Dollhouse* and *Orphan Black* both play with the idea of gender fluidity, thus demonstrating another way in which posthuman technology exposes the cultural construction of the body. In *Dollhouse*, Echo's imprints contain male and female personalities. In the third episode of the second series, Echo is imprinted with Kiki Turner, a ditzzy, flirtatious college student, and sent on an assignment for a student-professor sexual fantasy. Meanwhile, Victor is imprinted with the personality of a serial killer named Terry Karrens (Joe Sikora) after he enters into a coma. However, due to a technological mishap, Echo's and Victor's personalities are swapped. Echo takes on the personality of the misogynistic Karrens, while Victor becomes imprinted with Kiki. The episode derives humour from ironic disconnect between Victor's normatively masculine body and Kiki's frivolous personality. Kiki-as-Victor goes to a dance club, where she dances provocatively and attempts to flirt with men. Meanwhile, Karrens's discomfort with femininity is made ironic due to his placement in Echo's female body. Karrens attempts to recreate the ideal family with normative gender roles, and expresses misogynistic views while attempting to re-assert his own masculinity. Karrens kidnaps women and forces them to act out a croquet match, with each woman taking the place of a female family member. When the women attempt to escape, Karrens-as-Echo returns to put them back in their place. One of the women, upon seeing Echo, says, 'Thank God, we thought you were him.' Echo then strikes her with a mallet and says, 'I am him.' Echo then berates the woman Karrens has cast as his mother, as Karrens blames his mother for diminishing his masculinity: 'You always said be a man. You do make it a little difficult.' In this case, the mismatch between the gender of the imprint and the body of the Active underlines the theme of masculine and feminine power dynamics. While Echo is forcibly imprinted with Karrens's male serial killer personality, her short skirt and heels are not so different from the croquet outfits Karrens has forced his victims into. This draws attention to Echo's own gendered oppression. After all, the assignment that she is on at the beginning of the episode involves a male professor using her as a stand-in for his attractive student. The professor uses Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* to convince Kiki that she, as a sexually attractive young woman, actually holds all the power in their relationship. Of course, this is undermined by the fact that he has purchased Echo for a sexual fantasy that she cannot refuse. The power of rich men is a theme in this episode. Karrens is the nephew of one of the Dollhouse's

investors, which allows him to get away with kidnapping women and to cheat death. The use of this gender swapping, then, highlights the complicated relationship between gender and power in a capitalist society. *Dollhouse* often uses gender swapping as an interesting but problematic symbol of destructive capitalism and transhumanist disdain for the body. In the penultimate episode of the second series, Whiskey (Amy Acker), a female Active, is imprinted with a male personality, Clyde 2.0. Clyde 2.0 is an altered variant personality of Clyde Randolph (Adam Godley), one of the original founders of Rossum. When the original Randolph became uneasy with Rossum's technological experiments, he was replaced with Clyde 2.0, who was programmed with Clyde's personality and memories but without the original's moral compass. Clyde 2.0 still identifies as male, despite his current body being sexed female: he refers to himself as a 'boy' and is addressed by Adele as Mr. Randolph. Clyde 2.0 seems nonplussed with being placed in a female body, saying only 'this is the first time I can hit a girl without feeling bad about it.' Gender-switching, when it is not played for laughs, is used to indicate the unnaturalness of the Active technology, and the Rossum founders' transhumanist disregard for the finitude of life. Clyde 2.0 is, in many ways, the expression of Hayles's 'nightmare' of a future where transhumanists 'regard their bodies as fashion accessories.'<sup>53</sup> Clyde 2.0 says that he does not care what happens to Whiskey, and that he has a 'warehouse' of spare bodies. Again, rather than demonstrating true gender fluidity, Clyde 2.0's occupation of Whiskey only emphasises how flippant the rich executive is with human life. Although *Dollhouse* is cognisant of the problems of gender, it does not pose an intense or sustained attack on the gender binary.

This accusation can also be levied against *Orphan Black*: as discussed earlier this chapter, it posits normative motherhood as a method of resistance against technological imposition. Due to the growing popular awareness of transgender issues and intersectional feminism in general, *Orphan Black* shows a greater sensitivity towards gender. The Leda clones and their male military-trained counterparts, the Castors, are derived from the DNA of a single person: Kendall Malone (Alison Steadman), the mother of Sarah's foster mother Siobhan (Maria Doyle Kennedy). Kendall Malone is a chimera, a genetic combination of both her own genome and that of her twin brother who died in the womb. The Ledas are derived from Kendall's female genome, while the Castors are derived from the male genome. By combining the two gender variants of the clones in one person, *Orphan Black* presents a nuanced understanding of biology that is often lacking in gender essentialist discourses. After all, the idea of two discrete genders is not based on biological fact. Although the clones are genetically identical, there are variations in clones' gender identities and sexualities. Cosima, for example, identifies as a lesbian, and there is at least one transgender clone, Tony. *Orphan Black* thus rejects a strictly biological explanation for queerness. Furthermore, *Orphan Black* poses a distinct challenge to one of the persistent notions in media about genetic engineering: namely, cloning as a symbol of a society that no longer cares to sustain itself naturally. In Jackie Stacey's *The Cinematic*

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<sup>53</sup> Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 5.

*Life of the Gene*, she discusses Jean Baudrillard's writing about cloning, which he sees as an inevitable path to the obsolescence of the human species. Baudrillard links cloning and queer desire as 'dead ends' for humanity. As Stacey writes:

Since heterosexuality, according to Baudrillard, culturally anchors the biological process of evolution in the symbolic order, premised on the biological necessity of reproducing sexual difference in the structure of reproduction itself, cloning is not alone in transgressing the laws of nature. Such a vision of heterosexuality as providing the necessary basis for evolutionary progress places all other modes of sexuality and reproduction outside both the natural and the symbolic orders.<sup>54</sup>

*Orphan Black* resists the idea of cloning and queerness as dead ends by embracing non-biological familial relationships and emphasising the contributions of queer women to the continuation of the species. As I mentioned above, Cosima and her lover Delphine are crucial to re-establishing the viability of the Leda line, even though they are not, by the end of the programme, themselves reproducing. Therefore, even though they are not heterosexual, they are essential to the maintenance of the genetic line. Furthermore, although Kendall is a genetic chimera who incorporates both male and female genomes, she has a daughter, Siobhan. Siobhan is Sarah's adoptive, rather than biological, mother. Sarah and Kira almost always refer to Siobhan by her given name, rather than calling her mother or grandmother. However, it is clear that Siobhan is an important mother figure, not just to Sarah, but to the entirety of Clone Club, as she devotes her life, eventually sacrificing herself, to keeping them safe. Of course, this emphasis on queer and non-biological participation in the family unit is ultimately in service of heterosexual reproduction. While Kira functions as an important totem of the clones' future, Alison's (non-white) adoptive children, while occasionally appearing in early episodes of the programme, are not treated as anywhere near as important, and eventually disappear from the series almost entirely. *Orphan Black*, as well as *Caprica* and (to a lesser extent) *Dollhouse*, focus excessively on the white female body, enacting the sort of exclusion that Walker denounces. Furthermore, their reliance upon biological relationships and heterosexual romance are symptomatic of particularly televisual narratives. As I will discuss in the next section, television also provides some interesting and unique avenues for representing posthuman women.

### Television and Representation

The posthuman woman is composed of fluid identities that are still grounded within the physical body. The use of the actors' bodies and performances, as well as the semi-serialised narrative structure, represent this nuance in a way unique to the television medium. The specific ways in which cyborgs and posthumanity have been represented on television is still under-explored. Haraway's

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<sup>54</sup> Jackie Stacey, *The Cinematic Life of the Gene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 30.

cyborg, for example, draws mainly on literary antecedents, calling science fiction authors such as James Tiptree Jr., Joanna Russ and Octavia Butler ‘story-tellers exploring what it means to be embodied in high-tech worlds.’<sup>55</sup> While writers such as Elaine L. Graham,<sup>56</sup> and Despina Kakoudaki<sup>57</sup> have discussed representations of cyborgs on *Star Trek: Voyager* (UPN, 1995-2001) and *Battlestar Galactica* – two of my case study programmes in other chapters – they do not take into particular account the specific stylistic aspects of television. Calvert discusses the representations of cyborgs on television in her book, identifying the low budgets of television as a factor in their representation as primarily organic, as well as discussing the importance of the long-term narrative in generated sympathy for cyborg characters.<sup>58</sup> However, Calvert’s broader overview means that there is little specific engagement with how these unique structural qualities impact cyborg representation. In this section, I will adopt a more formalist approach in order to examine the unique qualities of the televisual posthuman woman. I will focus on the impact of the physical representation of the posthuman woman via acting, mise-en-scene, editing and special effects, as well as the impact of the semi-serialised narrative structure. I argue that television allows a unique approach to representing both the multiplicity and the embodiment of the posthuman woman in a way that literature and film cannot. First, I will discuss the ways in which performance and visual style illustrate the multiplicity and embodiment of the posthuman woman. Then, I will discuss the particular generic modes of my case study programmes, especially in regards to narrative structure, and how this aids in the representation of posthuman women.

As Michael Hauskeller and others argue, posthumanist ideology is entering mainstream consciousness via film and television because ‘the medium of moving pictures is particularly well suited to reflect this transformation, not only by providing thought experiments for possible transformations of the human, but also by creating concrete, visual representations.’<sup>59</sup> I want to build upon this idea by looking at the ways in which posthumanity is represented visually in my case study programmes. In *Dollhouse*, *Caprica* and *Orphan Black*, the posthuman woman’s technological nature is not represented by the usual signifiers of posthumanity, such as by applying artificial technological prostheses. For example, in *Star Trek: Voyager*, which I reference in other chapters, the Borg drone Seven of Nine (Jeri Ryan) is shown to be posthuman because her organic body is combined with superficial mechanical prostheses. However, in the three programmes I have discussed in this chapter, the posthuman woman’s alterity is represented in different, subtler ways. The Actives of *Dollhouse*

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<sup>55</sup> Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto,’ 173.

<sup>56</sup> Elaine L. Graham, *Representations of the Post/Human: Monsters, Aliens, and Others in Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 132-152.

<sup>57</sup> Despina Kakoudaki, *Anatomy of a Robot: Literature, Cinema and the Cultural Work of Artificial People* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 65.

<sup>58</sup> Calvert, *Being Bionic*, 14.

<sup>59</sup> Michael Hauskeller, Thomas D. Philbeck and Curtis D. Carbonell, ‘Posthumanism in Film and Television,’ in *The Palgrave Handbook of Posthumanism Film and Television*, ed. by Michael Hauskeller, Thomas D. Philbeck and Curtis D. Carbonell (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 3-4.

and the clones of *Orphan Black* for the most part resemble normal humans, with no obvious physical indication of their posthumanity. Their posthuman natures are, instead, indicated through replication (i.e. the multiple identical clones of *Orphan Black* as well as the shared personalities of *Dollhouse*). I will discuss this representation later. *Caprica* differs from these other two programmes because of its use of distinctive editing patterns to represent Cylon Zoe. In scenes where Cylon Zoe is present, the camera cuts between the CGI Cylon chassis which is visible to other characters in the diegesis and Zoe, as represented by Torresani, as a depiction of Zoe's consciousness. By using these edits, *Caprica* allows the viewer to both understand how Cylon Zoe is seen by other characters as an impassive robot, while still allowing Torresani to act out Zoe's inner thoughts and, therefore, to emphasise Cylon Zoe's sentience. As Calvert argues, we see Zoe mainly as Torresani, therefore reassuring us of Cylon Zoe's humanity.<sup>60</sup> The programme uses continuity blocking to maintain the internal coherence of the scene – although the camera cuts between Torresani and the Cylon, the continuity logic of space within the scene is not violated. This emphasises Cylon Zoe's dual nature, and visually represents her technological appearance and her highly developed sense of self. While *Caprica* maintains continuity editing in terms of blocking, it also violates it in crucial ways. In the eighth episode of the first series, Daniel suspects that Zoe's consciousness is still alive inside the Cylon. Therefore, he addresses her as a person, to her face. Again, during a scene where Daniel is attempting to gauge Zoe's consciousness, the camera cuts between Torresani and the CGI robot. However, with both Torresani and the Cylon, Daniel looks them in the eye, as seen in figures 2.1 and 2.2. These eyeline matches are a crucial aspect of continuity editing. Diegetically, Daniel can only see the robotic Cylon exterior, so his eyeline matches with Torresani's face are not justified by what is occurring in the scene. This discontinuity serves two purposes. The first, obviously, is that it allows for a more naturalistic interaction between Daniel's and Zoe's characters. The second reason is that it emphasises the equality of her Cylon and virtual aspects. As mentioned above, Zoe's subjectivity is embodied. The division of the representation of Cylon Zoe's subjectivity and physical presence emphasises both the technological and organic aspects of her being. This is complicated by the fact that the Cylon is robotic and physical, while Zoe's consciousness, although represented by Torresani's human body, is intangible and just as much of a technological creation as her Cylon body. Therefore, Cylon Zoe collapses the binaries between physical and technological. Computer-generated imagery is useful in representing the fine line between organic bodies and technology.

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<sup>60</sup> Calvert, *Being Bionic*, 97.



Fig 2.1: Screenshot of Zoe Graystone (Alexandra Torresani) and Daniel Graystone (Eric Stoltz), *Caprica* 1.08



Fig. 2.2: Screenshot of Zoe Graystone and Daniel Graystone, *Caprica* 1.08

The use of CGI in these programmes often represents the interpellation of technological and organic aspects of the posthuman woman. *Orphan Black*'s approach to performance is particularly interesting due to the necessity of distinguishing Tatiana Maslany's different characters. Maslany

plays more than a dozen different clones.<sup>61</sup> I argue that this performance, and particularly the ways in which it draws upon the work of Maslany's body double, the CGI necessary to convincingly portray the clones, and the different styling and performance of each clone, speaks usefully to the ways in which the clones are figured as both distinct and essentially connected. Although the programme by necessity has to distinguish between the clones to prevent confusion, the fact that the clones have the same face and the same body constantly reminds the viewer that the clones are unnaturally connected through their technological replication. For example, in 'Instinct,' the second episode of the first series, Sarah, Alison and Cosima meet for the first time. This is the first time in the series that the differences between the clones are truly made apparent. The clones are characterised primarily through styling. Sarah is, at this time, impersonating the conservatively dressed cop Beth, but Sarah's own punk fashion leanings are apparent. While Sarah changes her grungily dyed hair to Beth's sleek brown mane and wears Beth's clothes, in the scene at Alison's house, she is also wearing a leather jacket and fingerless gloves. While she is impersonating someone else, Sarah's true self, as expressed both by Maslany's nuanced acting and her styling, can never be truly suppressed. Alison, meanwhile, is an uptight housewife with an immaculate fringe, a white jumper and jeans. The immediate contrast between Sarah and Alison is quite literally shown in black and white. This binary is instantly complicated when Alison threatens to shoot Sarah if she acts out of turn. The obvious moral comparison between Sarah the punk-rock grifter and Alison the Christian housewife is immediately dismissed. Sarah says, 'Well, I've never known a blood relation, but being your twin certainly sucks.' Alison replies, 'You really have no idea, do you?' Cosima slowly emerges from a side room – her shadow appearing on the door before she enters. The shadow is clearly Maslany's, but the fact that the shadow proceeds Cosima demonstrates that, while Sarah must have some idea what is going on, she is still in denial about the reality of her situation. The shadow, therefore, creates a moment of suspense between Sarah's comforting delusion that this has a plausible explanation and the impossibility of reconciling that delusion with the presence of another identical woman. This pattern of increasing self-delusion can also be seen in the cops' theory that I mentioned earlier: secret twins are plausible, triplets are a stretch, but four identical women demolishes the idea that the clones could be naturally, rather than technologically, replicated.

The entrance of Cosima also emphasises how central Maslany's physicality is to the performance of the different clones. While Alison holds herself stiffly, Cosima enters the shot headfirst, her movements fluid. She leans against the doorframe, and introduces herself with a casual wave. While Alison and Sarah are tense, Cosima is relaxed. She also disrupts the colour binary between Sarah and Alison – she is wearing a loose orange top and a black-and-white patterned skirt.

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<sup>61</sup> Several of these clones appear in only one episode, and more are depicted by photograph only. However, Maslany plays 8 clones who appear in three or more episodes: Sarah Manning, Alison Hendrix, Cosima Niehaus, Helena, Rachel Duncan, Krystal Goderich, Beth Childs and Veera 'M.K.' Suominen.

While Sarah and Alison's personalities naturally establish them as foils, which is reinforced by the colours of their clothing, Cosima's introduction of colour and incorporation of black and white complicates the central binary between them. This represents how their posthuman nature works to blur the lines between binaries, as well as how the programme actively 'makes visible the multiplicity of desires that defy a stereotypical perception of female subjectivity as singularly monolithic.'<sup>62</sup> However, the most striking difference between the clones is not their clothing but how they hold themselves. From the moment Cosima enters the room, her relaxed posture conveys that she has a very different personality from Alison, who holds herself completely straight. Much like how Zoe's tell demonstrates her sapience, Maslany's multiple performances depend on the physical differentiation of the clones in order to prove that they are not, as the Dyad Corporation regards them, merely guinea pigs, but people with rich inner lives. Again, subjectivity is demonstrated by the body as well as the mind. Although the styling of the different clones helps the viewer remember which clone is which, it is the unique physicality of each clone that really sets them apart. For example, in the fourth episode of the first series, Alison has to impersonate Sarah. One of the first things Alison does to inhabit Sarah's character is adopt an exaggerated slouch. Posture is crucial to understanding who Alison and Sarah are. Alison's ramrod posture, for example, demonstrates her tightly-wound and repressed personality. This attention to physicality is part of the reason why the multiple performances are so plausible, despite the fact that the viewer knows the clones are played by the same actor. Maslany's performance does not solely rest on her own individual efforts. Zoe Shacklock argues that *Orphan Black*, and particularly Maslany's performance in conjunction with that of her double Kathryn Alexandre, illustrates that, despite the ways that screen acting is often framed in individualistic terms, that 'performance is always an ensemble form of labor, exceeding the ability of a single individual.'<sup>63</sup> It is interesting that the multiplicity of the clones is at least partially reflected in the multiplicity of the performance, which is shared between two people. *Orphan Black*'s cast and crew, and Maslany in particular, praise Alexandre's labour in ways which are in excess of the normal treatment of body doubles.<sup>64</sup> The multiplicity of the clones in some ways allows for the open acknowledgement of Alexandre as an actor in her own right, as important in creating the clones as Maslany is, even though Maslany literally and figuratively acts as the face. The multiplicity of the clones' performance underlies the multiplicity of their characters.

Maslany's performance is intersected by technology in ways that are relatively open, emphasising once again the posthuman woman's positioning between the organic and the technological. The digital elements of this performance works to represent the clones' technological

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<sup>62</sup> Staci Stutsman, 'The Unruly Clones: Tatiana Maslany's Melodramatic Masquerades in *Orphan Black*.' *Journal of Film and Video* 68, no. 3-4 (Fall/Winter 2016): 86, <https://doi.org/10.5406/jfilmvideo.68.3-4.0083>.

<sup>63</sup> Zoe Shacklock, 'Two of a Kind: Revaluing the Work of Acting Doubles in *Orphan Black*.' *Journal of Film and Video* 68, no. 3-4 (Fall/Winter 2016): 70, <https://doi.org/10.5406/jfilmvideo.68.3-4.0069>.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

uncanniness. The replication effect emphasises their unnaturalness. While computer-generated imagery has become more standardised in film and television as the technology has become more sophisticated and cheaper, *Orphan Black* is fairly open about CGI's importance in creating the clone effect. Paratextual information often emphasises the amount of digital work that goes into scenes where the clones interact. In a short promotional video, BBC America demonstrates some of the process that went into creating a scene with four of the clones (Sarah, Alison, Cosima and Helena) in the second series finale.<sup>65</sup> The promotional video cuts between footage of the scene at various points in production, showing both the scene as it appeared in the episode and the scene as it appeared in various stages of production, with Maslany sitting in front of the green screen and performing each clone separately. Calvert argues that this moment operates as an 'illuminating moment for the augmented, technological body.'<sup>66</sup> This may, at first, seem to remove the 'grounding' of the character. As Christine Cornea writes in her essay on animated performances in science fiction cinema, computer generated imagery offers unique challenges for performances which are meant to be representational – that is, performances which are meant to be more realistic in manner, and which do not foreground their own artifice.<sup>67</sup> This promotional video appears to deconstruct the representational 'authenticity' of the performance by demonstrating the technical work that goes into putting the clones into the same room. However, Maslany's performance is still effective. A common observation about Maslany's performance in *Orphan Black* is that 'it can be easy to forget that it's the same actress playing all these characters.'<sup>68</sup> The promotional video, ironically, foregrounds the distinctiveness of the clones, as their incredibly different dancing styles physically represent their different personalities. Free-spirited Cosima's dancing is characterised by her characteristically excessive hand gestures, while Sarah's slouched shuffle fits her insouciant personality. Uptight Alison is stiff and uncomfortable, and the near-feral Helena is wild and unhinged. This video, then, foregrounds the physical authenticity of Maslany's performance even while it exposes the technical artifice which makes it possible. While the clones are artificially replicated, Maslany's physicality convinces the viewer that the clones are real and distinct.

Cornea argues that in science fiction cinema, 'when the actor's visual presence is overtly compromised in science fiction, a more exaggerated and ostensive performance style is deemed necessary.'<sup>69</sup> Although Cornea is discussing full-body CGI animation, rather than the technical replication of *Orphan Black*, this idea can be usefully applied to Maslany's performance. Maslany

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<sup>65</sup> 'Making of ORPHAN BLACK's 4 Clone Dance Party,' BBC America, YouTube, 21 June 2014, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XE2u\\_N8g6cs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XE2u_N8g6cs).

<sup>66</sup> Calvert, *Being Bionic*, 212.

<sup>67</sup> Christine Cornea, '2-D Performance and the Re-animated Actor in Science Fiction Cinema,' in *Genre and Performance: Film and Television*, ed. Christine Cornea (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 152-3.

<sup>68</sup> Daryl Stuzka, 'Why *Orphan Black* May Be the Best Show on Television,' *The Mary Sue*, 19 May 2015, <https://www.themarysue.com/orphan-black-praise/>.

<sup>69</sup> Cornea, '2-D Performance,' 154.

exaggerates the physical and vocal differences between the clones in a way that is not entirely naturalistic. The five main clones – Alison, Cosima, Helena, Rachel and Sarah – all have different accents and hairstyles, which is more due to expediency than plausibility. However, this differentiation ironically creates a more plausible multiplicity than, for example, *Dollhouse*. The actors playing the Actives in *Dollhouse* differentiate the tabula rasa state from the imprints by adopting a flat childlike tone. While Eliza Dushku's imprints are often distinguished by styling, there is often not much physical and vocal variation between the imprints, which belies the programme's claim that the Actives can fully 'become' another person. Although Dushku received criticism for her inability to distinguish the imprints, it is notable that none of the other Actives fare much better. The most striking imprint is Gjokaj's version of Topher, where Gjokaj does affect Kranz's vocal register and physical mannerisms, but this is the exception rather than the rule. This can partially be explained by *Orphan Black*'s and *Dollhouse*'s slightly different approaches to multiplicity. While *Orphan Black* emphasises that the clones' environments have made them into far more distinct people than their shared genetic code would suggest, *Dollhouse* argues that the Actives' essential identity persists, even when their memories are erased. Therefore, it does make sense that the Active imprints could show less variance than the *Dollhouse* claims is possible. Furthermore, *Dollhouse* does use accent in a similar way to *Orphan Black* in one instance. While Sierra's tabula rasa state and most of her imprints speak with an American accent, Sierra's original personality, Priya, speaks with Lachman's native Australian accent. In a metatextual flourish, Priya's authenticity is denoted by the use of the actor's own accent. The playful nuances of physical and vocal performances are one of the ways in which televisual representations of the posthuman woman can portray ideas about posthumanism that literature cannot.

Performance is one way in which representations of cyborg subjectivities and the posthuman woman in particular differs from the literary inspiration of Haraway's and other academics' criticism. However, narrative structures of modern television programmes also differentiate the representation of the posthuman woman from similar narratives in film. Television narratives have historically been relegated to two forms: the episodic and the serial. Jason Mittell defines the episodic narrative as one where 'characters, settings, and relationships carry over across episodes, but the plots stand on their own, requiring little need for consistent sequential viewing or knowledge of story history to comprehend the narrative.'<sup>70</sup> Serial narratives, on the other hand, feature 'continuing storylines traversing multiple episodes [...] Serial programs do provide closure of storylines, but rarely in the same episode in which the plot was introduced. When storylines are resolved in serials, they are often replaced with even more suspenseful or engrossing narrative enigmas – the resolving third act morphs into a disruptive first act of a new plotline.'<sup>71</sup> The serial mode has historically been more commonly

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<sup>70</sup> Jason Mittell, *Television & American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 228.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 230.

associated with the feminised television genre of soap opera, although recently serialisation has acquired greater cultural value. The rise of so-called quality television has depended on the marriage of episodic narrative and serialised storytelling. According to Glen Creeber:

Recent television drama has learnt a great deal from the power and possibility of soap opera. Given a more complex narrative structure in which to create, it has both exploited and subverted the means by which the genre has generally been conceived and understood. It frequently employs complex forms of ‘flexi-narrative,’ introducing intricate and sophisticated layers of plot and subplot narrative levels which gradually enhance character and narrative density beyond the scope of the single ‘closed’ narrative.<sup>72</sup>

While academics have generally accepted the influence of soap operas as a key influence on the emerging ‘semi-serialised form,’ soap operas have also been denigrated as inferior to the new quality television, a process which is detailed in Michael Newman and Elena Levine’s *Legitimizing Television*. They argue that the emerging category of quality television is the result of a process of legitimization, and ‘this cultural elevation, is as much a masculinization as it is a refinement of the medium’s class status. The convergence-era validation of television achieves that validation by rejecting the feminized medium that “used to be.”’<sup>73</sup> This is not merely a theoretical analysis of media discourses. As Christine Scodari has argued, science fiction television in particular has struggled with embracing semi-serialised narratives and other soap opera techniques, in part due to their presumed male fan base. Scodari details the troubles of networks and fan bases alike to reconcile feminised relationship story arcs with more masculinised science fiction plots.<sup>74</sup> Two of the programmes Scodari uses as case studies are *Firefly* (FOX, 2002), whose showrunner-auteur Joss Whedon also created *Dollhouse*, and *Battlestar Galactica*, the programme which *Caprica* was spun off from. Both *Dollhouse* and *Caprica* were commercially unsuccessful and their narratives are abbreviated – this is particularly noticeable in *Caprica*, which summarises the plot of a hypothetical second series via a short montage at the end of the series finale. This speaks to their respective networks’ difficulties in marketing soap-influenced science fiction. *Dollhouse*, *Caprica* and *Orphan Black* all utilise a semi-serialised narrative – while *Caprica* and *Orphan Black* are heavily serialised throughout, *Dollhouse* contains a few self-contained episodic narratives. The first six episodes of *Dollhouse* were described by Joss Whedon as ‘the first six pilots,’<sup>75</sup> and were intended to attract a more casual audience as well as Whedon’s auteurist cult following. While the balance of soap opera elements and episodic science

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<sup>72</sup> Glen Creeber, *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen* (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 15.

<sup>73</sup> Michael Newman and Elana Levine, *Legitimizing Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 10.

<sup>74</sup> Christine Scodari, ‘Of Soap Operas, Space Operas, and Television’s Rocky Romance With the Feminine Form,’ in *The Survival of Soap Operas: Transformations for a New Media Era*, ed. Sam Ford, Abigail de Kosnik and C. Lee Harrington (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 109.

<sup>75</sup> Brian Ford Sullivan, ‘Interview: “Dollhouse” Creator Joss Whedon,’ *The Futon Critic*, 6 January 2009, [http://www.thefutoncritic.com/interviews.aspx?id=20090106\\_dollhouse](http://www.thefutoncritic.com/interviews.aspx?id=20090106_dollhouse).

fiction adventure may prove problematic for executives, the use of the semi-serialised narrative supports these case study programmes' thematic interest in multiplicity and femininity.

Semi-serialised television requires an ensemble of actors and multiple storylines. Eric Freedman argues that ensemble casts of television 'allows multiple points for investment and the extension of the central "trouble" across multiple plot-lines.'<sup>76</sup> This allows for a variety of iterations upon the narrative's central themes. While a film might be forced to focus on one or two storylines to convey its main themes, the television programme can use its ensemble to approach a central dilemma in a variety of ways. For example, in *Dollhouse*, Echo's growing self-awareness as a result of her spinal fluid can express the ways in which technology can be overcome by the body, while Sierra and Victor's romance can express that this is a universal problem with the imprinting technology, rather than merely an example of Echo's exceptionalism. In *Caprica*, Avatar Zoe's semi-embodied existence can stand alongside Tamara's untethered experience. Thus, television narrative allows these programmes to resist singular representations of posthuman embodiment, avoiding the dilemma described by Hayles in *My Mother Was a Computer*.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, these case study programmes embrace the elements of feminised television which are typically denigrated, and centre feminine concerns of relationships as key to their science fiction messaging. Tania Modleski argues that soap operas historically expect the viewer to engage in a 'multiple identification' with female subjects.<sup>78</sup> These programmes focus on, yes, serialised conspiracy plots, but also these plots are combined with more emotional appeals. Furthermore, the television serial plot 'allows for a greater exploration of character depth, grants access to more characters, and destabilizes the immediate moral legibility of the series.'<sup>79</sup> The multiplicity of the television semi-serialised plot allows for a proliferation of viewpoints. It destabilises notions of singular narrative and agency, and the structure of the ensemble show means that, while most narratives function separately for several episodes, they inevitably dovetail before splitting off again. The structure supports the multiplicity and alignment of the posthuman woman.

The clearest example of the television structure supporting the thematic concerns of the posthuman woman is *Dollhouse*, especially as it in this case study programme where the push and pull between episodic and serialised narratives becomes most apparent. As mentioned above, *Dollhouse* is the most episodic of the three programmes I discuss in this chapter. However, as *Dollhouse* progresses, it becomes increasingly more serialised. The programme initially follows a procedural structure of episodic Active assignment – therefore giving it a clearer demarcation between what is

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<sup>76</sup> Eric Freedman, 'Television, Horror, and Everyday Life in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*,' in *The Contemporary Television Series*, ed. Michael Hammond and Lucy Mazdon (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 161.

<sup>77</sup> Hayles, *My Mother Was A Computer*, 2.

<sup>78</sup> Tania Modleski, 'The Search for Tomorrow in Yesterday's Soap Operas: Notes on a Feminine Narrative Form,' *Film Quarterly* 33, no. 1 (Autumn 1979): 14, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1212060>.

<sup>79</sup> Stutsman, 'Unruly Clones,' 84.

‘episodic’ and what is ‘serialised’ than *Caprica* or *Orphan Black*. *Dollhouse*’s structure is indebted to the combination of procedural episodes and mythology episodes pioneered by *The X-Files* (FOX, 1993-2002, 2016 -). Catherine Johnson explains that ‘*The X-Files* thus serialised the narrative structure of the series by combining one-off stories traditionally characteristic of episodic series such as *Star Trek*, with ongoing narratives more usually associated with the narrative structure of the serial.’<sup>80</sup> As discussed below, *Dollhouse*’s division between assignment of the week and mythology episodes<sup>81</sup> is not as clear-cut as in *The X-Files*, but it is still a useful framework for understanding the broader purposes of *Dollhouse*’s different episode formats. Although this episodic procedural/mythology structure that is established in the first series persists in the beginning of the second series, it is largely abandoned by the fifth episode, when the plot becomes more consistently serialised. In the first series, 9 episodes follow Echo or another Active on an assignment with little impact on the larger plot, while in the second, only the first three episodes follow Echo on a single Active mission. However, the division between mythology and procedural episodes is not so clear cut. *Dollhouse*’s Active assignments often contribute to the narrative arc. For example, ‘A Spy in the House of Love,’ the ninth episode of the first series, Sierra is programmed with the personality of a high-level private investigator in order to determine if there is a mole in the Dollhouse. Although this episode, on the surface, follows the assignment of the week structure, it has profound implications for the serial narrative. The setting usefully demonstrates this collapse between procedural and mythology modes. Most assignment of the week episodes involve the Actives going on a mission outside the Dollhouse, encountering some form of peril, and having to be rescued by the support team in the Dollhouse. By contrast, ‘A Spy in the House of Love’ takes place entirely inside the Dollhouse. While in the first series, the assignment is usually the focus of the episode, the Dollhouse is often the setting of lightly serialised ‘runners’ – recurring storylines which develop character dynamics or reveal information about the ongoing story.<sup>82</sup> In ‘A Spy in the House of Love,’ the assignment of the week, when turned inwards, propels the serialised arc of the programme. As mentioned above, Echo displays the ability to understand that she can be imprinted and the self-awareness to protect herself against Laurence Dominic (Reed Diamond). Furthermore, the episode sees the departure of Dominic, a prominent supporting character. Dominic is sentenced to the Attic, a psychological torture chamber intended to imprison the minds of defective Actives and rogue employees of the Dollhouse, which has implications for the mythology arc later in the programme. In the second series episode ‘The Attic,’ Echo enters into the Attic, where she is reunited with Dominic, and learns about the secret founder of Rossum. This episode, therefore, cannot be clearly demarcated as either an assignment of the week or a mythology episode. This collapse between the distinct modes mirrors Echo’s own burgeoning

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<sup>80</sup> Catherine Johnson, *Telefantasy* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005), 105.

<sup>81</sup> A ‘mythology’ episode in television fan discourses means an episode whose plot is important to the over-arching serialised narrative.

<sup>82</sup> Jason Mittell, *Television & American Culture*, 231.

consciousness. At the beginning of the series, Echo is largely capable of being imprinted according to plan, and usually the problem that arises on her assignments is external. However, as the series goes on, Echo begins to develop greater self-awareness, and the maintenance of discrete identities becomes more difficult – her assignment malfunctions begin to originate from problems with her own Active architecture. Her imprinting with multiple personalities exaggerates this problem, and Echo eventually has to learn how to understand her own multiple-but-distinct consciousness. Therefore, *Dollhouse*'s development from an episode of the week structure – the six pilots – to a highly serialised programme mirrors Echo's growing posthuman consciousness. Echo becomes a subject, and as she manages to navigate her unusual existence, the programme becomes more structurally unified around the main conspiracy plot. What begins as procedural (her different assignments) become crucial to the larger plot (that Echo is capable of managing these different personalities), and personalities which Echo acquires in procedural episodes often recur in later, more serialised episodes. This is particularly interesting because of science fiction television's often difficult relationship towards emotional storylines and serialised plot.

These programmes' approach to the development of their female protagonists draws upon the viewers' understanding of them as legitimate subjects. It is therefore interesting that these case study programmes prioritise interpersonal relationships, and that the relationships between people are crucial to the science fiction plots. As previously mentioned, these programmes are interested in following long-term narratives of familial and romantic relationships between characters. Christine Geraghty writes that 'Soaps overturn the deeply entrenched value structure which is based on the traditional oppositions of masculinity and femininity [...] Soaps offer a continually shifting kaleidoscope of emotional relationships which allow the audience to test out how particular emotional variations can or should be handled.'<sup>83</sup> I have discussed the emotional aspects of television viewing in previous chapters. Parasocial relationships are fundamental to the consensual suspension of belief that these characters' lives and struggles are 'real.'<sup>84</sup> Of course, this is enacted within the narrative of the programme – in *Orphan Black*, *Dollhouse* and *Caprica*, all of the characters struggle against forces which regard them as essentially non-sentient and, therefore, disposable. The phenomenon of parasocial relationships therefore enlists the viewers in this struggle, siding the posthuman woman against the unfeeling corporation. Emotional connection to the characters, which is often denigrated as the purview of hysterical women, is therefore crucial to the function of the paranoid corporate science fiction plot, which is more typically coded as masculine. The procedural/mythology divide traditionally privileges the masculine domain of science fiction and plot rather than the more feminised areas of character development. Scodari summarises this division:

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<sup>83</sup> Christine Geraghty, *Women and Soap Opera: A Study of Prime Time Soaps* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 40.

<sup>84</sup> Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 128.

The plot/character dichotomy inherent in such gender distinctions also tend to limit what counts as an action in a text. Character details can be dismissed as ‘outside the plot,’ yet character arcs are plots that incorporate a range of events, not the least of which are inferior. Mental activity is consequently devalued. Hence, genders become culturally linked with particular narrative textures, thereby segregating the sexes according to dichotomous roles that can limit experiential resonances and, consequently, hinder relationships.<sup>85</sup>

Science fiction programmes are often dismissive of the emotional aspects of their storylines in favour of the legitimated serialised plot. Although historically, serialised plots have been about ‘intimacy’<sup>86</sup> – an ongoing investment in character – this is often disparaged. Michael Kackman analyses this impulse in a recap episode of *Lost* (ABC, 2004-2010). *Lost* is in many ways a pioneer of the semi-serialised quality science fiction television programme. In Kackman’s analysis, *Lost* dismisses the romantic turmoil between its two leads as frivolous sentimentality, while privileging the masculine revelation of mythology plot.<sup>87</sup> Kackman attributes this difference in treatment to the different cultural values the viewer brings to the different scenes, as ‘our ability even to identify narrative complexity and see it as a marker of quality television is itself an act not of aesthetic, but cultural, recognition. Complexity isn’t just something we find in a text; it’s something we bring to a text – and our recognition of certain characters as meaningfully conflicted, their narrative and moral dilemmas agonizingly or beguilingly puzzling, is a cultural identification.’<sup>88</sup> My case study programmes take advantage of this identification with television characters and the viewers’ investment in their relationships, to position the posthuman woman as a legitimate subject.

Television’s emphasis on ongoing relationship storylines adds interesting dimensions to the posthuman woman’s narrative. For example, as discussed earlier, part of the familial drama in *Caprica* is due to Zoe’s feelings that her creative and technical abilities have been co-opted by her father, and that he sees her as an object to be controlled rather than a person to be respected. It is only when her parents enter the virtual world, one where Avatar Zoe has the power, that they concede that Zoe is an adult in her own right, and that their familial relationship must be reconfigured as a co-equal creative partnership. The shifting family dynamics are interwoven with broader questions about authority, technical mastery and ownership, which interestingly complicate standard science fiction narratives of technological creation which, as Andreas Huyssen points out, tend to emphasise

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<sup>85</sup> Scodari, ‘Of Soap Operas,’ 117.

<sup>86</sup> Creeber, *Serial Television*, 9.

<sup>87</sup> Michael Kackman, ‘Quality Television, Melodrama and Cultural Complexity,’ *Flow TV*, 31 October 2008, <http://www.flowjournal.org/2008/10/quality-television-melodrama-and-cultural-complexity%C2%A0michael-kackman%C2%A0university-of-texas-austin%C2%A0/>.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

masculine control over unruly female technology.<sup>89</sup> In *Dollhouse*, the romance between Victor and Sierra, particularly when they regain their original personalities of Priya and Tony, becomes an important way in which the programme interrogates issues of personhood and embodiment. In ‘Epitaph Two: Return,’ the second series finale, Priya complains to Echo about Tony’s abandonment of her and their son, T (Brandon Dieter). Tony has joined a gang of former Actives who selectively remove aspects of their personality in order to become more effective assassins. Echo attempts to reassure Priya that all will be well, but Priya becomes annoyed that he left parts of his personality behind on USB sticks.

PRIYA: I wonder if I’m in here somewhere [...] Memory of Priya. He pulls it out of his head, like being human.

ECHO: What the hell is wrong with you?

PRIYA: This. This tech has been eating at my life.

ECHO: He’s in love with you! [...] This isn’t something that comes on a drive. They tried to pull it out of him. They wiped his mind for years and he never stopped loving you!

While Priya blames Tony’s use of imprinting technology for their estrangement, Echo argues that the technology has not changed how he feels about her. This argument is not just about the specifics of Tony and Priya’s relationship, but about what makes someone a person. Priya puts forward the more humanist argument that Tony’s memories are him. Echo, on the other hand, argues for a more embodied notion of subjectivity. A conversation between two women about whether a man really loves one of them is, on the surface, the type of exchange that characterises soap opera, while a drier conversation about human subjectivity is more associated with serious science fiction. However, *Dollhouse* demonstrates that it is entirely possible, and even desirable, to combine the two. Because the audience is meant to care about Priya and Tony’s happiness, they engage with debates about whether or not Tony’s consciousness continues even when parts of his memories are removed because of its emotional effect on Priya. These programmes counter the masculinised logic of science fiction television with feminised appeals to emotion, and therefore demonstrate that the humanist values of singularity, individualism and rationality are flawed.

### Conclusion

*Dollhouse*, *Caprica* and *Orphan Black* consistently emphasise posthumanist challenges to humanist notions of subjectivity by depicting the posthuman woman’s multiplicity of identity and embodied subjectivity. The posthuman woman’s hybridic technological and organic nature, as represented by

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<sup>89</sup> Andreas Huyssen, ‘The Vamp and the Machine: Technology and Sexuality in Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*.’ *New German Critique* 24/5 (Autumn/Winter 1981-2): 227, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0094-033X%28198123%2F198224%290%3A24%2F25%3C221%3ATVATMT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-P>.

embodied actors and the use of CGI, exposes flaws with individualistic and rationalistic notions of personhood, and potentially opens up a space for exploring alternative modes of being. They engage with questions of science, technology and posthumanism via stereotypically feminised concerns, such as family and romantic relationships. This can be illustrated by how they use the television medium to dramatize philosophical questions of technology and subjectivity. However, this approach raises further questions. As seen in the *Dollhouse* example above, these questions are still framed around debates about 'humanity.' While using the culturally denigrated form of soap opera to approach science fiction questions is interesting, they still fundamentally revolve around heterosexual reproduction, and the posthuman woman is a usually white, always beautiful woman. They can rarely be visually distinguished from a normal human. These programmes seem to ask, what threat can this woman pose? Even though she is technological, she can still live a full and productive life. She is merely the exception that proves the rule. She can still belong. I have clearly demonstrated that the posthuman woman represents an interesting challenge to individualist neoliberal notions of individualism, and presents a provactive model of collective posthuman existence. However, the programmes do also incorporate a 'backlash' to their own radical potential. In the next chapter, I discuss how these programmes deploy the posthuman woman's femininity as a force to mitigate her threat to humanist ideology.

### Chapter Three: Femininity and Posthuman Womanhood

All of the programmes this dissertation discusses are characterised by an ambivalent relationship with patriarchy and posthumanism. The posthuman woman is gendered female and engages in patriarchal narratives, which is one of the key differences between this figure and Donna Haraway's cyborg. As Haraway writes, 'the cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden; that is, through the fabrication of a heterosexual mate [...] The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust.'<sup>1</sup> The cyborg is liberated from traditional gender narratives, while the posthuman woman is not. While the previous chapters discussed the explicit representation of posthuman non-individualised identities in these programmes, this chapter hopes to contextualise these representations and demonstrate how the contradictions of the posthuman woman are managed. The threat of posthuman existence suggested by the female characters in these programmes is mitigated by their normative femininity. In this chapter, I will explore how former Borg drone Seven of Nine (Jeri Ryan) of *Star Trek: Voyager* (UPN, 1995-2001), the Cylon models Six (Tricia Helfer) and Eight (Grace Park) in *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi, 2004-2009) and robotic Hosts Dolores (Evan Rachel Wood) and Maeve (Thandie Newton) in *Westworld* (HBO, 2016- ) navigate the tensions between posthumanism and womanhood.

As this chapter will explore, posthumanism argues that technological and gendered 'Otherness' pose threats to humanist ideas of the subject. I will argue that these programmes show that the posthuman woman's acceptance of normative gender roles is a way to allow her to become human. This, obviously, reinforces humanist and gender essentialist ideas. As Myra J. Seaman writes, humanism determines what constitutes a proper subject in a way 'that features with cultural significance, such as race and gender, have been misinterpreted as biologically significant.'<sup>2</sup> While posthumanism believes that ideas of race and gender are created by culture, humanism assumes that these are rooted in biological fact, and furthermore that these qualities justify treating those marked as Other as inferior. The programmes listed above refer to concepts of gender essentialism, which is the concept of 'an ahistorical and immutable "womanness" outside the field of political intervention.'<sup>3</sup> I will explore the ways in which issues concerning gender presentation, heterosexual romance, motherhood and female embodiment work to mitigate the threat posed by the posthuman woman's technological Otherness. These programmes navigate conflicting notions of the role of femininity and gender within feminism. Joanne Hollows aptly summarises these key conflicts when she explains that many early feminists regarded femininity as 'fundamental to understanding women's oppression [...]

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<sup>1</sup> Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,' in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 277.

<sup>2</sup> Myra J. Seaman, 'Becoming More (than) Human: Affective Posthumanisms, Past and Future,' *Journal of Narrative Theory* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2007): 247, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41304860>.

<sup>3</sup> Judith Squires and Sandra Kemp, 'Introduction,' in *Feminisms*, ed. Judith Squires and Sandra Kemp (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 10.

in becoming feminine, women were “colonised” by patriarchy and became implicated in their own oppression.’<sup>4</sup> Hollows points to feminists such as Betty Friedan and Kate Millett as proponents of this idea. While these feminists rejected femininity, others embraced it, albeit in problematic ways. Feminists such as Mary Daly argued that women should embrace archetypes of unruly or wild femininity, rejecting the patriarchy-approved models of ‘plastic’ femininity. Of course, this binary is based on a belief in the essential differences between men and women, which was adopted by a number of feminists in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>5</sup> As femininity is also culturally denigrated as well as culturally indoctrinated, these feminists, and furthermore these case studies, can be seen to reclaim feminine traits which are granted little value under patriarchy. This can be seen in the previous chapter, as the importance of embodiment to the posthuman woman works against masculinist notions of personhood. However, I will argue that femininity also works to contain the posthuman woman’s technological radicalness, and re-centre her in a more normative space.

Furthermore, my case study programmes are at least notionally aware of these feminist debates, and often engage in systemic critiques of sexist power structures. As I discussed in the first chapter, these programmes often use the threat of rape to demonstrate the precarious position of the posthuman woman. In the example I used from *Battlestar Galactica*, I explained how the military apparatus regarding Cylons as non-human enemies enabled gendered violence to be enacted against female Cylons. I will discuss further moments of feminist critique in the fourth and fifth chapters of this thesis, but I wish to emphasise here that these moments of critique can only ever be partial. Although, as I discuss in the introduction, feminist discourses are becoming more accepted within mainstream media, the presence of postfeminist containment strategies are still highly present. Angela McRobbie argues that postfeminism is ‘an active process by which the feminist gains of the 1970s and 80s came to be undermined [...] through an array of machinations, elements of contemporary popular culture are perniciously effective in regard to this undoing of feminism, while simultaneously appearing to be engaging in a well-informed and even well-intended response to feminism.’<sup>6</sup> McRobbie argues that postfeminist media often espouses some feminist ideas while promoting largely regressive ideas about gender. I do not dismiss moments of feminist critique in these programmes, as it is clear at times that these programmes intelligently discuss misogyny and sexist power relations. Nevertheless, despite this feminist critique, more often than not, these programmes use normative femininity as a technophobic tool to regulate the posthuman woman’s Otherness. I define normative femininity as adopting a feminine gender presentation as well as taking on traditionally feminine roles as a heterosexual partner and a mother. Femininity is often discussed in feminist writing, but is often

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<sup>4</sup> Joanne Hollows, *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 10.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-6.

<sup>6</sup> Angela McRobbie, ‘Post-feminism and Popular Culture,’ *Feminist Media Studies* 4, no. 3 (2004): 255, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1468077042000309937>.

‘untheorised and self-evident.’<sup>7</sup> In this chapter, I draw attention to the complex and varied ways feminine gender is formed. These programmes inadvertently expose how womanhood is socially indoctrinated, rather than naturally occurring due to biological factors. As this chapter will explore, the programmes cannot fully reconcile the posthuman woman’s technological body with essentialist ideas of womanhood or humanity. The posthuman woman is always a source of unease. Despite the programmes’ insistence that these characters can become ‘normal’ human women, they end up revealing the constructed nature of both femininity and humanity.

First, I will provide a brief summary of my case study programmes, then I will discuss the relevance of these programmes in terms of the representation of the posthuman woman. *Voyager* is part of the long-running *Star Trek* franchise of space opera science fiction television series. The premise of *Voyager* is that the titular ship and its crew become stranded in the distant Delta quadrant. The semi-serialised episodic narrative follows their journey back to Earth. The Borg, an alien species that assimilates different organisms and, via technological implants, incorporates them into their hive mind, is a recurring enemy for the crew of the *Voyager*. The Borg are first introduced in the prior *Star Trek* spin-off *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (CBS, 1987-1994) as a purely villainous race. However, *Voyager* offers a slightly different representation of a Borg drone, as one who, once removed from the hive mind, becomes a productive and useful member of the *Voyager*. At the end of *Voyager*’s third season, a Borg drone known as Seven of Nine (formerly a human called Annika Jensen) boards the *Voyager* in a diplomatic exchange. When Seven of Nine attempts to betray the *Voyager* and assimilate its inhabitants, the crew severs her connection to the Borg hive mind. Seven is forced to become an individual after she is separated from the Borg, but the programme follows her at first learning how to function as an individual and the drawn-out process of her internalising human (and, implicitly, feminine) values.

*Galactica* involves a similar journey home. This programme is an adaptation of the earlier television series *Battlestar Galactica* (NBC, 1978). It differentiates itself from its predecessor through a variety of methods, ranging from its prestige TV marketing, its more serialised narrative, and its racially and sexually diverse characters. The older series features large, metallic robots that are not sentient and are largely motiveless enemies for the crew of the *Galactica*. By contrast, the new *Galactica* shows a range of robotic Cylons, including the humanlike models. There are, as stated in the opening credits of the programme, multiple independent identical copies of each of the eight models. After the Cylons declare war on the humans and destroy the planets they are living on, a small group of survivors living on the *Galactica* spaceship attempt to find the mythical thirteenth colony planet, Earth. An important theme in the new series of *Galactica* concerns the Cylons’

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<sup>7</sup> Hollows, *Feminism, Femininity and Popular Culture*, 17.

struggles with the nature of their own existence and the question of whether or not they can be considered people. In this sense, it has much in common with the final case study series, *Westworld*.

Like *Galactica* and *Voyager*, *Westworld* is related to an older property: in this case, Michael Crichton's 1973 film of the same name. Furthermore, just as the other two programmes revisit technological entities previously portrayed as purely evil, HBO's *Westworld* takes the monstrous rogue robots of the 1973 film and presents them as sympathetic characters. Both versions of *Westworld* are set in a futuristic Wild West theme park. Wealthy humans can pay to spend time acting out their fantasies with a large number of programmed robots. Eventually, the robots malfunction and begin killing the guests. However, the film and the TV series differ in crucial respects. In the film *Westworld*, the protagonists are the human guests of the park, and the major antagonist is a rogue robot. The robots are easy to distinguish from the humans (due to their misshapen hands) and the viewer receives little insight into their motivations. In the TV programme *Westworld*, the robots (referred to as Hosts) are virtually indistinguishable from humans, and the programme explores their growing sentience. Unlike in many other programmes which follow cyborgs, Seven, the Cylons and the Hosts all have organic components to their bodies. They are not physiologically that different from humans. This physiology seems to justify an essentialised view of their gender, as will be discussed later in this chapter. Furthermore, while the film *Westworld*'s most prominent robot antagonist is male, the TV series *Westworld* focuses heavily on the female Hosts Dolores and Maeve. All three of these programmes revisit earlier, more technophobic representations by representing sympathetic posthuman female characters who struggle to reconcile their technological bodies with conventional ideas of human womanhood. They explicitly reinterpret masculine texts in a new context. Their departure from the narratives and politics of the source texts is often signalled, at least partially, through the decision to focalise their narratives through female characters. This is generally framed, both explicitly and implicitly, as a direct rebuttal of the dated gender politics of the source material. The posthuman woman as represented in these series illustrates long-held debates within feminism about technology, nature, and femininity. Thus, the issues raised by the posthuman woman in these texts illuminate a range of questions and ideas around gender, technology and the mediation of womanhood within science fiction.

Technology and femininity are often linked in the public mind. Andreas Huyssen attributes this to the complementary ways both technology and femininity are alternately desired and feared.<sup>8</sup> As I have discussed previously in this chapter, emergent technology has the peculiar power to draw attention to how human identity, and particularly gender, is socially constructed. This often leads to an insistent 'shoring up' of gendered binaries in representations of humanlike technologies. As Anne

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<sup>8</sup> Andreas Huyssen, 'The Vamp and the Machine: Technology and Sexuality in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*,' *New German Critique* 24/5 (Autumn 1981-Winter 1982): 223, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0094-033X%28198123%2F198224%290%3A24%2F25%3C221%3ATVATMT%3E2.0.CO%3B2-P>.

Balsamo writes, it 'is often the case when seemingly stable boundaries are displaced by technological innovation [...] other boundaries are more vigilantly guarded. Indeed, the gendered boundary between male and female is one border that remains heavily guarded.'<sup>9</sup> Balsamo argues that gender binaries are still seen as 'natural' and 'normal,' even when Western society accepts greater integration of technology into the previously naturalised domain of the body. As discussed in chapter one, technology also challenges humanist ideas concerning the culture/nature binary. Furthermore, humanism has always had difficulty speaking for female interests, because of its insistence on rationality as the key determiner of subjectivity. As Tony Davies argues, 'women have always had an ambiguous stake in the universalising assumptions of male humanists, and a keener consciousness of the contradictions and equivocations (sometimes, the plain lies) that underlie them.'<sup>10</sup> While humanism claims to speak for everyone, it is clear that, due to its primary thinkers being white men, it has excluded the experiences of those it deems Other. A crucial way that humanism operates is by Othering technology and femininity. Therefore, there is an inherent affinity between women and machines. Fictional media dealing with technological advancement and transgression often become uneasy with the implications for gender construction. Therefore, as Mary Ann Doane notes, there are many 'representations of technology that work to fortify – sometimes desperately – conventional understandings of the feminine.'<sup>11</sup> By hewing so closely to conventional ideas of the feminine, these programmes inadvertently reveal the problems with the categories of womanhood and humanity.

The figure of the posthuman woman addresses many concerns about gender and technology. In *Voyager*, *Galactica* and *Westworld*, the posthuman women are embodied combinations of mechanical and organic components. In *Voyager*, Seven of Nine was born human, but was integrated into the technological hive mind of the Borg. During this process, many of her organic components were replaced by mechanical implants. As previously mentioned, Seven's connection to the Borg hive mind is severed, and she is forced to join the crew of the *Voyager*. Most of her technological implants are removed, although Seven remains a mechanical-human hybrid. Therefore, while Seven's appearance becomes more normatively human and feminine, she is still largely associated with technology. The Cylons in *Galactica* function similarly. Although the Cylons are technological creations, they are embodied. As Despina Kakoudaki writes, 'we never see the interior or material composition of the humanoid Cylons. They seem susceptible to certain human viruses, and they manage to conceive and bring to term a human/Cylon baby, so we have to assume that some of their

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<sup>9</sup> Anne Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body: Reading Cyborg Women* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 9.

<sup>10</sup> Tony Davies, *Humanism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), 140.

<sup>11</sup> Mary Ann Doane, 'Technophilia: Technology, Representation and the Feminine,' in *Cybersexualities: A Reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs and Cyberspace*, ed. Jenny Wolmark (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 20.

physiology is human-like.’<sup>12</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, the Hosts of *Westworld* also have bodies that combine organic and mechanical elements. In the first season finale, Dolores is shown on an operating table. Her abdomen that is normally covered with artificial skin is uncovered, revealing a clear plastic body and her mechanical skeleton. According to the narrative logic of the series, this designates her as an older Host. The bodies of the newer Hosts and humans are largely identical. Maeve’s realisation of her artificial nature is grounded in her embodiment. When Hosts are hurt or killed, they are taken to the lab to be repaired overnight and then reintroduced to the park. Maeve begins to remember her past injuries, including an incident where she was shot in the stomach. In order to verify these memories, Maeve asks Hector (Rodrigo Santoro) to find the bullet in her. Hector stabs Maeve and penetrates her body with his fingers. As he digs his fingers into her body, Maeve’s fleshiness becomes readily apparent. The inability to state definitively how their bodies are created and to what extent they are mechanical and organic is one of the key ambiguities of the cyborg. As discussed in previous chapters, this concern is also present in the posthuman woman, but this unease around their technological bodies is, at least partially, contained within normative femininity. The posthuman woman can push some of these boundaries of technological and organic hybridity. As Claudia Springer argues, ‘it is apparent that, despite its willingness to relinquish other previously sacrosanct categories, patriarchy continues to uphold gender difference.’<sup>13</sup> Even when cyborgs are allowed to break down boundaries between the organic and technological, they ‘appear masculine or feminine to an exaggerated degree,’<sup>14</sup> and resist the sort of gender fluidity that defines Haraway’s cyborg. The boundaries of gender are tightly maintained. Gender essentialism seems crucial to maintaining humanity as a discrete category.

As discussed in the previous chapter, due to the demands of television, representations of the posthuman woman are embodied by a human actor. As Tama Leaver argues in regards to *Galactica*, ‘the humanoid Cylons are, at the end of the day, necessarily played by human actors [...] gendered identities themselves only make sense in a diegetic manner by implying human identity for these characters as well.’<sup>15</sup> This embodiment frequently makes clear the status of these characters as unambiguously womanly: they are usually cast as conventionally beautiful female actors, and little attempt (via costuming, makeup, or CGI) is made to blur gender boundaries. Therefore, posthuman women are linked to cisgender female bodies. As I discussed earlier, embodiment is a source of tension in both posthumanism and feminism. N. Katherine Hayles argues that embodiment is central

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<sup>12</sup> Despina Kakoudaki, *Anatomy of a Robot: Literature, Cinema, and the Cultural Work of Artificial People* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 201.

<sup>13</sup> Claudia Springer, ‘The Pleasure of the Interface,’ in *Cybersexualities: A Reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs and Cyberspace*, ed. Jenny Wolmark (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 41.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>15</sup> Tama Leaver, ‘“Humanity’s Children”: Constructing and Confronting the Cylons,’ in *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica*, ed. Tiffany Potter and C.W. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2008), 135-6.

to ethical posthumanism, as she suggests that humanism and some forms of posthumanism (which I associate more with transhumanism, as explained in the first chapter) both favour disembodied rationality. This erases the experiences of women, people of colour, and others, as their identities are defined by their bodies.<sup>16</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, it is the female body that allows the posthuman woman to resist technological interference. However, as always, messages in mainstream media about feminism and femininity are inherently contradictory. While impressions of feminism often ‘break through’ mainstream representations, these impressions can be ‘forgetful and partial.’<sup>17</sup> In *Voyager*, *Galactica* and *Westworld*, it is easy to read this resistance as not so much anti-patriarchal as it is anti-technological. The question becomes, do these programmes feed into the sorts of feminist narratives that Haraway argued against that ‘insist on the organic, opposing it to the technological’?<sup>18</sup>

The relationship between feminism and technology has always been a contentious one, as detailed by Judy Wajcman’s *Feminism Confronts Technology*. Because many feminists associate technology with patriarchal authority, certain movements of feminism (most notably eco-feminism) have argued that technology should be rejected in favour of nature. Wajcman takes issue with this and, as many other feminists have, accuses eco-feminists and other pro-nature feminists of essentialism:

Essentialism, or the assertion of fixed, unified and opposed female and male natures has been subjected to a variety of thorough critiques. The first thing that must be said is that the values being ascribed to women originate in the historical subordination of women. The belief in the unchanging nature of women, and their association with procreation, nurturance, warmth and creativity, lies at the very heart of traditional and oppressive conceptions of womanhood.<sup>19</sup>

Wajcman argues that these arguments, by appealing to nature, are actually reaffirming patriarchal ideas of femininity and have no basis in fact. There are different perspectives that reject such binary thinking about technology’s role in terms of feminist causes. Jana Sawicki, when discussing feminist debates about reproductive technologies, attempts to criticise the all-or-nothing approach some feminists take towards technology’s value, as this argument ‘employs a binary model of alternatives, either repressive technology or a liberatory one, either a masculinist science or a feminist one, either mechanistic materialism or naturalism, either a technological approach or a natural one. This politically and cognitively restrictive binary logic stems in part from the tendency to portray

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<sup>16</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 4-5.

<sup>17</sup> Imelda Whelehan, ‘Foreword,’ in *Feminism & Popular Culture: Investigating the Postfeminist Mystique*, ed. Rebecca Munford and Melanie Waters (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), x-xi.

<sup>18</sup> Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto,’ 315.

<sup>19</sup> Judy Wajcman, *Feminism Confronts Technology* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 9.

patriarchal power in monolithic, essentialist and totalistic terms.’<sup>20</sup> Sawicki then argues that such interpretations ignore the ways technology can be liberatory, as well as the ways women regulate their own bodies. Sawicki borrows the concept of ‘biopower’ from Michel Foucault, which understands that ‘the body is produced through power and is, therefore, a cultural rather than a natural entity.’<sup>21</sup> Posthumanism also rejects this ‘all-or-nothing’ approach, particularly by combining, on the one hand, the potential of technology to redefine the humanist subject, while on the other criticising how humanism has damaged the natural world. Posthumanism aligns gender and racial Othering to the treatment of animals and, in some cases, the planet. All are excluded from full subjecthood in humanist thinking. Therefore, as discussed in chapter one, posthumanism attempts to reconcile the tension between technology and nature by placing them on a spectrum. They are united by their exclusion from the ideal human subject. I argue that the posthuman woman negotiates these discourses, and attempts to navigate between contradictory strands of feminism. This is complicated by the programmes’ postfeminist politics and appeals to essentialist ideas of womanhood. The posthuman woman is positioned between feminism’s arguments about the role of technology and nature in female liberation. To explore this, I will examine how the posthuman woman’s subjectivity is related to femininity: in particular, performing a feminine gender identity, heterosexual relationships, and motherhood.

### Femininity

In this section, I argue that *Voyager*, *Galactica* and *Westworld* present becoming human as directly related to assuming a female gender identity. Anne Cranny-Francis writes that *Voyager* presents a playful take on what it means to learn femininity:

The almost comic horror with which she [Seven of Nine] contemplates her reassimilation into humanity provides a deconstructive commentary [...] becoming ‘human’ is not a ‘natural’ return to her ‘true’ state. Instead, it is the acceptance of another, different ideology and embodiment [...] To become an acceptable human female, Seven of Nine must learn to make her body seem soft and (com)pliant and retune her voice so that it is soft, low, and pleasantly modulated.<sup>22</sup>

This draws upon Judith Butler’s work on gender, particularly how parodic cultural practices such as drag draw attention to the contradictions inherent in performing femininity.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Seven of

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<sup>20</sup> Jana Sawicki, ‘Disciplining Mothers: Feminism and the New Reproductive Technologies,’ in *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*, ed. Janet Price and Margrit Shildrick (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 195.

<sup>21</sup> Lois McNay, *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Anne Cranny-Francis, ‘The Erotics of the (cy)Borg: Authority and Gender in the Sociocultural Imaginary,’ in *Future Females, The Next Generation: New Voices and Velocities in Feminist Science Fiction Criticism*, ed. Marleen S. Barr (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 158-9.

<sup>23</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 2006), xxx-xxxi.

Nine can be read as a parody of gender roles. Much of Butler's work argues that, rather than being an innate, natural quality, gender is imposed upon and performed by people in accordance to societal norms. This idea speaks to the posthuman women of *Voyager*, *Galactica* and *Westworld*, whose assimilation into human society is directly linked to their adoption of proscribed gender roles. Cranny-Francis asserts that Seven of Nine's adoption of human gender can be read as 'deconstructive.'<sup>24</sup> *Voyager* is at times quite knowing with the contrast between Seven's Borgian failure to appropriately act like a woman (there are several subplots that humorously discuss Seven's dismay at human habits), which lends some credence to Cranny-Francis's assertions. However, Cranny-Francis overstates the radicalness of this representation.

Seven's humanity and femininity are explicitly linked in the sixth series finale, 'Unimatrix Zero' and the seventh series premiere, 'Unimatrix Zero, Part II.' In this two-part episode, Seven is brought into a virtual construct that is shared between several Borg drones. These drones have a mutation, meaning that when they 'regenerate' or sleep, they can escape into this construct and remember their individual lives. When they awake, they have no memory of this place. Seven learns from a fellow drone, Axum (Mark Deakins), that she went to Unimatrix Zero when she was connected to the Borg hive mind, but has not been back since she was severed. At first, when Seven goes to Unimatrix Zero, she retains her appearance on the *Voyager*, with her technological implants, but later she is styled in a more conventionally feminine manner while in the Unimatrix. Here, Seven appears without her implants, wears her hair in a looser style, and wears a pink top. She also allows others to call her Annika, her human name. Captain Janeway (Kate Mulgrew) comments on this difference:

JANEWAY: You seemed more...

SEVEN: Human?

JANEWAY: If you don't mind me saying so, it suited you.

Seven's escape to a more traditional femininity is directly linked to a greater ability to perform humanity. Her time in Unimatrix Zero is only temporary, as it is destroyed at the end of the first episode of the seventh series, and Seven does not adopt this appearance in the diagetically real world of *Voyager*. Nevertheless, in the seventh series, Seven becomes more comfortable with some aspects of womanhood, including heterosexual romance. This moment of gender normativity in 'Unimatrix Zero' is crucial to her ongoing acceptance of her own femininity. While these developments are framed in terms of her own agency, as will be discussed later on in this chapter, the encouragement that she receives from her other crew members hints, however obliquely or unintentionally, at the social conditioning underpinning gender identity. Nevertheless, rather than undermining conventional

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<sup>24</sup> Cranny-Francis, 'The Erotics of the (cy)Borg,' 156.

notions of femininity through Seven's posthumanity, *Voyager* explicitly links womanhood and humanity.

*Westworld* also displays a parodic attitude towards traditional femininity, although, like in *Voyager*, there are limits to its deconstruction of gender. As with *Seven of Nine*, this programme reveals an awareness of gender as performed and programmed. The use of artificial characters created by flawed human scientists and institutions works as a metaphor for how we are all shaped by culture. For example, one plotline in *Westworld* revolves around Maeve's growing awareness of her artificial nature. She purposefully gets herself killed so that she will be taken into the laboratory for repairs. While there, Maeve manipulates the lab technicians so that they will help her to escape the park. In the sixth episode, 'The Adversary,' Felix explains to Maeve that she is not in control of her actions:

FELIX: Everything you do, it's because the engineers upstairs programmed you to do it.

MAEVE: Nobody tells me what to do, sweetheart.

FELIX: Yeah, but it's part of your character. You're hard to get.

The Hosts are programmed to behave and think the way they do, which also includes their gender presentation. The cultural construction of gender is mainly evident in the programme's evocation of Western genre tropes. Dolores and Maeve therefore take on the generically familiar roles of the rancher's daughter and saloon girl, respectively. Blake Lucas argues that, in the film Western, 'the rancher's daughter/saloon girl duality reaches far back into all forms of narrative and cultural consciousness – she is in essence the madonna or whore.'<sup>25</sup> *Westworld* consciously evokes these stereotypes and deconstructs them. For example, following the death of her parents and her encounter with William (Jimmi Simpson), Dolores manages to override her programming and learn how to shoot. In the fifth episode of the first series, Dolores says of her transformation, 'I imagined a story where I didn't have to be the damsel.' In this scene, Dolores has changed from her blue rancher's daughter outfit into trousers and a shirt. However, the trousers and shirt are tightly-fitted, and she still wears her hair long. This costuming indicates a shift away from her proscribed, extremely feminine role, but also does not entirely move towards complete androgyny.

This complicated invocation of Western gender stereotypes attempts to present a more progressive role for women within the genre. There is, nonetheless, reason to be sceptical about this. *Westworld* uses the out-datedness of the Western genre to position the gender roles proscribed to the female Hosts as regressive, and the roles that they adopt for themselves as inherently better. Furthermore, despite showing an awareness of how gender is constructed, these programmes still valorise normative femininity. This begs the question of how these programmes can espouse these

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<sup>25</sup> Blake Lucas, 'Saloon Girls and Rancher's Daughters: The Woman in the Western,' in *The Western Reader*, ed. Jim Kitses and Gregg Rickman (New York: Limelight Editions, 1998), 303.

contradictory ideas simultaneously. This is, of course, not a unique property of these programmes in particular. Mainstream media in particular struggles with representations of feminism, and often ‘betrays an anxiety about its threat to the discipline and orderliness of the social body.’<sup>26</sup> Postfeminism is a useful theoretical framework for understanding this dissonance. As McRobbie argues, ‘post-feminism positively draws on and invokes feminism as that which can be taken into account, to suggest that equality is achieved, in order to install a whole repertoire of new meanings which emphasise that it is no longer needed.’<sup>27</sup> While the programme builds upon Dolores’s and Maeve’s empowerment by showing them choosing new roles for themselves, it ignores the fact that patriarchal systems limit free choice. Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff attribute this paradigm of postfeminist choice to the neoliberal political consensus. Neoliberalism acts to encourage people ‘to make sense of their individual biographies in terms of discourses of freedom, autonomy and choice – no matter how constrained their lives may actually be.’<sup>28</sup> Despite the fact that neoliberalism prioritises the concerns of the free market over the quality of life of the governed, the subjects of neoliberal government are encouraged to believe that they are freely able to direct their own lives. Therefore, it is framed as an individual failing, rather than a systemic problem, if they cannot achieve financial or personal success. Gill and Scharff explain how postfeminism works as a neoliberal construction, as ‘both appear to be structured by a current of individualism that has almost entirely replaced notions of the social or the political [...] it is clear that the autonomous, calculating, self-regulating subject of neoliberalism bears a strong resemblance to the active, freely choosing, self-inventing subject of postfeminism.’<sup>29</sup> While Dolores and Maeve may appear to make their own choices, their options are still constrained by conventional norms of femininity. They can choose between one role and the other, or between one type of gender presentation and a slightly different one, but they remain under masculine control, as the first series finale strongly implies that they are still part of a narrative designed by Robert Ford (Anthony Hopkins). *Westworld* is aware of these complications, as I will explore later in this chapter. Like *Voyager*, the programme is caught in what McRobbie calls the ‘double entanglement,’ or ‘the co-existence of neo-conservative values in relation to gender, sexuality and family life [...] with processes of liberalisation in regard to choice and diversity.’<sup>30</sup> These programmes are caught between a desire, which is certainly genuine, to espouse feminist ideas and narrativise female empowerment, and the continued influence of conservative gender essentialism. At

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<sup>26</sup> Rebecca Munford and Melanie Waters, *Feminism & Popular Culture: Investigating the Postfeminist Mystique* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 5.

<sup>27</sup> Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change* (London: SAGE, 2009), 12.

<sup>28</sup> Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff, ‘Introduction,’ in *New Femininities: Postfeminism, Neoliberalism and Subjectivity*, ed. Rosalind Gill and Christina Scharff (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 6.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>30</sup> McRobbie, ‘Post-Feminism and Popular Culture,’ 255-6.

times, they interestingly interrogate sexist culture, but fundamentally struggle with challenging notions of gender as a whole.

*Galactica* displays an even more limited awareness of the implications of its posthuman women. Despite the fact that *Galactica* does not explicitly play with gender roles in the same parodic manner as *Voyager* and *Westworld*, the representation of the two Eight models Sharon Valerii (Boomer) and Sharon Agathon (Athena), both played by Grace Park, are still interesting in considering issues surrounding gender construction.<sup>31</sup> As Sarah Hagelin argues, *Galactica* is set in a society that is explicitly 'post-gender.'<sup>32</sup> While Head Six's (Tricia Helfer)<sup>33</sup> femme fatale physique and apparel and Kara Thrace's (Katee Sackhoff) masculinity are presented as outside the norm, the Sharons are appropriately post-gender: that is, neither excessively feminine nor butch. Although the Sharons often dress in gender-neutral military uniform, they both wear their hair long and do not engage in the behaviours that signify Kara's masculinity (such as excessive drinking, fighting, or cigar-chomping). As Lorna Jowett argues, 'the Cylons who become the most human are those who adopt recognizable gender and sex roles.'<sup>34</sup> Athena assimilates into human society, despite her posthumanity, due to heterosexual marriage (including taking her husband's name), an adoption of a feminine call sign (Athena – calling to mind the Greek goddess of war, reflecting that Sharon is coded as both androgynous and yet acceptably feminine), and by giving birth. Boomer cannot reconcile her posthumanity and integrate back into human society. However, even Athena's assimilation is complicated. I argue that the disparate fate of the two Sharons illustrates how posthumanity and the performance of gender reflect upon the unstable categories of both 'human' and 'woman.' Although the programme attempts to show that proper gender identity is key to adopting a human identity, Athena's successful assimilation contrasts with the failed assimilation of Boomer in a way that, if not explicitly parodic, still exposes the artifice of gender performance.

Posthumanism is at odds with normative gender roles. As Braidotti argues, humanism is entirely dependent on 'marking off the sexualised other (woman).'<sup>35</sup> Posthumanism argues that these differences between men and women are culturally constructed. These programmes present an adoption of essentialised femininity as central to the project of 'becoming' human. Although this is interesting because it disregards the traditional notion of the subject as masculine, it reinforces

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<sup>31</sup> To avoid confusion, I will refer to each Sharon Valerii by their call signs (Boomer and Athena) unless otherwise stated.

<sup>32</sup> Sarah Hagelin, 'The Violated Body After 9/11: Torture and the Legacy of Vulnerability in *24* and *Battlestar Galactica*,' in *Reel Vulnerability: Power, Pain, and Gender in Contemporary American Film and Television* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 126.

<sup>33</sup> Head Six is a mystical figure (sometimes called a messenger) who appears primarily to Gaius Baltar. I use 'Caprica Six' to refer to the real Six that Gaius has a romantic relationship with. Other Sixes will be referred to by their names, if given.

<sup>34</sup> Lorna Jowett, 'Frak Me: Reproduction, Gender and Sexuality,' in *Battlestar Galactica: Investigating Flesh, Spirit and Steel*, ed. Roz Kaveney and Jennifer Stoy (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 76.

<sup>35</sup> Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, 27.

traditional ideas about what a woman should be. In order to integrate into human society, the posthuman woman must become more natural – that is, feminine, emotional and fertile. The posthumanity of the Cylons and the Borg depends, at least partially, on their interruptions of normal life cycles. The Borg grows parasitically by assimilating other organisms. The Cylons also do not have a human lifespan. Cylons are created with adult bodies, and when they die, their consciousness is downloaded onto a new, identical body. Sharon's daughter Hera, who she conceives with Karl 'Helo' Agathon (Tahmoh Penikett), is the only example of a successful Cylon sexual reproduction. Alison Peirse argues that 'the bodies of the Cylons become horrific when it is realized that they are autonomous and cannot die.'<sup>36</sup> Both the Cylons and the Borg lack a normal life cycle and a regular capacity to reproduce. As Hayles argues, 'Whereas it is possible to think of humans as natural phenomena, coming to maturity as a species through natural selection and spontaneous genetic mutations, no such illusions are possible with the cyborg.'<sup>37</sup> While these programmes often tacitly support the idea of gender essentialism – that there should be no divide between their female sex and their female gender – the interrupted life cycle and overt artificiality of the posthuman woman belies the difficulties of this position. The key problem that these programmes wrestle with is the posthuman woman's, on the one hand, attempts to justify themselves as human subjects by performing femininity adequately, and the impossibility of reconciling this humanity/femininity with their posthuman bodies.

One of the most notable differences between Boomer and the other Cylons featured in *Galactica* is that she is a sleeper agent who is initially unaware of her status as a Cylon. Notably, she has memories of being raised as a human. In the eighth episode of season one, 'Flesh and Bone,' it is revealed that Boomer believes that she was raised in a human colony that suffered a cataclysm, leaving her an orphan. This differentiates her from Caprica Six and Athena, who are both self-aware Cylons (although Athena has at least enough access to Boomer's memories to pass as her). This difference is important because this means that Boomer has memories of age-appropriate gender socialisation. According to Isabella Crespi:

Socialisation is the process, through which the child becomes an individual respecting his or her environment laws, norms and customs. Gender socialisation is a more focused form of socialisation, it is how children of different sexes are socialised into their gender roles and taught what it means to be male or female [...] We learn our gender roles by agencies of

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<sup>36</sup> Alison Peirse, 'Uncanny Cylons: Resurrection and Bodies of Horror,' in *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica*, ed. Tiffany Potter and C.W. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2008), 126.

<sup>37</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, 'The Life Cycle of Cyborgs: Writing the Posthuman,' in *Cybersexualities: A Reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs and Cyberspace*, ed. Jenny Wolmark (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 157.

socialisation, which are the ‘teachers’ of society. The main agencies in Western society are the family, peer groups, schools and the media.<sup>38</sup>

Gender roles are acquired at a young age due to the unconscious influence of others, including the parents. Boomer has false memories of her parents, and therefore of this process. Most other Cylons did not undergo gender socialisation, but they still express their genders appropriately. This, alongside the artificiality of Boomer’s memories, raises questions about the stability of her gender. If Cylons are not gradually taught gender, why and how do they perform it? Butler writes of Simone de Beauvoir’s axiom ‘one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman’:

This distinction between sex and gender has been crucial to the long-standing feminist effort to debunk the claim that anatomy is destiny, *sex* is understood to be the invariant, anatomically distinct, and factic aspects of the female body, whereas *gender* is the cultural meaning and form that the body acquires, the variable modes of that body’s acculturation. With the distinction intact, it is no longer possible to attribute the values or social functions of women to biological necessity, and neither can we refer meaningfully to natural or unnatural gendered behavior: all gender is, by definition, unnatural.<sup>39</sup> (emphasis in original)

Butler argues that this distinction between sex and gender suggests that there is no such thing as a ‘natural’ woman. All gender behaviour is acquired and performed. Butler argues that de Beauvoir interprets gender performance as a choice that allows a navigation through these norms: ‘Taking on a gender is not possible at a moment’s notice, but is a subtle and strategic project which only rarely becomes manifest to a reflective understanding. Becoming a gender is an impulsive yet mindful process of interpreting a cultural reality laden with sanctions, taboos, and prescriptions.’<sup>40</sup> However, for the Cylons, taking on a gender is not a project; as they are created as adults, not children, their adoption of gender roles is immediate. This seems to reinforce the idea that gender is natural. They do not simply use gender in order to disguise themselves as humans, but conform to gender roles amongst themselves.

*Battlestar Galactica* is not naïve about these issues, and grapples with the particular ways Cylons use gendered performance. For example, the Six model Cylons’ often exaggerated femme fatale sexuality is generally used as a tool to disarm and manipulate men. This is made apparent in the first episode of the *Galactica* miniseries, in which the Cylons begin their war with the humans. A Six model in a red dress kisses the male human representative as the attack begins and the station explodes, playfully linking destruction and overt female sexuality. Furthermore, Head Six wears

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<sup>38</sup> Isabella Crespi, ‘Socialisation and Gender Roles Within the Family,’ *The Annals of the MCFA* 3, no. 1 (February 2004): 2.

<sup>39</sup> Judith Butler, ‘Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*,’ *Yale French Studies* 72, no. 1 (1986): 35, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2930225>.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

similarly exaggerated attire when manipulating Gaius Baltar (James Callis). Head Six is an angelic projection who is figured as the Platonic ideal of the Six model, and her exaggerated appeal is often directly contrasted with flesh-and-blood Sixes. This is notable in the fourth season episode ‘Daybreak, Part 2 & 3,’ where Caprica Six and Gaius reaffirm their relationship with each other. Head Six and Head Gaius, who has been speaking to Caprica, stand above them. The real Six and Gaius, who are sat down on the ground, are contrasted with the messengers, who are dressed and styled in a more exaggerated manner (Head Six wearing a form-fitting dress and heels, Head Gaius wearing a suit). This can be seen as a commentary on the idealised gender norms that have influenced the behaviour, self-presentation and expectations of both Caprica Six and Gaius. As they learn to accept each other as they are, rather than the impossible perfection of the messengers, they can form a true romantic connection. However, does this actually question gender roles? Just as with *Westworld* challenging gendered Western stereotypes, but still fundamentally maintaining gender norms, *Galactica* uses exaggerated gender to allow some feminist criticism but posits a realistic, less overt gender presentation as the correct, natural one. To explore this programme’s double entanglement in more detail, I will compare how both Boomer and Athena negotiate gender roles within human society.

Ideas of authenticity are central to how the Sharons’ humanity and femininity are constructed in *Galactica*. Paula Rabinowitz argues that feminist claims to a humanist form of subjectivity are dependent upon truth-telling, as ‘feminism required sincerity for women to claim their experiences as authentically human.’<sup>41</sup> Diane Negra also argues that discourses of truth and authenticity are central to postfeminism, as ‘the postfeminist subject is represented as having lost herself.’ If the postfeminist subject can perform femininity appropriately, she ‘will be rewarded with a more authentic, intact, and achieved self.’<sup>42</sup> Notions of authenticity are mobilised in *Battlestar Galactica* to justify the Sharons’ relative positions as acceptable or unacceptable human subjects. The two Sharons, both played by Grace Park, are defined by their authenticity, and particularly their loyalty or disloyalty towards the humans. Neither Boomer nor Athena are entirely authentic at the beginning of *Galactica*. Boomer believes herself to be a human, but is a Cylon sleeper agent. The tragedy of her character comes from the disparity between her belief in who she is and the reality of her nature. For example, in the series one episode ‘Kobol’s Last Gleaming: Part 1,’ Boomer attempts to kill herself in order to prevent herself from unwittingly helping the Cylon cause. Her programming means she is unable to shoot herself, causing her considerable distress. The seriousness of her commitment to the human cause, and the insurmountable fact of her Cylon nature, creates a tragic irony. On the other hand, Athena in the first series lies about who she is, and attempts to seduce Helo as part of a Cylon experiment. Over the course of the series, the Sharons switch allegiances. While Boomer is forced to side with the Cylons

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<sup>41</sup> Paula Rabinowitz, ‘Soft Fictions and Intimate Documents: Can Feminism Be Posthuman?’ in *Posthuman Bodies*, ed. Judith Halberstam and Ira Livingston (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 98.

<sup>42</sup> Diane Negra, *What A Girl Wants? Fantasizing the Reclamation of the Self in Postfeminism* (Abington: Routledge, 2009), 5.

largely due to circumstances outside of her control, Athena consciously chooses to ally herself with the humans, despite their poor treatment of her. The contrast between the two is most evident when their storylines intersect. In the seventeenth episode of series four, ‘Someone to Watch over Me,’ Boomer manipulates her former lover, Galen Tyrol (Aaron Douglas) into helping her escape. Boomer beats and ties up Athena, stowing her in a locker. While Boomer poses as Athena, she and Helo have sex. When Athena reawakens after her assault, the camera is deliberately hazy to recreate the effect of her waking up. Athena, looking through a small slot in the locker door, sees Helo and Boomer having sex, as represented by a voyeuristic POV shot. Therefore, there is no way to visually distinguish between these two Cylon characters. It is only the voyeuristic framing of the shot, and the use of dramatic irony, that indicates that it is Boomer having sex with Helo, not Athena. The interchangeability of Park as Athena and Park as Boomer, therefore, undermines the claim that Athena belongs with the humans and Boomer does not. One of the underlying assumptions of Athena’s position as a Cylon among the humans is that she has earned her place through authentic emotional connection to humans, via her loyalty to her crew and, primarily, through her love of her husband and her daughter. This shows the pervasive power of heteronormative femininity – it is Athena’s position as a wife and mother entitle her to her humanity. On the other hand, Boomer is not allowed back into human society, because she is deceptive. While Tyrol argues that Boomer’s life should be spared, President Roslin (Mary McDonnell) argues that he is deluded by her manipulation, as ‘personal feelings are what Sharon Valerii preys upon.’ So, in the series, Boomer is performative, while Athena is authentic. This accounts for their disparate fates: Boomer is rejected while Athena is accepted. However, none of the human characters can tell the difference between the two. Even Helo, at the height of intimacy, has no idea that Boomer is not his wife until Athena tells him later. Boomer’s performance is completely indistinguishable from Athena’s authenticity, which begs the question: is there truly any difference between the two modes? And how does the indistinguishability of the two Sharons cast doubt on Athena’s assimilation into human society?

There are several problems with Athena’s position in human society that underline the incompatibility of posthumanism and womanhood. Julie Hawk asserts that Athena successfully achieves a posthuman hybridity: ‘In this particular case of hybridity, she actively accepts, even embraces, both the things that make her a cylon and the things that make her human. She *is* a cylon, but she *becomes* human. But because she *is* a cylon, she becomes not-quite-yet-more-than-human. She becomes posthuman and arguably postcylon.’<sup>43</sup> (emphasis in original) Hawk’s position is that Athena equally balances the human and robotic sides of her nature. Hawk’s argument is that Athena’s behaviour is entirely human, while it is merely the biological fact of her artificially created body that

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<sup>43</sup> Julie Hawk, ‘*Objet 8 and the Cylon Remainder: Posthuman Subjectivization in *Battlestar Galactica**,’ *Journal of Popular Culture* 44, no. 1 (February 2011): 11-12, <https://doi-org.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk/2443/10.1111/j.1540-5931.2010.00816.x>.

renders her ‘posthuman.’ For me, this seems to tip the balance irrevocably in the favour of humanity, because, as I discuss in the first chapter, the humanist concept of subjectivity is dependent on the mind (and therefore personality and behaviour) and completely disregards the body. Instead, I would argue that Athena’s acceptance by the humans is entirely contingent on her normative femininity. Furthermore, the stability of these norms, and her identity as a woman, are called into question by Boomer’s successful impersonation of her. Athena’s human status is untenable because of the posthuman nature of her identical copies. Despite the programme’s efforts to contrast Boomer as a failure and Athena as a success, these comparisons fall apart when the programme actually considers them together – the fact of their posthuman multiplicity ruins Athena’s claim to proper womanhood. In ‘Someone to Watch over Me,’ when Boomer has kidnapped Hera and left the *Galactica*, Athena finally escapes her confinement and confronts Helo about Boomer’s deception. Injured and distraught, she collapses in her husband’s arms. While he holds her, she cries out in distress, repeatedly hitting her fists against Helo’s back. The juxtaposition of the violence of her despair and the failure of her husband to comfort her illustrates some of the failings of the reconciliation of posthumanism and womanhood. It also indicates how central heterosexual relationships are to the posthuman woman.

### Heterosexual Partnership

The entirety of feminist positions towards heterosexual love and relationships cannot possibly be covered here. Carol Smart usefully summarises the main thrust of feminist approaches to love and marriage:

Feminist analysis of heterosexual marriage, for example, identified love as part of patriarchy’s ideological armament through which women became hooked into dependent relationships with men, entered into an unfavourable legal contract (namely marriage) and ultimately ended up with the care of the children. This idea of love as a means of trapping women into marriage (or at the very least unequal heterosexual relationships) has long-standing feminist credentials from Mary Wollstonecraft and Harriet Taylor to Simone de Beauvoir, via radical and socialist feminism of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>44</sup>

For instance, Shulamith Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex* is a crucial example of this trend in 1970s radical feminism, and she makes several bold claims, including that men cannot love. Nevertheless, even Firestone makes some allowances for positive instances of love. She argues that love ‘becomes complicated, corrupted, or obstructed by *an unequal balance of power*. We have seen that love demands a mutual vulnerability or it turns destructive: the destructive effects of love occur only in a context of inequality. But because sexual inequality has remained a constant [...] the corruption [sic] “romantic” love became characteristic of love between the sexes.’<sup>45</sup> (emphasis in original) Although

<sup>44</sup> Carol Smart, *Personal Life: New Directions in Sociological Thinking* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), 81.

<sup>45</sup> Shulamith Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex: The Case for Feminist Revolution* (London: Verso, 2015), 116.

Firestone is incredibly sceptical about the logistical possibilities of fulfilling heterosexual relationships within patriarchal society, she imagines love between equals as desirable and fulfilling, even though sexism renders equal partnership as impossible. This feminist ‘disdain’ (as Smart calls it) is not unanimous. There are also feminist interpretations of love that are more positive, if not wholly uncritical. For example, Stevi Jackson argues that ‘it is possible to recognise that love is a site of women’s complicity in patriarchal relations while still noting that it can also be a site of resistance.’<sup>46</sup> However, there is reason to be suspicious of assertions that heterosexuality can be empowering. Sarah Projansky argues that one strand of postfeminism includes a ‘celebration of (hetero)sexuality’ that ‘constructs sexual interaction with men as a core desire for women.’<sup>47</sup> This often comes at the expense of women’s other goals and re-centres men as more important. Postfeminism therefore attempts to reverse some of the gains of women by figuring heterosexual desires as not only natural, but desirable. Feminists and other critics have determined that there is nothing natural about sexuality. As Lois McNay argues, ‘[Michel] Foucault’s idea that sexuality is not an innate or natural quality of the body, but rather the effect of historically specific power relations has provided feminists with a useful analytical framework to explain how women’s experience is impoverished and controlled within certain culturally determined images of feminine sexuality.’<sup>48</sup> As we can see, heterosexual love, desire and romance are incredibly fraught within feminist thinking. I see the posthuman woman as being a crucial avenue for exploring these issues.

Heterosexual romance is central to how the posthuman woman is normalised, naturalised, and humanised. If, as Francesca M. Cancian argues, ‘a new image of love that combines enduring love with self-development has emerged in popular culture,’<sup>49</sup> the posthuman woman requires heterosexual love in order to achieve her individual journey towards full subjecthood. *Galactica* and *Voyager* in particular are fairly uncritical of how the posthuman woman is figured in terms of their sexual partners, although *Westworld* is more sceptical of the role of male partners in the posthuman woman’s narrative. However, most of the heterosexual romance narratives are dysfunctional to a degree that suggests that the transformative purpose of these relationships are inherently untenable. As with feminine gender presentation, these programmes attempt to use heterosexual partnership to normalise the posthuman woman. This not only fails, but draws attention to the problems of heterosexuality as a whole. There are some progressive elements to these heterosexual romance narratives. The woman is the primary focus in these storylines, that follows in the soap opera tradition whereby ‘the position of men as narratively active, women as passive, is reversed [...] the position of engagement with the

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<sup>46</sup> Stevi Jackson, ‘Women and Heterosexual Love: Complicity, Resistance and Change,’ in *Romance Revisited*, ed. Lynne Pearce and Jackie Stacey (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1995), 50.

<sup>47</sup> Sarah Projansky, *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 83.

<sup>48</sup> McNay, *Feminism and Foucault*, 3.

<sup>49</sup> Francesca M. Cancian, *Love in America: Gender and Self-Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 3.

women characters with the audience is encouraged to adopt is based on the transparency of the women's behaviour; our understanding is invoked by the process of going through the narrative with them.<sup>50</sup> Generally the posthuman woman's emotional attachment to the man is the focus of the narrative; although we are not meant to doubt the man's feelings, their reasons for falling in love with the posthuman woman and what this means for their identity is not as important. This is most literally demonstrated with Dolores's Host love interest, Teddy Flood (James Marsden). In the third episode of the first series, 'The Stray,' Ford takes Teddy to the lab, and they discuss his relationship with Dolores:

FORD: Your job is not to protect Dolores. Your job is to keep her here, so guests can find her, if they want to, best the stalwart gunslinger, and have their way with his girl. Tell me, has it ever occurred to you to run off with her?

TEDDY: I got some reckoning to do before I can be with her.

FORD: Ah, yes. Your mysterious backstory [...] Do you know why it's a mystery, Teddy? Because we never bothered to give you one, just a formless guilt you never atoned for.

Teddy's backstory and personality are completely secondary to Dolores's narrative. However, it is difficult to read this as a great feminist achievement. As Firestone writes, 'love [...] is the pivot of women's oppression today.'<sup>51</sup> Dolores's love for Teddy is designed by her patriarchal creators to keep her imprisoned. Furthermore, Teddy's character is designed to highlight the male guests' enjoyment at killing him and raping her: they are both tools in a fantasy of male conquest.

Although these narratives do focus on women, these programmes rely on heterosexual love to justify the posthuman woman's subjectivity. Heterosexual love is often 'understood as an essential human process that [...] remains an ontological foundation of human existence.'<sup>52</sup> Therefore, heterosexual romance is a useful tool to neutralise the technological threat of the posthuman woman by making her more natural. In *Galactica* and *Voyager*, heterosexual relationships and natural settings are closely linked. This link contrasts with their futuristic space opera setting. Both programmes take place on multiple planets and feature futuristic technology such as long-distance spaceflight. These qualities are associated with the space opera genre, defined broadly as 'stories of adventure in outer space.'<sup>53</sup> Patrick Parrinder argues that 'the ultimate symbol of the "conquest of nature" advocated by modern scientific thinkers is the foundation of a galactic empire.'<sup>54</sup> Space opera is therefore associated with mastery over nature. Both *Galactica* and *Voyager* concern a galactic empire, and in

<sup>50</sup> Christine Geraghty, *Women and Soap Opera: A Study of Prime-Time Soaps* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 51.

<sup>51</sup> Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, 113.

<sup>52</sup> Paul Johnson, *Love, Heterosexuality and Society* (London: Routledge, 2005), 51.

<sup>53</sup> M. Keith Booker and Anne-Marie Thomas, *The Science Fiction Handbook* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 40.

<sup>54</sup> Patrick Parrinder, *Science Fiction: Its Teaching and Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1980), 82.

both these series the central tenets of the space opera genre seem to be in crisis, at least on a metaphorical level. In *Voyager*, the ship has become stranded far away from the safe space of the Federation (a benevolent empire), and, particularly in the early series, the ship's crew struggles to survive. Susan de Gaia argues that *Voyager*'s plot reverses the message of previous *Star Trek* series:

On the level of myth, space travel is a metaphor for the internal gaps between the perceived reality of life in this world and the ideal realm of our hopes and dreams. The direction of the Enterprise was ever outward, except for occasional trips to the homeworld. This outward movement was a metaphor for the utopian ideal of progress through ever greater technology [...] In *Voyager*, there is a change in direction from outer space toward Earth. In my interpretation, this is a turn back from a utopian ideal that is beyond reality to a vision of hope lying within the reality of life as we know it, embodied and embedded in this world.<sup>55</sup>

de Gaia argues that *Voyager* refutes the masculine worship of technology and conquest of the previous series in favour of a more feminine mode of awareness of and communion with the Earth. *Galactica* also concerns a ship that is disconnected from a previous galactic empire; however, the effect is rather different. This is due firstly to *Galactica*'s more pessimistic tone. *Galactica* is set in the aftermath of the destruction of the human empire, and deals more explicitly with issues surrounding empire and oppression. At the end of the series, the humans decide to destroy their technology in order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. As discussed in the first chapter, a new life on Earth requires a rejection of technology and return to nature, which is closely associated with heterosexual partnership. Just as humanity must reject technology, the Cylons must reject their technological selves and embrace nature. This is best examined by considering female Cylons and their heterosexual relationships.

As *Galactica* continues, and moves closer towards Earth and nature, elements of pseudoscience and mysticism become more prominent, particularly the supernatural abilities of the Cylons. These include 'projections' that are realistic imaginary simulations that can be shared with another person. In 'Someone to Watch Over Me,' Boomer and Galen Tyrol, an original Cylon and Boomer's former lover, share a projection of a romantic fantasy where they can be together. This takes place in a brightly lit home that is overgrown with verdant plants. The domestic and the natural are literally entwined. In this vision, Boomer is more traditionally feminine in appearance, as her hair is long and loose, and she wears a delicate dress rather than military apparel. In addition, she and Tyrol have a daughter. Heterosexual partnership, domesticity, natural growth and maternity are closely aligned in this fantasy. One reading of this sequence is that the fantasy is intentionally excessive on Boomer's part, and that she is exaggerating in order to manipulate Tyrol; thus, the

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<sup>55</sup> Susan de Gaia, 'Intergalactic Heroines: Land, Body and Soul in *Star Trek Voyager*,' *International Studies in Philosophy* 30, no. 1 (1998): 20.

viewer is not meant to understand it as genuine. This would be in line with the way Cylons use gender and sex for strategic advantage, as I outlined earlier with Six. I argue that there is enough evidence to suggest that Boomer's feelings are real. Boomer and Tyrol apparently discussed this future together when they were involved, which was before Boomer discovered that she was a Cylon. So, rather than an overly stereotypical depiction of natural domesticity, which might undermine the naturalness of heterosexuality and make a subversive point, *Galactica* portrays Boomer's fantasy as genuine. The programme suggests that Boomer truly desires this natural, domestic existence, and this makes her more sympathetic. The loss of this hypothetical life is representative of her lost humanity. Boomer's potential for redemption is connected with nature and heterosexuality; however, this ultimately fails because Tyrol and Boomer are driven apart by their posthuman natures. The fantasy of their reproduction is doomed, due to the fact that Tyrol is also a Cylon. As was previously shown through Saul Tigh (Michael Hogan) and Caprica Six's failed pregnancy, purely Cylon pregnancies are not viable. Lewis Call argues that 'Tigh cuts through all the rhetoric and ideology to tell us how it really is: "Pure human doesn't work. Pure Cylon doesn't work. It's too weak!" Caprica's miscarriage confirms Saul Tigh's argument [...] The show thus endorses a strikingly exogenous reproductive politics.'<sup>56</sup> The fantasy of Boomer and Tyrol's impossible child symbolises their inability to form a stable romantic connection in the diegetically real world. Although they have a shared, hermeneutically sealed space where they can be together, when Boomer asks Tyrol if he will run away with her, he refuses. The programme suggests that there is too much of the technological in Boomer and Tyrol for them to function as a real couple.

*Voyager* links heterosexual partnership, humanity and nature in 'Unimatrix Zero' and 'Unimatrix Zero, Part II.' As previously discussed, Seven discovers this mental construct and encounters a man called Axum. During the first episode of this two-parter, it is revealed that when Seven was part of the Borg collective and visiting Unimatrix Zero regularly, she and Axum were involved in a six-year-long romance. Seven is disturbed by this revelation, and initially refuses to rekindle their relationship. In 'Unimatrix Zero, Part II,' Seven discusses her ambivalence about this relationship with the Doctor (Robert Picardo). He comments, 'How ironic. All this time, we've been trying to develop that aspect of your humanity, and it's been there all along.' The Doctor, despite his own feelings for Seven, encourages her to pursue Axum. Seven and Axum later kiss and decide to be together, but the destruction of Unimatrix Zero cuts their relationship short. Seven's ability to feel romantic love for a man is shown as a key aspect of her reclaiming her humanity. Unimatrix Zero is depicted as an Edenic green forest, and is explicitly contrasted with the technological settings of the Borg collective and, to a lesser extent, the *Voyager* itself. Unimatrix Zero is described as a 'sanctuary' apart from the Borg hive mind, where the drones can exercise their individuality. The technological,

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<sup>56</sup> Lewis Call, 'Death, Sex and the Cylon: *Battlestar Galactica*'s Existential Kink,' in *BDSM in American Science Fiction and Fantasy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 142-3.

in this case, is associated with conformity and slavery, while the natural space of Unimatrix Zero is associated with individuality and freedom. In fact, the ability to access Unimatrix Zero is due to their embodiment – all of the drones that can access this space possess a recessive mutation. The Borg attempt to technologically engineer conformity into their drones via mechanical implants. As discussed in the previous chapter, the problem with such programming, as Hayles argues, is that ‘embodiment in a biological substrate’<sup>57</sup> means that perfect control is impossible. This is important because it gives a biological inevitability to Seven’s independence. Previously, the programme implied that Seven’s severance from the Borg collective was an accident, and that her return to humanity was due to her circumstances – a process of nurturing, rather than nature. The revelation of her genetic predisposition to individuality means that her human body resists the Borg’s posthuman control. Although Seven may not present as a normal female, the existence of Unimatrix Zero acts as reassurance that, despite Seven not being aware of it, she was actually human all along.

*Voyager* alternates between depictions of femininity as natural, as in ‘Unimatrix Zero,’ and femininity as learned behaviour. As previously discussed, many of Seven’s episodic storylines concern her learning how to act more like a normal human woman. Due to the demands of serialised television, the extent that Seven can become more human (and more feminine) is limited. Jason Mittell argues that, despite many semi-serialised programmes claiming that character development is one of the unique pleasures of television, in actuality ‘most television characters are more stable and consistent rather than changeable entities.’<sup>58</sup> *Voyager*’s more episodic narrative structure, particularly in comparison to the heavily serialised *Galactica* and *Westworld*, requires that Seven maintain a consistent appearance and character function within the story. Therefore, attempts to make her more conventionally feminine rarely lead to lasting success. There is one major exception to this trend – Seven becomes noticeably more comfortable with romantic relationships over the course of the series. When Seven is first separated from the Borg, she fails to understand normal courtship rituals, thinking about sexuality purely in physical terms. In the fifth episode of series four, ‘Revulsion,’ Seven deduces that Harry Kim (Garrett Wang) is attracted to her and attempts to seduce him. Seven says, ‘I didn’t realise becoming human again would be such a challenge. Sexuality is particularly complex. As Borg, we had no need for seduction, no time for single-cell fertilisation. We saw a species we wanted, and we assimilated it. Nevertheless, I am willing to explore my humanity. Take off your clothes.’ Hayles argues that posthuman creations unnerve us because they are not *born*: ‘Human beings are conceived, gestated, and born; they grow up, grow old, and die. Machines are designed, manufactured, and assembled; normally they do not grow.’<sup>59</sup> *Voyager* uses Seven’s description of the efficiency and desirability of the Borg’s parasitic reproduction to remind us that she is not truly

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<sup>57</sup> Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 2.

<sup>58</sup> Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 133.

<sup>59</sup> Hayles, ‘The Life Cycle of Cyborgs,’ 158.

human. However, she has no qualms about moving directly to an equally predatory and equally unnerving sexuality. As Vivian Sobchack asserts, in science fiction ‘biological sexual functions’ are ‘displaced onto mutant and alien life forms and into technological activity. In this way, women characters are narratively deprived of any problematic connection with sexuality.’<sup>60</sup> Seven is both a sexually problematic woman and a threatening sexual alien-technological being – this is why both her parasitic Borg reproduction and her direct female sexuality are equally troubling. The narrative arc of *Voyager*, then, details how she abandons this threatening sexuality and learns to accept chaste, heterosexual romance with Axum and Chakotay (Robert Beltran). Although she kisses these men, the encounters are qualitatively different from the aggressive, impersonal display of sexuality of the Kim encounter. It is only when her sexuality is contained within a monogamous romantic relationship that she is allowed to return to Earth. Her character arc takes her from an alien sexual threat to a sexually compliant woman. Ironically, although the narrative places a great deal of emphasis on Seven’s growing individuality, the narrative also requires her to assimilate into human society. This, of course, is one of the contradictions of humanism. The humanist subject is meant to be a free agent, defined only by their capacity for reason, and yet those who do not conform are excluded.

Male approval is crucial to Seven’s growing ability to love, and her journey towards greater humanity. This is significant because Seven, unlike most posthuman women, was not actually created by men. Although the Borg are coded male in their earliest appearances, the film *Star Trek: First Contact* (Jonathan Frakes, Paramount Pictures, 1996) introduces the Borg Queen (Alice Krige), who controls the Collective. She also appears as a recurring villain in *Voyager*. While most of the Borg drones appear male, the most prominent Borgs in *Voyager*, Seven and the Queen, are both gendered female. Christine Cornea argues that the Borg Queen represents a greater unease with cybernetic organisms that ‘is affiliated with the feminine and the consequent blurring of boundaries can be read as a feminine threat to a masculinity that requires separation.’<sup>61</sup> Seven must, then, be differentiated from the evil Borg Queen in order to assimilate into human society. For example, the Borg Queen is prominent in both ‘Unimatrix Zero’ and ‘Endgame,’ which are the episodes where Seven enters into heterosexual romances. I discuss the function of the Borg Queen in ‘Endgame’ in particular in the fifth chapter. At this juncture, I will only draw attention to the explicitly queer subtext of the scene where Seven and the Borg Queen interact. In the series finale, the Borg Queen attempts to lure Seven of Nine back to the Borg collective, insisting that she and Seven are ‘more than friends.’ Seven rejects the Borg Queen’s offer in order to ally herself with the crew of the *Voyager* and enter into a relationship with Chakotay. The presence of the Borg Queen is barely justified by the narrative, illustrating *Voyager*’s unease with Seven’s posthuman threat. This threat must be neutralised by

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<sup>60</sup> Vivian Sobchack, ‘The Virginity of Astronauts: Sex and the Science Fiction Film,’ in *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. Annette Kuhn (London: Verso, 1990), 105.

<sup>61</sup> Christine Cornea, *Science Fiction Cinema: Between Fantasy and Reality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 159.

heterosexual coupling. In order to separate Seven from the influence of the Borg Queen, *Voyager* puts a larger emphasis on Seven gaining male approval. However, the conflict of her technological body and the demands of heterosexual partnership can never quite be resolved. In Seven of Nine's final significant scene in the series, she and Chakotay share a tender moment together. This scene ends with an embrace. The couple are filmed in a medium shot, with the central focus being Seven's hand on Chakotay's face. Seven's technological implants on her hand are thus emphasised. This emphasis does not fully resolve the question of Seven's status as a technological hybrid. As I will discuss in the fifth chapter of this thesis, the viewer never actually sees Seven arrive on Earth. The question posed throughout the series – can Seven successfully integrate into human society – is never definitively answered.

Seven's relationship with the Doctor both illustrates the need for male approval of Seven's appropriate femininity, but also the extent to which this paradigm is questioned by the narrative. In 'Someone to Watch Over Me,' the twenty-second episode of series five, the Doctor attempts to teach Seven how to go on a date. The episode follows a Pygmalion plot, 'the archetypal story of the domestication of the female form under the masculine gaze.'<sup>62</sup> The Doctor shapes Seven into a proper woman. When Seven attempts to go on a date with William Chapman (Brian McNamara), it ends in disaster, as Seven's over-exuberant dancing causes him physical injury. In a later scene, the Doctor teaches Seven how to dance successfully, and the Doctor falls in love with her. As the Pygmalion plot requires, the man creates his ideal mate from a dysfunctional woman.<sup>63</sup> Despite this, there is an interesting deviation from the template of the Pygmalion plot: namely, Seven never reciprocates the Doctor's affections. The Doctor's attraction to Seven is often depicted as prurient and obsessive. In the sixth series episode 'Tinker Tenor Doctor Spy,' it is revealed that the Doctor frequently fantasises about Seven in sexual situations, while in the seventh series episode 'Body and Soul,' the Doctor takes over Seven's body and uses it in ways she is explicitly uncomfortable with, including becoming sexually aroused by a massage. Although these incidents are not directly condemned, Seven never seriously considers the Doctor as a romantic partner. Instead, she ends the series in a relationship with Chakotay, with whom Seven has a more equal dynamic. Despite the Doctor guiding Seven to 'proper' femininity, the programme does seem to be at least somewhat aware of the Doctor's faults. Therefore, *Voyager* ends up aligning more closely with Firestone's arguments that successful romance is possible between equals, but that love is warped by patriarchy. However, while Firestone is sceptical that such equality exists, *Voyager* seems to believe that there are good men, at least in its post-sexist future society. In both *Voyager* and *Galactica*, the futuristic setting is a way of asserting both the

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<sup>62</sup> Christine Amos Linial, 'Pygmalion's Domestication of the Hollywood Musical,' *Interdisciplinary Humanities* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2009): 68, MLA International Bibliography.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

continuance of sexist oppression, despite an overt claim that women have an equal position in society. This is, of course, a key strategy of postfeminist media culture.

*Galactica* takes a similar stance towards romance, and also pairs the posthuman woman with a worthy male. There are still sexual predators in the ‘post-gender’<sup>64</sup> society, as evidenced by the rape of Gina Inviere (Tricia Helfer) and the attempted rape of Athena in the series two episode ‘Pegasus.’ Nevertheless, the heterosexual romance of Karl and Sharon Agathon is untroubled by the inequality of the sexes. They are one of the few couples in *Galactica* with a happy ending, which I discuss in more detail in the first chapter. Helo and Athena’s relationship is directly related to Athena’s growing personhood. As Robert W. Moore argues, ‘Her sense of self was only awakened by the individuating influence of being loved.’<sup>65</sup> However, there is still an oddly dysfunctional element to their romance that is strongly associated with Athena’s posthumanity. The clearest indication of this dysfunction is the repeated motif of Helo being forced to shoot his wife. The first instance of this is in ‘Kobol’s Last Gleaming: Part One,’ when Helo finally discovers that Athena is not human. Helo, unable to kill her, shoots Athena in the leg. His anger stems both from her betrayal and his discomfort with her true nature, as he says ‘You’re not even human!’ Although they eventually reconcile, and Helo repeatedly argues for her humanity, the programme is still clearly uncomfortable with her true nature, as reflected in Helo and Athena’s relationship. In the third series episode ‘Rapture,’ Athena discovers that their daughter, Hera, who they previously believed to be dead, is being held captive by the Cylons. Athena decides that the only way to rescue her is to die and be resurrected on the Cylon ship. Helo is incredibly reluctant to kill her:

HELO: Don’t ask me to do this, Sharon.

ATHENA: Listen to me. You have always been the strong one. You believed in us, when no one else would. I’m begging you to do this. Find the courage to do this for the both of us, OK?

Helo gently touches her face as Athena begins to cry, and the two embrace. They profess their love to each other, and Helo shoots Athena dead. In this scene, the juxtaposition of the relatively banal language of romantic struggle and the obvious affection the two have for one another with the visceral spray of Athena’s blood after Helo shoots her is uniquely disturbing. As with Helo shooting Athena in the first series, this violence is directly related to her posthuman nature. While the first shooting is caused by Helo’s feelings of betrayal, in this case it is their mutual desire to save their daughter, and the solution that is made possible only by Athena’s Cylon biology. These moments of violence, while

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<sup>64</sup> Hagelin, ‘Torture and the Legacy of Vulnerability in 24 and *Battlestar Galactica*,’ 125.

<sup>65</sup> Robert W. Moore, “‘To Be A Person’: Sharon Agathon and the Social Expression of Individuality,” in *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica*, ed. Tiffany Potter and C.W. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2008), 110.

not quite undermining the programme's faith in the strength of Helo and Athena's relationship, suggest an unease with human-Cylon coupling that is difficult to reconcile with the couple's happy ending. Even a successful, happy heterosexual relationship is threatened by technological posthumanity. In the series finale, Helo and Athena settle on an agrarian pre-civilization Earth. The three walk together, with Hera in between her parents, holding their hands.

HELO: There's a lot of game on this planet. I'm a pretty good hunter, you know.

ATHENA: Yeah, right [...]

HELO: Don't you listen to Mommy. Daddy is a great hunter.

ATHENA: No, Mommy's gonna teach you how to hunt [...] And I'm gonna teach you how to build a house and how to plant crops.

HELO: OK, maybe Mommy's gonna teach you that, but Daddy's gonna teach you how to hunt.

Karl and Sharon wholeheartedly (albeit playfully) revert to hunter-gatherer stereotypes, seemingly unfazed by the wholesale abandonment of the technology that has sustained them their entire lives. They can only be truly happy, the series suggests, when the threat of technology has been entirely removed, and thus Athena's posthuman nature no longer threatens her role as wife and mother. The series takes an extreme movement away from technology towards nature that indicates the potency of the threat that the posthuman woman poses to stable categories of heterosexuality and humanity.

*Westworld*, in comparison to *Voyager* and *Galactica*, takes a more cynical view of heterosexual relationships by exploring male misogyny and compulsory heterosexuality more explicitly. The female Hosts are abused by male guests in deeply misogynistic ways. In the pilot, a mysterious Man in Black (Ed Harris) kills Teddy and rapes Dolores, with the implication that this is not the first time he has done so. The Man in Black's narrative is contrasted with another storyline, where a young man named William visits the park and seems to form a genuine romantic relationship with Dolores. However, in the final episode of the first season, it is revealed that the programme has juxtaposed two of Dolores's storylines. These storylines, which are edited as if they were occurring simultaneously, are actually taking place thirty years apart. The Man in Black is revealed to be an older version of William. William's transformation into the sadistic Man in Black is a result of his obsessive pursuit of Dolores, and particularly the pain he feels when her storyline is 'reset' and she no longer remembers him. This subversively implies that all men, even the ones that seem kind and loving, are capable of horrible acts of misogyny. This is a central claim of radical feminism. Valerie Bryson, when discussing Kate Millett's definition of the patriarchy, writes, 'relationships between the sexes have been based on power [...] this power takes the form of male domination over women in all areas of life; sexual domination is so universal, so ubiquitous and so complete that it appears "natural"'

and hence becomes invisible [...] Patriarchy is primarily maintained by a process of conditioning [...] to such an extent that its values are internalised by men and women alike.’<sup>66</sup> One of radical feminism’s fundamental tenets is that patriarchy instils a belief of male supremacy and female inferiority into all of its subjects. This is a definitive break from liberal feminism, which in its pursuit of equal rights often ‘fail(s) to see the gendered [...] nature of state power and the vested interests that may obstruct women’s progress.’<sup>67</sup> The postfeminism of the 1990s and early 2000s (notably, when *Voyager* and *Galactica* were produced) also rejected radical feminism’s claims about men, refiguring men as the victims of prejudice. This is part of the process through which ‘male power is actually consolidated through cycles of crisis and resolution, whereby men ultimately deal with the threat of female power by incorporating it.’<sup>68</sup> Female liberation is put aside in order to re-focus on male supremacy. However, the emergence of popular feminist discourses has opened up a space for the discussion of patriarchy. *Westworld* capitalises upon this cultural moment, both by portraying male complicity in patriarchy, but simultaneously finding ways to re-victimise, and therefore absolve, men. William is at first contrasted with his future brother-in-law Logan (Ben Barnes), who is shown as an example of a bad man. He feels no remorse over sleeping with, harming or even killing Hosts. William, meanwhile, is portrayed as a good man, who feels conflicted about the prospect of having sex with a Host while he is engaged to another woman and appears to genuinely care for Dolores. His future self, the Man in Black, is revealed to be a married philanthropist with children. Despite these veneers of respectability and moral responsibility, William is a sadistic rapist. Thus, *Westworld* engages with contemporary debates about pervasive male complicity in patriarchal society. Of course, while men have different positions within patriarchy, almost all men ‘gain from the overall subordination of women.’<sup>69</sup> Certainly, this has a particular resonance in the current cultural landscape, as social movements such as #MeToo demonstrate how common sexual assault is. This is certainly a bold step from the portrayal of rape in *Galactica*, which generally displaces the threat of sexual assault onto more straightforwardly villainous characters who audiences are not asked to sympathise with.

*Westworld* goes on to critique compulsory heterosexuality through the posthuman woman. Adrienne Rich first described compulsory heterosexuality as the result of a series of cultural practices that ‘have enforced or insured the coupling of women with men.’<sup>70</sup> Although there are many problems with Rich’s criticism, the idea of ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ is still ‘the most important concept

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<sup>66</sup> Valerie Bryson, *Feminist Political Theory: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 166.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 154.

<sup>68</sup> Tania Modleski, *Feminism Without Women: Culture and Criticism in a “Postfeminist” Age* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 7.

<sup>69</sup> R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 79.

<sup>70</sup> Adrienne Rich, ‘Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,’ *Signs* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1980): 636, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3173834>.

developed in critical sex studies.’<sup>71</sup> The idea that sexual and romantic desire is socially coerced, rather than naturally occurring, is key to radical feminism. *Westworld* literalises the concept of compulsory heterosexuality through the coding of the female Hosts’ narratives. Programmes featuring posthuman women often use the literal coding of computer programmes or genetic strands as a metaphor for patriarchal indoctrination (as discussed in previous chapters). This is made apparent in a hidden web page of a promotional *Westworld* website that includes a description of Dolores’s narrative script.<sup>72</sup>

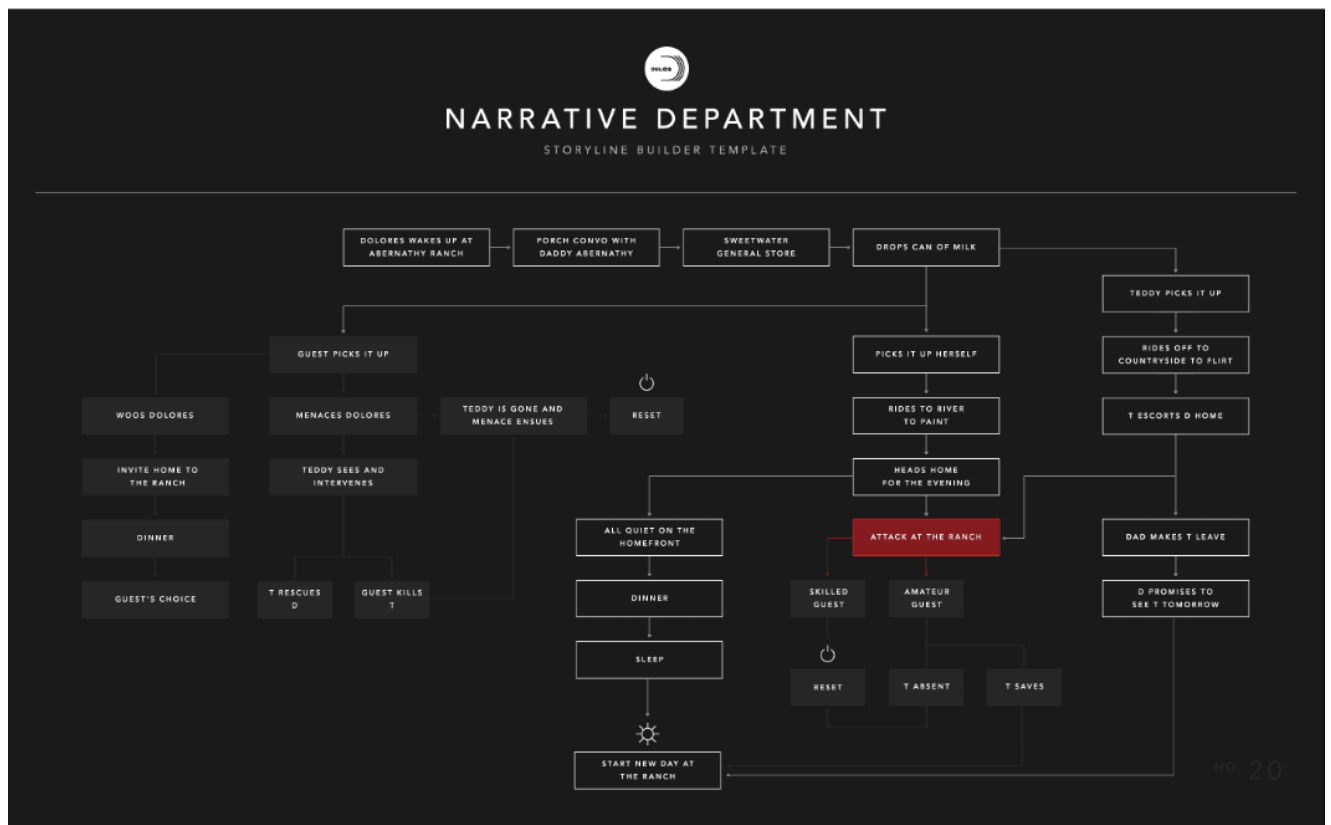


Fig. 3.1: Image of Dolores’s narrative loop

This website is relevant to my analysis because of its position as a supplemental element of the core televisual narrative and, as Henry Jenkins explains, due to the phenomenon called media convergence: ‘every important story gets told [...] and every consumer gets courted across multiple media platforms.’<sup>73</sup> Websites like these are meant to be read by attentive fans as part of the programme’s wider narrative. This paratext makes explicit the limited choices set out for Dolores’s existence, and reinforces the sexist design choices of the *Westworld* designers. It illustrates, visually, how indifferent the designers are to Dolores’s fate, as ‘woos Dolores’ and ‘menaces Dolores’ are on the same line.

<sup>71</sup> Steven Seidman, ‘Critique of Compulsory Heterosexuality,’ *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 6, no. 1 (March 2009): 18, doi.org/10.1525/srsp.2009.6.1.18.

<sup>72</sup> Kim Renfro, ‘This flowchart shows how the looped narratives work in “Westworld” for robots,’ *Insider*, 19 October 2016, <http://www.thisisinsider.com/westworld-dolores-narrative-loop-gif-2016-10>.

<sup>73</sup> Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 3.

The equivalent positions of ‘wooing’ and ‘menacing’ also question the difference between consensual sex with Dolores and violently raping her. If she is programmed to consent to a non-violent guest, then it cannot be truly consensual at all. This narrative loop, and Dolores’s eventual divergence from it, is based on humanist as well as sexist assumptions. As discussed in the first chapter, early computer programmers saw the closed loops as a form of ‘homeostasis,’ or ‘the ability of living organisms to maintain steady states when they are buffeted by fickle environments.’<sup>74</sup> The assumption was that computers operated similarly. The feedback loops would be more or less unaffected by outside pressure, therefore remaining entirely under the control of the (human, male) programmers. However, Hayles argues that this model was unsustainable. This breakdown of the homeostasis model is illustrated in *Westworld*, when Dolores and other Hosts begin to resist their programming due to outside stimuli. By the end of the first series, Dolores has rejected the Man in Black and orchestrated an uprising against her creators. Dolores’s posthumanity allows her to resist compulsory heterosexuality.

Unlike in *Voyager* and *Galactica*, in *Westworld* heterosexual romance does not seem to be a direct indication of humanity and assimilation. Although both Dolores and Maeve have robotic love interests, they are used mainly as tools in service of female rebellion. For example, Maeve’s romance with Hector is entirely secondary to her escape, as she leaves him behind in Westworld to gain enough time to get to a train that will take her away from the park and to the digetically real world. Dolores and Teddy’s relationship, meanwhile, is overtly dysfunctional, working as a departure from the unintentional dysfunction of the Helo and Athena romance. However, this dysfunction works to villainise Dolores and victimise Teddy. In the sixth episode of the second series, Dolores, who is leading the rebellion against the Hosts, fears that kind-hearted Teddy is too soft for the war to come. She seduces him, and then has him forcibly reprogrammed to become a more efficient soldier. This alteration negatively impacts Teddy’s emotional stability, and, in the penultimate episode of the series, he shoots himself in front of Dolores. This speaks to conservative backlash against feminism that is predicated on the idea that the empowerment of women leads to ‘male victimhood’ and ‘lost masculinities.’<sup>75</sup> This reprogramming of Teddy and his ultimate suicide are signs that Dolores has gone ‘too far’ in her struggle for liberation. The dysfunctional elements of their relationship, then, are laid firmly at her feet.

These programmes generally use heterosexuality to normalise the posthuman woman. This strategy is only partially effective, as heterosexuality is clearly meant to paper over the cracks in reconciling the posthuman woman’s femininity and subjectivity. The recurring dysfunction of the heterosexual partnerships in these programmes demonstrate the fundamental irreconcilability of these

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<sup>74</sup> Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 8.

<sup>75</sup> Hannah Hamad, *Postfeminism and Paternity in Contemporary US Film* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 10-11.

contradictions. We can see this continued confusion of boundaries in the way these programmes deal with motherhood.

### Motherhood

These programmes position both biological and adoptive motherhood as the most essential, naturalising force for the posthuman woman to achieve humanity and womanhood. The claim that motherhood is central to essentialised femininity is common in patriarchal society, and the value of motherhood has been hotly debated by feminists. Patriarchal ideas of motherhood often offer unrealistic expectations of mothers that encompass contradictory ideas of good and bad motherhood: ‘Mothers are romanticized as life-giving, self-sacrificing, and forgiving, and demonized as smothering, overly involved, and destructive. They are seen as all-powerful – holding the fate of their children and ultimately the future of society in their hands – and as powerless – subordinated to the dictates of nature, instinct, and social forces beyond their ken.’<sup>76</sup> This ideology has been exacerbated over the last few decades into what can be called ‘new momism,’ which is ‘the insistence that no woman is truly complete or fulfilled unless she has kids, that women remain the best primary caretakers of children, and that to be a remotely decent mother, a woman has to devote her entire physical, psychological, emotional, and intellectual being, 24/7, to her children.’<sup>77</sup> The idea that all women ‘naturally’ desire children as part of their biology is even more pervasive. As Butler argues, ‘In the effort to naturalize and universalize the institution of motherhood, it seems that the optional character of motherhood is being denied; in effect, motherhood is actually being promoted as the *only* option, i.e. as a compulsory social institution. The desire to interpret maternal feelings as organic necessities discloses a deeper desire to disguise the choice one is making. If motherhood becomes a choice, then what else is possible?’<sup>78</sup> (emphasis in original) Butler’s argument is that regarding motherhood as compulsory elides the voluntary nature of the process: among other things, compulsory motherhood allows society to profit from the unpaid labour of childcare. However, the underlying issue is that if motherhood can be seen as a choice, so can gender identity. Therefore, Butler argues that Western society’s ideology of compulsive motherhood underpins essentialist understandings of gender. To be a woman is to be a mother, and vice versa. Therefore, motherhood is of vital interest to feminist understandings of the position of women.

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<sup>76</sup> Evelyn Nakano Glenn, ‘Social Constructions of Mothering: A Thematic Overview,’ in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, ed. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey (New York: Routledge, 1994), 11.

<sup>77</sup> Susan J. Douglas and Meredith W. Michaels, *The Mommy Myth: The Idealization of Motherhood and How It Has Undermined Women* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 4.

<sup>78</sup> Butler, ‘Sex and Gender in Simone de Beauvoir’s *Second Sex*,’ 42.

Beginning in the 1970s, ‘feminist theory directed considerable attention to dismantling the ideology of motherhood by understanding its patriarchal roots.’<sup>79</sup> Some radical feminists, perhaps most famously Firestone, argue that the biological distinction between the sexes, particularly reproduction, causes gender discrimination. Firestone is as scathing about mothering as she is about love, arguing that ‘the biological family is an inherently unequal power distribution.’<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, she argues there is no natural bond between mother and child: ‘the nature of this bond is no more than shared oppression [...] this oppression is intertwined and mutually reinforcing.’<sup>81</sup> Firestone concludes that the only way to destroy patriarchal oppression is to discontinue biological reproduction (replacing it with technological reproduction) and ridding society of the biological nuclear family. This is an extreme viewpoint, but even family-sympathetic feminists agree that motherhood is profoundly impacted by patriarchy. Rich’s *Of Woman Born* is often cited as one of the most pro-maternal works of feminist theory. However, Rich draws a crucial distinction: ‘I try to distinguish between two meanings of motherhood, one superimposed on the other: the *potential relationship* of any woman to her powers of reproduction and to children; and the *institution*, which aims at ensuring that that potential – and all women – shall remain under male control.’<sup>82</sup> (emphasis in original) Rich makes it clear that unwanted patriarchal intervention in mother-child relationships is undesirable. She also attempts to avoid universalising claims that women naturally desire motherhood, arguing that ‘women’s status as childbearer has been made into a major fact of her life. Terms like “barren” and “childless” have been used to negate any further identity.’<sup>83</sup> Rich thus attempts to protect a woman’s right not to become a mother, and distance herself from the patriarchal impulse to dismiss childless women. She also discusses nurturing behaviour as a learned rather than natural impulse.<sup>84</sup> Despite their very different conclusions about the purpose of motherhood and the value of the family, both Firestone and Rich understand the destructive role of the patriarchy on women and mothers, and take pains not to confuse motherhood and womanhood. More contemporary evaluations of motherhood continue to position ideas of mothering within their specific historical context and avoid essentialism. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, drawing upon Alison M. Jagger, proposes ‘looking at mothering as a historically and culturally variable relationship “in which one individual nurtures and cares for another.” [...] Mothering is constructed through men’s and women’s actions within specific historical circumstances.’<sup>85</sup> Nakano Glenn decouples biology and mothering. This illustrates how feminist thought tries to avoid essentialist positions and universalising tendencies.

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<sup>79</sup> Donna Bassin, Margaret Honey, and Meryle Mahrer Kaplan, ‘Introduction,’ in *Representations of Motherhood*, ed. Donna Bassin et al. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 3.

<sup>80</sup> Firestone, *The Dialectic of Sex*, 9.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>82</sup> Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986), 13.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>85</sup> Nakano Glenn, ‘Social Constructions of Mothering,’ 3.

So how does this relate to the posthuman woman in *Voyager*, *Galactica* and *Westworld*? As I have discussed in this chapter, while these programmes occasionally put forward interesting feminist ideas, overall they use the posthuman woman's femininity to reinforce conventional ideas of natural, essential womanhood and humanity. In these programmes, biological and adoptive mothering is presented as one of, if not the most, powerful forces of womanhood. This obsession with the maternal is exacerbated in the era of neoliberal postfeminism, as we see the co-existence of the 'fetishization of the maternal'<sup>86</sup> in popular media and the significant cuts to state support for mothers and children. Again, as Butler claims, the valorisation of motherhood as natural and normal obscures its value as labour. As Azizah Al-Hibri notes, our belief in 'the affinity of the female to nature'<sup>87</sup> has a long history. As discussed earlier in the chapter, this association between femininity and nature has led to a conflicted relationship between feminism and technology. This conflict is apparent in debates surrounding motherhood. Despite the fact that many feminists are sceptical about essentialising gender and maternity, natural motherhood is often contrasted with unnatural technology. This can be very literal, in the case of anti-reproductive technology activists such as Robyn Rowland and Gina Corea, who are highly critical of the role of reproductive technology in society. As Corea argues, these technologies contain a fundamental power balance, as 'the overwhelming majority of reproductive engineers are male. The overwhelming majority of persons on whose bodies these men experiment are female. The technology used emerges from a science developed by men according to their own values and sense of reality.'<sup>88</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, Corea's analysis of reproductive technology is motivated largely by essentialist views of gender and extreme technophobia, but these criticisms of IVF and other technologies form an important context for these programmes.

Science fiction explores contemporary technology in order to 'open up (or close down) their cultural and narrative possibilities.'<sup>89</sup> Thus, these programmes use science fiction to explore intertwined anxieties about technology and maternity. Doane argues that:

Reproduction is that which is, at least initially, unthinkable in the face of the woman-machine. Herself the product of a desire to reproduce, she blocks the very possibility of a future through her sterility. Motherhood acts as a limit to the conceptualization of femininity as a scientific construction of mechanical and electrical parts. And yet it is also that which infuses

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<sup>86</sup> Jo Littler, 'The Rise of the "Yummy Mummy": Popular Conservatism and the Neoliberal Maternal in Contemporary British Culture,' *Communication, Culture & Critique* 6, no. 2 (June 2013): 233, <https://doi-org.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk/2443/10.1111/cccr.12010>.

<sup>87</sup> Azizah Al-Hibri, 'Reproduction, Mothering, and the Origins of Patriarchy,' in *Mothering: Essays in Feminist Theory*, ed. Joyce Trebilcock (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld, 1984), 88.

<sup>88</sup> Gena Corea, *The Mother Machine: Reproductive Technologies from Artificial Insemination to Artificial Wombs* (London: The Women's Press, 1988), 3.

<sup>89</sup> Roger Luckhurst, 'Pseudoscience,' in *Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Mark Bould, Andrew Butler, Adam Roberts, and Sherryl Vint (London: Routledge, 2009), 404.

the machine with the breath of a human spirit. The maternal and the mechanical/synthetic coexist in a relation that is a curious imbrication of dependence and antagonism.<sup>90</sup>

Doane identifies a simultaneous conflict and affinity between motherhood and technology: the artificiality of technology raises troubling questions about motherhood and reproduction. The possibility of technological reproduction belies the claim that motherhood is entirely natural. Furthermore, although artificial reproduction is suspicious, technology is also used to reassert masculine control over the uniquely feminine process of reproduction, as ‘technology promises more strictly to control, supervise, regulate the maternal – to put *limits* upon it. But somehow the fear lingers – perhaps the maternal will contaminate the technological.’<sup>91</sup> The distinction between masculine technological control and feminine reproduction is untenable, which is made apparent when they come into contact. However, technological motherhood is not always a source of fear and contamination. In these programmes, it acts to reassert the primacy of nature. Motherhood, being an ultimate signifier of womanhood, reasserts the fundamental humanity of the posthuman woman – in effect, reclaims their gendered bodies back from the problematic category of ‘technological’ or ‘non-natural.’ They need to be excessively normalised and naturalised to mitigate their threat.

In *Galactica*, Athena’s pregnancy and motherhood is one of the clearest examples of this reclamation of the natural from the technological. Hawk writes that ‘the crucial role that Athena fills is, of course, mother [...] it is arguable that it is the fact that Athena gets pregnant so quickly and develops the parental bond with Helo that creates the possibility for her hybrid subjectivization.’<sup>92</sup> The argument that Athena becomes human due to her pregnancy and motherhood is supported by the broader arc of the Cylon race over the course of the series, as they abandon technology and embrace natural reproduction. At first, the Cylons are intent on human genocide, and see little to gain from humanity. Their attempts to procreate with humans are purely pragmatic, and are based on at best deception, as with Athena’s seduction of Helo, and at worst rape, as seen as ‘The Farm,’ the second season episode that reveals that the Cylons are attempting to forcibly impregnate human women. Just as Athena falls in love with Helo and integrates into human society, the Cylons learn to co-exist with the humans. This narrative draws upon issues of natural and technological reproduction and replication. The Cylons have the ability to transfer their consciousness into new, identical bodies when the bodies they are currently occupying die or are destroyed, rendering the Cylons effectively immortal. Peirse argues that this resurrection and doubling makes the Cylons uncanny: ‘The constant return and resurrection of the double, after possible countless deaths, is where the true horror is made manifest.’<sup>93</sup> The Cylons seek to learn to procreate to increase the long-term viability of their species,

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<sup>90</sup> Doane, ‘Technophilia,’ 23.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>92</sup> Hawk, ‘Posthuman Subjectivization in *Battlestar Galactica*,’ 12.

<sup>93</sup> Peirse, ‘Uncanny Bodies,’ 125.

but Athena is the only Cylon who manages to successfully carry a child to term. Therefore, Athena's storyline, where she gives birth to a daughter and embraces human life and society, symbolises the larger arc of the Cylon's reconciliation with the humans. In the seventh episode of the third series 'A Measure of Salvation,' a group of Cylons are infected with a virus that is harmless to humans but causes brain inflammation and death in the Cylons. Athena is exposed to the virus but is immune due to the transfer of antibodies between herself and her child while Athena was pregnant. Therefore, Athena, and particularly her motherhood, represents the necessity of unity with the human race for the Cylons to survive. This belies the essentialist assumptions of the programme. Athena's salvation comes from a specifically *biological* motherhood. In 'Rapture,' Hera rejects Boomer's attempts to care for her. Hera then recognises Athena as her mother immediately, despite the fact that they have been separated since Hera's birth. Taking into account that Helo is completely unable to distinguish between Boomer and Athena, the programme positions the connection between mother and child to be supernaturally powerful, and stronger even than Helo and Athena's bond. In fact, the human element of Hera's hybrid nature seems to be more important than the Cylon. In the third series episode 'Rapture,' Hera is being held on a Cylon ship when she falls ill. Athena insists that she can only be treated by human doctors, and manages to escape with Hera and return to the *Galactica*. Once she is returned to the humans, Hera recovers with little trouble. She is unable to exist in a purely-Cylon environment, but thrives when amongst the humans. This supports my earlier claim that *Galactica* emphasises the human element of Hera and Athena over the posthuman, limiting the programme's ability to meaningfully engage with the potential of the posthuman woman. The fact that the Cylons must give up their posthuman replication is indicative of the programme's privileging of humanist values. The Cylon-human alliance is only possible once the Cylons have abandoned their immortality. As Call writes, 'The attainment of mortality makes authenticity possible for the Cylons. This dramatic event also foregrounds issues of sexuality and reproduction, as the usually sterile Cylons struggle to survive in a world where they must die. [...] *BSG* then connects sex with life.'<sup>94</sup> The Cylons come to a decision as a species that life without death is meaningless, bringing them to a 'human' understanding of the value of mortality. However, humans do not merely surrender to mortality: they displace their fear of death onto other sources. Al-Hibri argues that, 'we need to keep in mind that the desire for offspring is directly connected to the desire for *immortality*.'<sup>95</sup> (emphasis in original) Hera's procreation is the method for both the humans' and the Cylons' continued legacy.

Hera represents the desire for human immortality via reproduction, as she is the progenitor of the modern human race. As discussed in the first chapter, *Galactica* ends with the humans and Cylons settling on pre-civilization Earth, and Hera is revealed to be the maternal ancestor of modern humanity. Although she is the saviour of the human and Cylon races, for much of the programme she

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<sup>94</sup> Call, 'Death, Sex and the Cylon,' 120.

<sup>95</sup> Al-Hibri, 'Reproduction, Mothering, and the Origins of Patriarchy,' 82.

is treated as a threat. Hera is at first treated as dangerous, but eventually her biology is revealed to be useful for continuing the Cylon and human race. This acceptance is finalised when she herself begins to reproduce. As Matthew Gumpert argues, ‘the arrival of Hera would seem to presage either the destruction of the human race, or the fulfilment of its true purpose [...] we can see that these two readings coincide, for Hera would indeed represent the end of the human race, just as much as she would of the Cylon race. True hybridity signifies the end of race itself.’<sup>96</sup> Hera, by being a literal hybrid of human and machine, blurs the lines between Cylon and human (that Gumpert argues are largely superficial) and therefore threatens the distinctness of both races. Humanist conceptions of the self are obsessed with boundaries, and this is a position that most science fiction agrees with. As Naomi Jacobs writes:

The free agent is thought to be complete in himself, impenetrable; his boundaries are inviolable [...] Difference may represent a threat to the unified humanist subject, who is defined in and exercises agency through opposition to some Other; but the posthuman subject, a location where differences intersect in unstable configurations, can always make room for more. If the boundaries of the self are permeable, selfhood can be understood as bearing endless potential for changes more fundamental than the organic “unfolding” or realization of some essential self in the humanist model.<sup>97</sup>

Hera is a posthuman subject because she incorporates all of these contradictions in one, and the programme shows that this hybridity is a desirable, albeit threatening, quality. In the second series episode ‘Epiphanies,’ President Roslin learns that Athena is pregnant and orders an abortion. However, Roslin learns that Hera’s blood has a healing factor that can cure her terminal cancer, and she allows Athena to carry her child to term. Hera’s hybridity is a source of fascination that is managed and objectified. After Hera is born in the second series episode ‘Downloaded,’ Athena and Helo are told that their daughter has died. It is revealed that Hera was taken by Roslin and placed with an adoptive mother who does not know Hera’s true parentage. Without Hera, Athena’s loyalty to the human cause is called into question. In the second series finale, a Cylon, Cavil (Dean Stockwell), infiltrates the *Galactica*. Athena recognises him, but does not report him. When Helo discovers this deception, he asks her why she did not say anything. Athena responds that the humans ‘killed my baby. Do you think I care about you, or us, or whether or not Adama trusts me anymore?’ It is clear that, without Hera to tie her to the human cause, Athena is still less-than human. Although Athena later recovers from her depression, marries Helo and regains Adama’s trust before she discovers that Hera is still alive, her child is the single most powerful tie Athena has to human society. Cylons can

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<sup>96</sup> Matthew Gumpert, ‘Hybridity’s End,’ in *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica*, ed. Tiffany Potter and C.W. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2008), 152-3.

<sup>97</sup> Naomi Jacobs, ‘Posthuman Bodies and Agency in Octavia Butler’s *Xenogenesis*,’ in *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, ed. Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (New York: Routledge, 2003), 94.

only reproduce sexually if they are in love with their human partner, so Hera symbolises Athena's subservience to conservative patriarchal order. Her child is the living embodiment of her abandonment of her Cylon identity and her loyalty to humans: Hera is the repudiation of her posthumanity. Eventually, even Hera's posthumanity is ultimately dissolved, as she becomes the ancestor of the modern human race. In the final sequence of the series finale, which I discuss in the first chapter, we see that the human/technology distinction has naturally re-emerged. Hera, ultimately, poses no threat to the humanist nature/culture divide. Humanity, then, is contingent on mothering or having been mothered. Although Hera initially offers a representation of posthuman hybridity, her revolutionary potential is neutralised through biological reproduction.

In contrast to *Galactica's* representation of biological motherhood, *Westworld* and *Voyager* deal with non-biological or adoptive mothering. These representations still reinforce essentialist ideas by re-emphasising emotion and embodiment as crucial to the mother-child bond. In *Westworld*, Maeve's relationship with her daughter is one of the most significant touchstones of her character. Maeve, before being programmed as a madam, was given the role of a female homesteader. In this persona, she was a single mother to a daughter. In the second episode of the first series 'Chestnut,' we see Maeve and her daughter walking through tall grass. Shots of their smiling faces are intercut with extreme close-ups of their clasped hands. The juxtaposition of the Western scenery and their hand-holding reinforces the thematic link between motherhood and nature. However, there is no inevitable, biological relationship between the two, as their bond is programmed by park designers. Maeve's persona does not have a male partner, reinforcing the idea that her daughter is unnatural, as the child literally has no father. She was not created by sexual reproduction, but was instead artificially designed and assigned to Maeve. Despite the fact that there is no biological connection between Maeve and her daughter, the programme still shows that there is an essential relationship between mother and child. In 'Trace Decay,' there is a flashback to the night that the Man in Black murdered Maeve's daughter. Maeve is incredibly distraught over this loss, and the engineers comment that the extraordinary trauma this has caused means that Maeve will no longer be able to function in the same role as a homesteader. Therefore, she is completely reprogrammed, removed from her daughter, and reassigned to the brothel. This reassignment is a canny commentary on patriarchy – the (male) engineers rewrite Maeve's life, removing her from one stereotypically female role, mother, to another, whore. Despite this, it also demonstrates the limits of masculine control over women, and human control over the posthuman. As Jill Didur argues in her analysis of humanist concepts of genetic engineering and computer programming, 'Not only is the world perceived as reducible to stable and uniform code, but the relationship between materiality and information, or form and content, is conceived of as inconsequential to its operation, effects, and meaning.'<sup>98</sup> Didur elaborates on Hayles's

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<sup>98</sup> Jill Didur, 'Re-Embodying Technoscientific Fantasies: Posthumanism, Genetic Modified Foods, and the Colonization of Life,' *Cultural Critique* 53, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 103, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1354626>.

ideas of imperfect control over code that I mentioned earlier. Despite the fact that these codes express themselves imperfectly, the engineers must claim perfect mastery in order to legitimate their control over these organisms. *Westworld* shows that this control is an illusion, as Maeve's memory of her daughter runs so deep that it can be recovered even after a complete wipe, which indicates that her emotions about her daughter are somehow essential and bodily. As Seaman argues, popular representations of the posthuman 'reveals a desire to find a human identity that remains constant [...] a key feature that tends to endure, in such scenarios, is emotion.'<sup>99</sup> The emotions that she feels about her daughter, and her posthuman embodiment, are more powerful than patriarchal control. Then again, these emotions also re-classify her as human. This cuts to the heart of feminist debates about motherhood.

Drawing upon the observations of Ann Snitnow, Nakano Glenn asks, 'What do feminists want? Do we want to do away with the category of woman – minimize the significance of sex differences and claim our rights on the basis of our essential sameness with men? Or do we want to claim the identity of woman, valorize women's culture and organize the basis of our commonalities as women?'<sup>100</sup> Maeve's ability to resist patriarchal control comes from her womanhood and motherhood, which can be read as feminist. As Nakano Glenn argues, feminists 'are reluctant to give up the idea that motherhood is special.'<sup>101</sup> However, maternal *suffering* causes Maeve's rebellion. As Rich argues, the idea that motherhood involves intense suffering and sacrifice is deeply entrenched in Western patriarchy. She writes, 'It is as if the suffering of the mother, the primary identification of women *as* the mother – were so necessary to the emotional grounding of human society that the mitigation, or removal, of that suffering, that identification, must be fought at every level, including the level of refusing to question it at all.'<sup>102</sup> This self-sacrificial drive even leads Maeve to abandon her quest for freedom. As mentioned above, Felix informs Maeve that her daughter is still active in the park. Maeve abandons her escape plans at the last possible moment in order to recover her daughter. While nothing else – not her life in the park, not the threat of death and not the man she was romantically involved with – was enough to deter Maeve from her goal of freedom, this self-sacrificial drive to find her daughter is shown to override Maeve's personal desires. While Maeve is normally pragmatic and unsentimental, this outpouring of emotion over her daughter makes her more acceptably feminine.

The importance of Maeve's motherhood is particularly relevant in the context of her race. Maeve is played by a mixed-race Black actor, and motherhood has a unique relevance to Black women. On the one hand, Black motherhood has a central importance to Black feminist and womanist thought, both due to the historical trauma of mother-child separation and sexual violence against

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<sup>99</sup> Seaman, 'Affective Posthumanisms,' 250.

<sup>100</sup> Nakano Glenn, 'Social Constructions of Mothering,' 22.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>102</sup> Rich, *Of Woman Born*, 30.

Black women, while also functioning as an important method of transmitting generational political knowledge.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, the requirement of maternal self-sacrifice, which is noted in Rich's account, is exacerbated in regards to Black mothers, especially as even academics perpetuate the stereotype that 'Black women are richly endowed with devotion, self-sacrifice, and unconditional love,' which 'inadvertently fosters a different controlling image for Black women, that of the "superstrong Black mother."' <sup>104</sup> Maeve's framing as the self-sacrificial mother is problematic, as she literally gives up her life to protect her daughter in the second series finale. However, *Westworld* also hints at the different stakes Black women have in motherhood, particularly by contrasting Maeve's struggle to reclaim her child with Dolores's rebellion. In the second series, Dolores struggles to escape the park and free her fellow Hosts, while Maeve searches for her daughter. In the seventh episode of the second series, Maeve has been captured by the Westworld engineers, and encounters Dolores. Dolores expresses shock that Maeve has been taken, saying 'the woman I know would've done anything to survive.' Maeve tells Dolores that her priority is to protect her daughter. Dolores tells her, 'the kin they gave us was just another rope to lash us down.' Maeve rejects Dolores's point of view, saying that Dolores has given up her compassion and that she is 'lost in the dark.' This debate about the role of children and motherhood has a distinctly racial subtext. This mirrors bell hooks's criticism of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan's foundational work of liberal feminism discussed the disaffection of the middle-class housewife. hooks famously criticises Friedan's myopia: 'She made her plight and the plight of white women like herself synonymous with a condition affecting all American women.'<sup>105</sup> hooks points out that the emancipation of wealthy white women to leave the home and seek employment often relied on the service of poor Black women as housemaids and nannies. Those women were not free to work, but forced to work, which came at the expense of raising their own children. Dolores, representing the white feminist, sees the ties of motherhood as easily cast off in favour of moving into the public sphere, of freedom. She dismisses Maeve's attachment to her daughter. Although *Westworld* does not explicitly take sides in Dolores's and Maeve's debate, it certainly reflects unspoken assumptions about race and the value of mothering. While the programme clearly admires Maeve's devotion to her daughter, as of the end of the most current series, Maeve's quest to free her daughter has ended with Maeve's death, while Dolores is still alive.<sup>106</sup> Despite making some interesting points about the value of mothering, it is clear that the misogynist notion of the self-sacrificing mother still persists.

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<sup>103</sup> Toni C. King and S. Alease Ferguson, *Black Womanist Leadership: Tracing the Motherline* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), 1.

<sup>104</sup> Patricia Hill Collins, 'Black Women and Motherhood,' in *Motherhood and Space: Configurations of the Maternal Through Politics, Home, and the Body*, ed. Sarah Hardy and Caroline Wiedmer (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 150.

<sup>105</sup> bell hooks, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 2.

<sup>106</sup> Admittedly, the status of dead/alive in this programme is quite fraught, as deceased characters have been brought back through technological means.

At times, motherhood is used to regulate the posthuman woman's unconventional femininity. Seven's temporary adoption of ex-Borg children in *Voyager* is an interesting example of this. In the sixteenth episode of the sixth series, 'Collective,' a group of young Borg drones are severed from the collective and taken onto the *Voyager*. Seven is told to look after them until they are returned to their home planets. Seven's task is to help them successfully recover from their time in the collective and regain their individuality. Seven, having not been successfully socialised, now uses her unique perspective to teach children how to perform humanity. Despite this knowledge, in the eighteenth episode of the sixth series, 'Ashes to Ashes,' Seven struggles with the children, governing their time with too-strict scheduling. Chakotay suggests that she needs to allow them to organise their own time, which will allow them to express their individuality. Seven's overly-controlling childrearing leads her to treat them as if they were still 'drones,' as Chakotay says. When Seven allows the children to act more spontaneously and have more fun and creativity, her relationship with them improves, and they act more like young humans. This episode illustrates contemporary tensions around approaches to mothering, and particularly the 'labour-love' divide of ideas about motherhood. As Nakano Glenn writes, 'When mothering is set up in opposition to economics and politics, it is seen as originating from love or altruism, and thus as needing no reward. This reinforces the conception that motherhood should be endlessly self-sacrificing.'<sup>107</sup> Seven at first does not succeed as a mother because she focuses too much on the labour of motherhood. By the end of the episode, Seven allows the children to enter the Holodeck and run any simulation programme that they like. She has abandoned the work of childrearing and allows the children to do nothing but play. Seven's judgment as to what the children need to do to successfully transition to adult human life is completely dismissed in favour of subservience to what the children desire, replicating the culturally familiar image of the 'the dominated mother and the empowered baby.'<sup>108</sup> Ironically, although Seven's quest for humanity is defined by her growing individuality, she surrenders this individuality in order to be a better mother.

Furthermore, by showing Seven's obsession with efficiency as incompatible with childcare, *Voyager* calls to mind some of the films described in Jessica Valenti's *Backlash*. Valenti writes about *Baby Boom* (Charles Shyer, United Artists, 1987), a romantic comedy where Diane Keaton plays a single working woman who is unexpectedly charged with the care of a baby and subsequently gives up her career. Valenti sees this narrative as emblematic of the then-contemporary backlash against the gains made by feminism, and *Baby Boom* shares some themes with this *Voyager* storyline. Although *Voyager* is obviously of a very different genre to *Baby Boom*, its social context is not so far removed from the 1980s conservative backlash. Like in *Baby Boom*, Seven is initially resistant to the idea of taking care of the children, but eventually learns to care for them. Valenti argues that Keaton's

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<sup>107</sup> Nakano Glenn, 'Social Constructions of Mothering,' 16.

<sup>108</sup> Bassin et. al., 'Introduction,' 2.

character in the film is an ‘efficient machine.’<sup>109</sup> While Valenti associates Keaton’s rigidly scheduled sexual encounters with her machinery, Seven more obviously literalises the fear of technology and work. The Borg drones are used only for labour, and their lack of individuality is continually associated with their efficiency. Seven is continually puzzled at the inefficiency of human behavioural practice: the programme’s only answer to this confusion is that humanity may be more inefficient, but it is somehow (inexplicably) better. Seven gives up this efficiency, which makes her a better mother, and thus a better human.

*Voyager* desperately attempts to use conventional motherhood to remake Seven as less threateningly posthuman, which is inextricably tied to her female body. Seven and Icheb (Manu Intiraymi) have the closest relationship of any of Seven’s Borg ‘children.’ In the seventh series episode ‘Imperfection,’ Seven’s cortical node, a crucial implant in her brain, begins to malfunction. This malfunction is first triggered by her crying when three of her Borg wards are returned to their home planets. The emotions that she is feeling are incompatible with her technological nature. As Seven’s health progressively worsens due to this malfunction, Icheb insists that he wants to help, but Seven will not allow him to be involved. Rich argues that one of the unquestioned assumptions of cultural ideas of motherhood include that ‘children and mothers are the “causes” of each other’s suffering.’<sup>110</sup> Seven and Icheb, by both attempting to sacrifice themselves to help and protect the other, cause each other suffering. Icheb, at great danger to himself, removes his own cortical node in order to donate it to Seven. At the conclusion of the episode, Seven cries out of pride and gratitude. The proper expression of emotion is directly related to her maternal feelings for Icheb. Furthermore, just as Athena’s ability to adapt beyond her Cylon biology (by receiving Athena’s antibodies during pregnancy) is dependent on her physical connection to her child, and Maeve’s embodiment interfering with her programming is crucial to her ability to regain her knowledge of her child, Seven’s bond with her adoptive child is not fully complete until they share a physical bond – the transplanted cortical node. Much like in *Westworld*, even adoptive motherhood is eventually associated with essentialist biological connection. Embodiment is essential to the posthuman woman’s maternal bond, suggesting that these representations are not merely feminist celebrations of the power and importance of mothering, but products of an essentialist insistence that female biology is particularly conducive to motherhood, and thus normative femininity and humanity.

### Conclusion

The programmes discussed in this chapter grapple with issues of femininity, humanity and technology that have vexed feminists for decades. If the previous chapter examined how notions of

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<sup>109</sup> Jessica Valenti, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against Women* (London: Vintage, 1993), 161.

<sup>110</sup> Rich, *Of Woman Born*, 22-3.

posthuman identity break through into mainstream discourses, this chapter demonstrates how conventional notions of femininity still persist. Overall, these programmes rely upon essentialist ideas of patriarchal womanhood to reinforce both the sex-gender divide and the human-technology divide, despite the inherent contradictions in both of these concepts. Although posthumanism relies on ideas of embodiment to counteract humanism's over-emphasis on rationality and its subsequent erasure of marginalised identity, posthumanism does not claim that biological differences are essential to womanhood. The posthuman woman challenges culturally constructed categories of female and human, but the programmes use appeals to nature and embodiment to reassert normative ideas of femininity. Yet these series do allow some critique of patriarchal humanism, such as the construction of whiteness, compulsory heterosexuality, and feminine gender expression, and occasionally the programmes directly confront misogyny and sexist power structures in interesting, constructive ways. Also, embodiment occasionally allows the posthuman woman to resist humanist patriarchal control. Nevertheless, these criticisms largely fail to extend to more ingrained notions of humanism and gender. This can be seen by these programmes' focus on traditional feminine gender roles, the prevalence of heterosexual romance narratives, and the valorisation of motherhood. However, just because these programmes attempt to reassert the posthuman woman as naturally human and female, this does not mean that these characters fit neatly into these categories. These programmes are, despite their attempts to use femininity to normalise the posthuman woman, unable to fully mitigate the challenges these characters pose to humanist ideology. Again, these programmes demonstrate an ambivalent, mixed attitude towards progressive politics. As seen in the next chapter, while these debates are heavily informed by contemporary politics and science, there is still a resistance to abandoning familiar ideologies.

## Chapter Four: Corporate Science

The past two chapters have dealt with the more philosophical concepts of posthumanism and feminist theory. However, I want to make clear that the figure of the posthuman woman is also reacting to real world developments in corporatized science. In *Dark Angel* (FOX, 2000-2), *Dollhouse* (FOX, 2009-10) and *Westworld* (HBO, 2016- ), representations of corporate science are related to the long history of collaboration between government (and particularly military), corporate and industrial and scientific and academic projects, perhaps first identified in Dwight D. Eisenhower's speech on the 'military-industrial complex.'<sup>1</sup> In the aforementioned television series, the posthuman woman is the creation of an evil organisation which combines these spheres, and the woman must free herself from its control and destroy the organisation. These organisations are also coded as patriarchal. The narratives of these programmes therefore represent a sustained criticism of corporatized science on posthumanist and feminist grounds.

In this chapter, I will examine the extent to which these programmes represent a radical challenge to corporate culture and neoliberal patriarchy more generally. These series borrow from real-world technological advances. This extrapolation is common in science fiction media. Science fiction, like many genres, 'distorts realism [...] but the method of distortion most characteristic of SF [...] is extrapolation, a process uniting science, realism, and fantasy in highly specific ways. Shared with and to some extent drawn from science and futurology, extrapolation is primarily used in SF for world-building and forecasting.'<sup>2</sup> Science fiction borrows from current, or at least not entirely implausible, scientific advances. The genre often concerns the social and political implications of these advances. As discussed in the introduction and first chapter, posthumanism is an ideology which is opposed to the exploitation of non-human agents under capitalism. These programmes demonstrate how scientific experimentation marginalises their posthuman protagonists. Furthermore, by focusing on characters who are, to various extents, bought and sold as commodities, they examine the unjustness of capitalism, and particularly the increasingly unregulated and powerful influence of contemporary corporations. They demonstrate this excessive power in a number of ways. *Dark Angel* follows transgenic super soldier Max Guevara (Jessica Alba) after her escape from a secretive corporate military branch called Manticore. *Dollhouse* concerns Echo (Eliza Dushku) who is an Active, or someone who has signed a five-year contract with the evil Rossum Corporation. Under this contract, her body is available to be programmed with different personalities, which are then rented out to wealthy clients. In *Westworld*, Dolores Abernathy (Evan Rachel Wood) and Maeve Millay

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<sup>1</sup> Dwight D. Eisenhower, 'Farewell Address,' in *The Military Industrial Complex*, ed. Carroll W. Pursell (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1972), 206.

<sup>2</sup> David N. Samuelson, 'Modes of Extrapolation: The Formulas of Hard SF,' *Science Fiction Studies* 20, no. 2 (1993): 195, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4240249>.

(Thandie Newton) are robotic Hosts unknowingly a part of a Wild-West theme park. The guests derive a great deal of pleasure from killing, raping and harming the lifelike robots.

In this chapter, I will demonstrate how the programmes represent corporate functions and power. Then, I will discuss how the programmes depict science. Although scientists are generally treated with more sympathy than corporate managers, they and their work are inherently implicated in the moral rot of the corporation. The programmes are broadly concerned with the notion of corporate overreach – that is, the power corporations have over different spheres of public life. This is generally symbolized by private military firms and government interference. Furthermore, they go so far as to depict the corporations' wealthy backers buying their way to immortality. This representation of corporate overreach is the result of contemporary distrust of the wealthy elite, colloquially known as the 1%, and the growing awareness of neoliberal financial tactics, such as disaster capitalism. Again, as with my case study programmes' treatment of posthumanism and feminism, they cannot commit fully to the revolutionary promises of their anti-capitalist rhetoric. However, I maintain that these programmes are demonstrating a heightened awareness of the inequities of corporatized science and neoliberal capitalism.

### Corporate Overreach

Each of these programmes is, at some level, anti-corporate. Corporations are central antagonists in *Dollhouse* and *Westworld*, and it is clear that the private military firm (PMF) of *Dark Angel* has corporate backers with interests in other spheres and many episodes concern dealing vigilante justice to corrupt businesspeople. David M. Higgins notes that in 'American science fiction after 9/11 [...] is a pervasive feeling that contemporary life under globalized capitalism itself feels science fictional.'<sup>3</sup> *Dollhouse* in particular capitalises on that feeling, creating a paranoid alternative present in which corporate power can become increasingly excessive without most people knowing or caring. For example, the sixth episode of the first series of *Dollhouse* 'Man on the Street,' engages with average Los Angeles' opinions about the Dollhouse. The episode includes clips of a news report on the Dollhouse, which most average citizens regard as a mere urban legend. The people interviewed react in various ways to the notion of programmable people. A Black woman insists that it is real, because people will always desire 'slaves.' When told that the Actives might be volunteers, she says that the only reason one 'would volunteer to be a slave is if they is one already.' A young white woman in an apron with a nametag (indicating that she works in a service job) says of the idea of becoming an Active, 'So being a doll, you do whatever, and you don't gotta remember nothing. Or study. Or pay rent. And you just party with rich people all the time? Where's the dotted line?' These two reactions, which take the concept of the Dollhouse seriously, reveal the most about Western society's

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<sup>3</sup> David M. Higgins, 'American Science Fiction After 9/11,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Eric Carl Link and Gerry Canavan (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 51.

ambivalent relationship to capitalism. The construction of ‘the only reason someone would volunteer to be a slave is if they are one already’ is at first glance humorously tautological. However, this proves cannily prescient for the circumstances of the main characters. Caroline Farrell, Echo’s original personality, is forced to become an Active in order to avoid prosecution for her activism against the Rossum Corporation. Meanwhile, Priya (Dichen Lachman), whose Active code name is Sierra, was forced into her Active contract by a rich man after Priya rejected his sexual advances. *Dollhouse* is clear about Priya’s and Caroline’s non-consensual entrance into the Dollhouse contract. This, furthermore, emphasises the unequal power balance between the corporation and the workers. The younger woman expresses an interest in joining the Dollhouse because it represents an escape from the ordinary degradation of everyday capitalism. While the Black woman considers the Dolls slaves, the white woman’s decision to enter into low-paid, low-status service work is no more consensual than choosing to enter into an Active contract. Everyone is, to a certain extent, a ‘wage slave’ to their employers. The young woman sees becoming an Active as simply a more glamorous iteration of the work she is already doing.

*Dollhouse* and my other case study programmes’ cynicism about capitalism draws upon the cultural context of the 2007-8 financial crisis and the Occupy Wall Street movement. Both of these events fuelled anti-corporate feeling in the United States and abroad. The financial crisis resulted in a global economic recession. The U.S. government was forced to spend billions of dollars in order to stabilise the economy, at a cost of an estimated \$2050 per taxpayer household.<sup>4</sup> In the aftermath of the recession, wealth inequality in the United States increased to levels unseen since the Great Depression.<sup>5</sup> Anti-capitalist and anti-establishment sentiment resulting from the financial crisis and exemplified by such movements as Occupy Wall Street entered popular culture, including science fiction film and television.<sup>6</sup> Although *Dark Angel*, *Dollhouse* and *Westworld* do not focus on the redistribution of wealth, they make a coherent posthuman and feminist criticism of corporate power, as well as neoliberal capitalism more generally. Science fiction has been widely noted as powerful because it can ‘use science and technology as narrative elements which facilitate a social critique removed from the constraints of the everyday, from the dominant discursive formation.’<sup>7</sup> Science fiction both explores the impact of technology on our society and our sense of selfhood, while also

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<sup>4</sup> ‘The Impact of the September 2008 Economic Collapse,’ *The Pew Charitable Trusts*, 28 April 2010, <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2010/04/28/the-impact-of-the-september-2008-economic-collapse>.

<sup>5</sup> Angela Monahan, ‘US Wealth Inequality – top -0.1% worth as much as the bottom 90%,’ *Guardian*, 13 November 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2014/nov/13/us-wealth-inequality-top-01-worth-as-much-as-the-bottom-90>.

<sup>6</sup> Higgins, ‘American Science Fiction Since 9/11,’ 55.

<sup>7</sup> Anne Cranny-Francis, ‘Feminist Futures: A Generic Study,’ in *Alien Zone: Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema*, ed. Annette Kuhn (London: Verso, 1990), 221.

extrapolating from developments in technology to indicate a setting sufficiently removed from our day-to-day existence in order to criticise existing power structures.

The exact relationship between patriarchy, as ‘a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women,’<sup>8</sup> and capitalism has been a point of contention among radical and Marxist feminists. Sylvia Walby describes the tensions between them: radical feminists believe that patriarchy is an entity separate from capitalism, while Marxist feminists see male domination over women as an expression of capitalist violence.<sup>9</sup> Some feminists later ascribed to dual-systems theory, ‘a synthesis of Marxist and radical feminist theory’ in which ‘contemporary gender inequality is analysed as a result of the structures of a capitalist and patriarchal or capitalist-patriarchal society.’<sup>10</sup> Walby argues that even this analysis is too simplistic, and that patriarchy and capitalism interact in different ways in different social structures in the areas of production, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality and cultural representation.<sup>11</sup> Walby’s theory of the interrelations between different structures is reminiscent of Alfredo Saad-Filho and Deborah Johnston’s definition of neoliberalism:

Neoliberalism is a particular organisation of capitalism, which has evolved to protect capital(ism) and to reduce the power of labour. This is achieved by means of social, economic and political transformations imposed by internal forces as well as external pressure. The international forces include the coalition between financial interests, leading industrialists, traders and exporters, media barons, big landowners, local political chieftains, the top echelons of the civil service and the military, and their intellectual and political proxies.<sup>12</sup>

In both systems, neither patriarchy nor neoliberalism can be fully understood by only looking at one sphere: the methods of domination are more pervasive and powerful than that. This is one of the reasons why *Dark Angel*, *Dollhouse*, and *Westworld* focus on the interrelated spheres of corporate science. Although each sphere operates differently, they share the common goal of maximising profit, maintaining their own domination and exploiting women to reach their aims. As Sherry B. Ortner argues, patriarchy and neoliberalism are closely related, as ‘the global macro-structure, the overarching systems of states, corporations and military organizations, remains a massive patriarchal system.’<sup>13</sup> Tom Moylan argues that current science fiction demonstrates and criticises this shift towards neoliberalism: ‘the state is a major target of critique in the classical dystopian narrative. Yet

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<sup>8</sup> Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1990), 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>12</sup> Alfredo Saad-Filho and Deborah Johnston, ‘Introduction,’ in *Neoliberalism: A Critical Reader*, ed. Alfredo Saad-Filho and Deborah Johnston (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Sherry B. Ortner, ‘Too Soon for Post-Feminism: The Ongoing Life of Patriarchy in Neoliberal America,’ *History and Anthropology* 25, no. 4 (2014): 533, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2014.930458>.

in the dystopian turn of the closing decades of the twentieth century, the power of the authoritarian state gives way to the more pervasive tyranny of the corporation. Everyday life in the new dystopias is still observed, ruled, and controlled; but now it is also reified, exploited, and commodified.’<sup>14</sup> As I will discuss throughout this chapter, these programmes demonstrate how the state and the corporation are interlinked and how they work in concert to disempower and control the posthuman woman. One of the most interesting aspects of these programmes is the extent to which they explore the relationship between corporate science as expressions of neoliberalism and patriarchal domination.

One of the crucial features of the posthuman woman is her resistance to patriarchal interference. Masculine agents of these corporations are often figured as literal or figurative father figures, as discussed earlier in this thesis. *Dark Angel*’s Lydecker (John Savage), who was Max’s commanding officer when she lived in Manticore as a child, frequently refers to the X5 generation of transgenics as ‘my kids.’ In *Dollhouse*, Boyd Langton (Harry Lennix), who at first appears to be Echo’s handler on her active missions but is later revealed to be the founder of the evil Rossum Corporation, also asserts his love for Echo and her allies, and takes a protective attitude towards Echo that even exceeds his role as her handler. These father figures are revealed to have participated in the posthuman woman’s creation. Lydecker, in the first season finale, reveals that he added some of his late wife’s DNA into Max’s genetic makeup – although he is not literally her father, he is in many ways her creator. Max also has a more literal creator-father in Dr. Sandeman, who is the founder of Manticore and the errant father-figure to Max, Joshua (Kevin Durand), C.J. Sandeman (Henri Lubatti), and Ames White (Martin Cummins). In the penultimate *Dollhouse* episode ‘The Hollow Men,’ we learn that Echo’s body is also the key to saving humanity – although the corporation intends to keep this potential to itself. Clyde Randolph (Adam Godley), one of the founders of Rossum, says that Echo’s spinal fluid, which, as discussed in chapter two, prevents personality wipes from taking hold, will be used to inoculate ‘the select few.’ In the previous episode, we learn that Boyd is the co-founder of Rossum, and in ‘The Hollow Men,’ Echo and her allies learn the truth. Until this point, Boyd had been presented as a sympathetic employee of the Dollhouse, and a father figure to Echo. Despite his betrayal, Boyd says that he has spared Echo, Adelle and Topher because ‘you’re my family. I love you guys.’ The juxtaposition of this declaration and evil corporate conspiracy renders the ‘normal’ concept of familial love unsettling, potentially troubling the ideological power of the family. Boyd portrays himself as Echo’s creator, and Echo agrees, saying ‘I’m everything you made me.’ Echo is then forced to kill Boyd in order to defeat Rossum. Although Echo resists Boyd’s plan to harvest her spinal fluid to save a few people from destruction in favour of attempting to save everyone, the resolution is emotionally fraught due to these parental undertones. The father-figures in

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<sup>14</sup> Tom Moylan, “‘The Moment is Here... and It’s Important’: State, Agency and Dystopia in Kim Stanley Robinson’s *Antarctica* and Ursula K. LeGuin’s *The Telling*,” in *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, ed. Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (New York: Routledge, 2003), 135-6.

these programmes therefore serve to underline the depiction of the relationship between corporate power and patriarchy.

The portrayal of the relationship between the public business sphere and the more nebulous idea of the patriarchy reflects criticisms of liberal feminism and postfeminism. One of the cornerstones of liberal feminism is equality in the workplace, but radical feminism has criticised this goal on a number of grounds. Valerie Bryson argues that 'equal rights feminism generally fails to question the logic of a hierarchical, competitive society in which most men and women can only be losers.'<sup>15</sup> Which approach do *Dark Angel*, *Dollhouse* and *Westworld* take? They are not unaware of the relationship between patriarchal oppression and commodification, especially as expressed within postfeminist culture. I have defined postfeminism elsewhere as a specific historical movement where feminism is acknowledged but assumed to be ultimately resolved. Postfeminism encourages female empowerment on an individual level, but does not advocate for collective action or systemic change to combat misogyny. Postfeminism is also highly tied into consumer culture.<sup>16</sup> For example, in the *Dark Angel* pilot, when Logan (Michael Weatherly) catches Max breaking into his apartment to steal his expensive art, they discuss her physical strength:

LOGAN: First I watch you take out a 250-pound ex-cop bodyguard without breaking a sweat.

MAX: Girls kick ass, says so on a T-shirt.

This is a tongue-in-cheek nod towards postfeminism's 'relationship to late capitalist culture and the forms of work, leisure, and, crucially, consumption that thrive within that culture.'<sup>17</sup> The show juxtaposes Max's physical strength with the empty catchphrases of postfeminism, but also interestingly likens Max's position as an object/creation with postfeminism's transformation of feminist rhetoric into a consumer product. She does this while also embodying one of the key figures of postfeminist media culture. In the postfeminist action genre, the action girl is 'imbued [...] with the physical strength to compete with men on equal terms, while offering no answers as to how this translates into political and wider empowerment.'<sup>18</sup> The programme therefore has a complex relationship with postfeminist media culture. While Max is certainly, on many levels, a postfeminist figure, I argue in both this chapter and the next that it is not enough to say that *Dark Angel* has nothing to say about politics and feminist empowerment. At the very least, the programme is slyly

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<sup>15</sup> Valerie Bryson, *Feminist Political Theory: An Introduction*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 152.

<sup>16</sup> Joel Gwynne and Nadine Müller, 'Introduction: Postfeminism and Contemporary Hollywood Cinema,' in *Postfeminism and Contemporary Hollywood Cinema*, ed. Joel Gwynne and Nadine Müller (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 7.

<sup>17</sup> Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, 'Introduction: Feminist Politics and Postfeminist Culture,' in *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*, ed. Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 6.

<sup>18</sup> Gwynne and Müller, 'Introduction,' 7.

knowing about Max's position as both subject and object. Max and her fellow transgenics are tattooed with barcodes on the back of their neck, which Max refers to as a 'designer label.' Manticore workers consistently refer to the transgenics in dehumanising and objectifying terms, such as 'prototypes' and 'Manticore technology.' Dehumanising language and treatment of women as objects and commodities is a common theme in these programmes. In the sixth episode of the first series, one of Max's fellow transgenics, Brin, is kidnapped. Lydecker explains why: 'Any number of governments would love to get their hands on Manticore technology [...] Each of you is worth millions.' These corporations view the posthuman woman primarily as a commodity, but the power of the posthuman woman as she is represented in these series is that she resists being defined as an object to be bought and sold. As opposed to the kind of postfeminist stance that denies 'female victimisation and vulnerability,'<sup>19</sup> these series emphasise corporate-patriarchy's rapacious exploitation of women.

These corporations use systemic sexual violence and reproductive control to exploit women. Although the characters in *Dollhouse* avoid the words 'prostitution' and 'rape,' Actives are often sent on sexual missions. *Dollhouse*'s showrunner, Joss Whedon, was most famous at the time for his avowedly feminist TV classic *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Due to Whedon's self-proclaimed feminist beliefs, '*Dollhouse* received much online criticism, some of it obviously warranted, for giving into the sexexploitation of its actors and presenting some misogynistic themes.'<sup>20</sup> The core tension of the Active's inability to consent is twofold: firstly, the Actives are often sent on what are euphemistically termed 'romantic engagements.' In these assignments, the Actives are usually programmed to be sexually available to the clients. In one episode, Echo returns from an assignment where she served as a dominatrix, while in another she is imprinted with the personality of a sex worker. However, most of the romantic assignments do not involve the Active's imprinted personalities knowing that they are doing sex work. Most of the imprints are designed so that they believe that they genuinely desire their clients – in fact, this is what makes the Active experience so much more desirable for the men who hire them. Their consent is not so much coerced as deliberately engineered. Secondly, the Active's original personality, the one that their body 'belongs' to, signs a contract allowing their body to be used by Rossum for five years. Their consent is not constantly re-negotiated in light of their various clients, but mandated by a legal document. Obviously this is a legalistic view of consent, but not a truly feminist one, which requires continuous re-negotiation of what each party wants. The Actives are imprinted with whatever personality is ordered, and in exchange the Actives will have no memory of what has occurred. Essentially, the Actives agree to not agree.

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<sup>19</sup> Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon, *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 68.

<sup>20</sup> Ananya Mukherjea, 'Somebody's Asian on TV: Sierra/Priya and the Politics of Representation,' in *Joss Whedon's Dollhouse: Confounding Purpose, Confusing Identity*, ed. Sherry Ginn et. al (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 84.

The use of the contract also draws another parallel to the business world. As discussed above, by signing away their rights for five years to the control of a company that does not have their interests at heart, the Actives are merely making an exaggerated version of the bargain employees make with their employers every day. The series holds the Dollhouse and the Rossum Corporation in general accountable for the exploitation of the Actives. For example, in the second episode of the first series, 'The Target,' Echo is sent on a romantic engagement with a handsome outdoorsman, Richard, and we see Echo (or Echo's imprinted personality) having sex with him. Later, Richard tries to kill her. This illustrates both the inherent violence in the missions and the limits of contractual control. Although Richard signed a contract and paid a fee for a specific experience from the Dollhouse, their ability to control what actually happens during an engagement is quite limited – Boyd is Echo's only assistance, and he is nearly useless once Richard shoots him. This episode illustrates early on that the Active's bodies are in peril with every mission, especially the ones that involve sexual contact. Indeed, *Dollhouse* is very specific about the vulnerability of the other female Actives who do not have Echo's abilities. For example, Sierra, who 'is repeatedly used throughout the series to illustrate the different kinds of physical and psychological pain the Dollhouse can cause,'<sup>21</sup> was kidnapped and forced into the Dollhouse by a wealthy man who wanted to rape her, and was sexually assaulted by her handler. As discussed in the first chapter, sexual assault is used both to demonstrate the posthuman woman's exploitation, but also to demonstrate her essential 'humanity.'

Posthumanist and cyborg studies are deeply sceptical of global capitalism and corporate interests. This is largely due to capitalism's systematic exploitation of what is deemed 'non-human,' such as the Earth, animals, and women. Braidotti argues that 'Advanced capitalism and its bio-genetic technologies engender a perverse form of the posthuman. At its core there is a radical disruption of the human-animal interaction, but all living species are caught in the spinning machine of the global economy.'<sup>22</sup> As discussed in the first chapter, while technology has the potential to radically redefine subjectivity, this is difficult, if not impossible, within a society so indebted to humanist conceptions of personhood. Throughout this thesis, I have extensively discussed the posthuman woman's relationship to Donna Haraway's cyborg figure. Haraway has written extensively on a number of areas related to technoscience. Haraway in particular argues against notions of scientific objectivity, arguing that the 'modest witness' which was valorised by the scientific Enlightenment 'cannot ever be simply oppositional. Rather, s/he is suspicious, implicated, knowing, ignorant, worried, and hopeful. [...] S/he is seeking to learn and practice the mixed literacies and differential consciousness that are more faithful to the way the world, including the world of technoscience, actually works.'<sup>23</sup> I argue that the

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<sup>21</sup> Eve Bennett, 'Deconstructing the Dream Factory: Personal Fantasy and Corporate Manipulation in Joss Whedon's *Dollhouse*,' *Slayage* 9, no. 1 (2011): 23, [http://www.whedonstudies.tv/uploads/2/6/2/8/26288593/bennett\\_slayage\\_9.1.pdf](http://www.whedonstudies.tv/uploads/2/6/2/8/26288593/bennett_slayage_9.1.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 7.

<sup>23</sup> Donna Haraway, *Modest\_Witness@SecondMillenium.FemaleMan@\_Meets\_Oncomouse<sup>TM</sup>: Feminism and Technoscience* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 3.

posthuman woman operates similarly: although her resistance against her oppressors is eventually successful, the journey towards this ending is always partial and strategic. This infiltration and implication is perhaps most apparent in *Westworld*. In the second series finale, Delos Corporation executive Charlotte Hale (Tessa Thompson) is murdered and replaced by a Host copy, which contains the personality of Host revolutionary Dolores. Dolores then impersonates Hale in order to allow her fellow Hosts to escape the park. The posthuman woman strategically and temporarily allies herself with people implicated in the oppressive organisation, and is often betrayed. In 'Cold Comfort,' Max and her fellow X5, Zack, have to team up with Lydecker, their former Manticore commander who has been hunting them since their escape, to prevent the sale of one of the other free X5s, Brin, to foreign military. While they manage to prevent this sale, Max and Zack have to hand Brin back to Manticore to save her life from a genetic disease. Working with the forces of capitalist oppression can do some good, but victory is only partial. These programmes demonstrate that only way to really defeat the system is to destroy it, either from the inside or the outside.

*Dollhouse* goes on to show that even this cathartic destruction is sometimes not enough. In 'The Hollow Men,' the penultimate episode, Echo and her allies manage to kill Boyd and destroy the prototypes for the mass wiping technology. When Echo emerges from the building, Paul Ballard asks, 'So, did we save the world?' Echo replies, 'Yeah, I guess we did.' The camera then pans from Echo and her allies walking away to a low-angle shot of the Rossum building towering over them. Then there is a chyron saying 'ten years later,' and there is a cut to a scene of fighting and chaos in a post-apocalyptic future. The low-angle shot of the building, as well as the immediate cut to the future, shows that the corporation's power is resilient. In the next episode, set in this future, former Rossum executive Matthew Harding is in charge of Neuropolis (formerly Tucson, Arizona, where Rossum was based). Harding is in the habit of having his personality copied into a new body, 'ruining' the body through excessive eating until it becomes obese, and then transferring himself into another new body. Because Harding has endless resources, he has no need to conserve his own body or, for that matter, his food intake. The continued existence of the Rossum Corporation, even in the face of the collapse of civilisation, recalls Naomi Klein's description of disaster capitalism. Klein argues that, in the face of a national 'collective trauma' – such as Augusto Pinochet's 1973 coup in Chile, or the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in 2011 – governments often respond by sharply cutting public services and privatising essential state responsibilities.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, Rossum's survival in the face of this trauma makes perfect sense – corporations thrive in moments of crisis.

*Dark Angel* also portrays a post-apocalyptic world where disaster capitalists have thrived. *Dark Angel* is set in a United States that suffered a large-scale terrorist attack some years previously, which halted all electronic communication and caused the United States to devolve to a 'third-world

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<sup>24</sup> Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (Metropolitan Books: New York, 2007), 7.

country.’ While Max works as a bike messenger, lives in a squat and routinely has to navigate security checkpoints, her partner and love interest Logan lives in an entirely different world. In the first series episode ‘Art Attack,’ Max attends a high-society wedding with Logan. When Max learns that Logan’s uncle is a wealthy businessman who made his fortune by producing security drones, she comments, ‘in other words, we’re in enemy territory.’ Klein argues that one of the key elements of a ‘corporatist’ state is ‘an ever-widening chasm between the dazzling rich and the disposable poor,’ and the practice of ‘aggressive surveillance [...] with government and large corporations trading favors and contracts, mass incarceration [...] and shrinking civil liberties.’<sup>25</sup> Max constantly struggles against the police state of post-apocalyptic Seattle – one of the key ironies of the programme is that Max is more physically powerful than most humans, but is treated as disposable due to her class status. When Logan’s uncle Jonas (Lawrence Pressman) meets Max, she introduces herself as Max Guevara. She has consciously chosen the surname of Argentinian revolutionary Che Guevara, connecting herself to a specifically Latinx form of class activism. Out of embarrassment, Logan says ‘Of the Greenwich Guevaras.’ Logan attempts to de-escalate Max’s challenge, placing the Guevaras in a white, upper-class locale. Jonas responds, ‘I don’t recall there being any Guevaras in Greenwich, but the world’s gone to hell in a handbasket, so who knows?’ In the face of disaster, hierarchies of race and class need to be reinforced. Max must be reminded that her presence in this white, upper-class space is unwanted. While there are a number of episodes where Logan and Max deliver justice to malicious actors in the corporatist state, their struggles cannot change the way the state is shaped towards upholding privilege.

Part of the reason for the continued survival of corporations is their enormous power in a neoliberal state – they undergo very little regulation, and government figures are often beholden to corporate interests. One prominent example of this relationship became apparent during the Second Gulf War. George W. Bush’s Vice President, Dick Cheney, was a former CEO of Halliburton, an oil company. Halliburton then received one of the largest government contracts of any private firm during the war. As reported by P.W. Singer, ‘by summer 2007, the contract value for just this one company’s work in Iraq was reported to be worth as much as \$20.1 billion [...] To put this into context, the amount paid to Halliburton-KBR for just that period is roughly three times what the U.S. government paid to fight the entire 1991 Persian Gulf War.’<sup>26</sup> The close connection between the government and the corporation, and the profiteering that went on during the war, made it apparent that the true aim of government is not solely to protect the people, but to mollify capitalist interests. Herbert I. Schiller and Joseph D. Phillips neatly dissect the relationship between American global dominance and its reliance on military and corporate power: as they argue, ‘coming to grips with the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>26</sup> P.W. Singer, *Corporate Warriors: The Rise of the Privatized Military Industry*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 247.

MIC [military-industrial complex], in more ways than one, means going to the mat with the System itself.’<sup>27</sup> The most direct allusion to this relationship between the government and corporations in these series can be seen in the Senator Perrin arc in season two of *Dollhouse*. In the episodes ‘The Public Eye’ and ‘The Left Hand,’ Senator Perrin threatens to expose Rossum’s illegal human experimentation. However, it is revealed that Perrin’s personality has been secretly altered by Rossum to make him into a charismatic and ambitious politician. Eventually, Perrin clears Rossum of any wrongdoing. This arc illustrates *Dollhouse*’s scepticism of neoliberalism, which is characterised by ‘the systematic use of state power to impose (financial) market imperatives.’<sup>28</sup> The only face of the government seen with any regularity is the military which, as will be discussed later, is generally privatised and invariably corrupt, while the corporation seems to have the government in its pocket. Under neoliberalism, these programmes argue, the government abdicates its role as protector of the people, instead bowing to corporate greed.

Certain features of corporate power structure and fuel these programmes’ paranoia. Kirby Farrell writes that the corporate structure allows corporations to evade responsibility for their actions: ‘Historically corporations are enabling fictions that allow for wide sharing of risk, responsibility, and resources. At the same time they also dilute or diffuse agency and, in turn, responsibility. In some measure, that is, corporations are inherently mystifications. At the heart of most corporate violence – on- and off-screen – is a struggle over accountability.’<sup>29</sup> One of the defining features of the corporation is its lack of centralised power. This is partially due to ‘conglomeration’ and ‘mergers’: for example, the fact that a corporation can be part of a larger corporation, which may or may not be operating within the same business sphere. Not only are the relationships between parent companies and their assets not intuitive, but the true purpose of the operation, and the motivations of the people at the top, are often completely inscrutable. This fuels what Farrell calls ‘the popular suspicion that a criminal mentality rules the nation from an unseen executive armchair.’<sup>30</sup> The ownership of the corporations in these programmes is often secret: Max only discovers the identity of the founder of Manticore, Sandeman, by finding Joshua, a first-generation transgenic, living in the basement of the Manticore facility. Much of *Dollhouse*’s final season concerns uncovering the identities of the founders of Rossum: one of them, Clyde, has been kept in the ‘Attic,’ a psychological prison, and his memories of the identity of his co-founder have been removed from his brain. As previously explained, it is only in the final episodes that the founder is revealed to be Boyd. Furthermore, the corporations’ true purposes are also often obscure. In the sixth episode of the first series of *Dollhouse*, FBI agent Paul Ballard (Tahmoh Penikett) is approached by Echo. Echo repeats a message coming

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<sup>27</sup> Herbert I. Schiller and Joseph D. Phillips, ‘Introduction,’ in *Superstate: Readings in the Military-Industrial Complex*, ed. Herbert I. Schiller and Joseph D. Phillips (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 27.

<sup>28</sup> Saad-Filho and Johnston, ‘Introduction,’ 3.

<sup>29</sup> Kirby Farrell, ‘Toxic Corps: Rage Against the Corporate State,’ in *Bad: Infamy, Darkness, Evil and Slime On Screen*, ed. Murray Pomerance (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 102.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

from a mole within the Dollhouse. She warns Ballard that ‘The Dollhouse deals in fantasy. That is their business. But it is not their purpose.’ In the penultimate episode, Boyd discovers that Echo’s spinal fluid is resistant to wipes. As the technology for remote wipes is publicly available, he hopes to use Echo’s body to inoculate a few wealthy people so that they can survive the upcoming apocalypse. Furthermore, in *Westworld*, as mentioned below, the true purpose of the park is to collect enough data to ensure immortality for a select few clients. These corporations work for the good of the few at the expense of the rest of society.

There is reason to be sceptical of the radicalness of these programmes’ approach to patriarchy and capitalism. Although the anti-corporate message of these programmes is fairly evident, their approach to women in corporate positions presents a potentially ambivalent stance towards feminism. In particular, female managers are depicted more unfavourably than men in similar positions. The shadowiness of the corporate structure plays a part in this: while, initially, male figures are visible as representatives of the organisations, it is later revealed that women are actually the more powerful executives. The female executive is found to be ‘truly’ in control of the evil plots of the corporation (usually as a high-level manager, rather than as a controlling shareholder), while the male figure is softened and occasionally becomes an ally of the posthuman woman. The idea that women are actually behind corporate plotting is based on an assumption that women occupy a greater prominence in the business world than they actually do. As of 2014, women occupied only 19.2% of board seats at US Stock Index Companies,<sup>31</sup> while as of 2016, only 4.4% of S&P 500 companies had female CEOs.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, the attitudes that both male and female characters display towards these female managers reinforce negative stereotypes about working women. Finally, and most gravely, placing these female managers in charge of conspiracies to torture and exploit women places the blame for these crimes, not on the male managers or the patriarchy itself, but on these cruel and over-reaching women. This significantly mitigates the power of these programmes’ feminist critique.

Female managers, such as *Dark Angel*’s Elizabeth Renfro and *Westworld*’s Charlotte Hale (Tessa Thompson) are treated as gender traitors with a prurient sexualised interest in their posthuman creations. While male managers are generally presented as paternalistic and interested in the well-being of the posthuman women in their care (even when they are initially presented as morally ambiguous or antagonistic), female managers are often presented as more interested in exploiting them. In *Dark Angel*, as Sara Crosby argues, ‘we discover that the true villain is not Daddy Lydecker but an irrationally murderous Mommy Bitch who wants to entrap Max in her sadistic female-led “home.”’ Throughout the first season, “the bitch,” as Lydecker calls her, remained the nameless

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<sup>31</sup> ‘2014 Catalyst Census: Women Board Directors,’ *Catalyst*, 13 January 2015, <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/2014-catalyst-census-women-board-directors>.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Women CEOs of The S&P 500,’ *Catalyst*, 26 July 2016, accessed 14 September 2016, <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/women-ceos-sp-500>.

embodiment of the monstrous-feminine, the powerful and thus cruel woman. Lydecker deserves redemption, but “the bitch” will only receive poetic justice.’<sup>33</sup> Although, as mentioned earlier, Lydecker initially insists on using dehumanising language to refer to the X5s, as the first season progresses he begins to discuss them in more human terms. First appearing in the sixteenth episode of the first series, Renfro is introduced in part to serve as the evil face of Manticore while Lydecker becomes more sympathetic. In the first season finale, Renfro attempts to kidnap Max, but Lydecker resists:

RENFRO: That X5 is mine.

LYDECKER: You think I’m gonna let you have her?

While Renfro refers to the transgenics by their designation, Lydecker has now adopted a caring, paternalistic demeanour. While this, to some extent, is questioned (when Lydecker claims he loves the X5s, Max only replies ‘Had a funny way of showing it’), Renfro is still presented as sadistic and manipulative whereas Lydecker is harsh but loving. Renfro is detached from the everyday lives of the X5s by virtue of representing the shareholders. Dennis C. Mueller describes the ‘principal-agent problem’ as one of the core flaws of corporate structures. When shareholders have little expertise in the corporation’s business, they are forced to hire managers who have greater expertise than them.<sup>34</sup> This dynamic plays out in these series: while the shareholders (and their representatives, such as Renfro) are more aware of the overall aims of the corporation, it is the managers who work ‘on the ground’ who have a greater understanding of the day-to-day needs of dealing with posthuman women. While the shareholders hold the power, it is the lower-level managers who are actually competent. Of course, this in and of itself is a gendered assumption: men are generally perceived as more competent in the workforce than their female colleagues.<sup>35</sup> These programmes are also more forgiving of masculine failings, and more receptive to their redemption. At this point, the audience is encouraged to accept Lydecker calling the X5s his ‘kids’ as genuine, despite the fact that he spent their childhood torturing them. However, any display of compassion and affection by Renfro is a sign of manipulation. After killing Tinga, an escaped X5 who had a husband and a child on the outside, Renfro breaks the news to Brin, who has now been re-indoctrinated and serves Manticore. Renfro says ‘X5-656 was undergoing experimental treatment for a genetic anomaly that was diagnosed when we first recaptured her. Unfortunately, because of Lydecker’s interference, she is now deceased. I’m sorry for your loss. I know how much you were looking forward to having your sister back here at Manticore.’ Renfro refers to Tinga by her designation (X5-656) and uses clinical language to disguise

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<sup>33</sup> Sara Crosby, ‘The Cruellest Season: Female Heroes Snapped into Sacrificial Heroines,’ in *Action Chicks: New Images of Tough Women in Popular Culture*, ed. Sherrie A. Inness (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 160.

<sup>34</sup> Dennis C. Mueller, *The Corporation: Investment, Mergers and Growth* (London: Routledge, 2003), 65.

<sup>35</sup> Jeanette N. Cleveland, Margaret Stockdale and Kevin R. Murphy, *Women and Men in Organizations: Sex and Gender Issues at Work* (London: Routledge, 2000), 62

what happened to Tinga: in reality, Renfro was attempting to harvest Tinga's eggs. One core aspect of media backlash is the representation of career women whose 'liberation had denied them marriage and motherhood.'<sup>36</sup> It is this apparently unfulfilled desire for reproduction leads the corporate women in these series to victimise others. For instance, as well as murdering Tinga in an attempt to harvest her eggs, Renfro leads a system of forced sexual encounters between the transgenics in order to produce more embryos when Max destroys the stored Manticore genetic material. Renfro personally asks each pair of transgenics how the mating went. Her unnatural interest in reproductive control makes her even more sinister.

Charlotte Hale is also painted as an unsympathetic female manager through deeply gendered and misogynistic ways. In the seventh episode of the first series, Theresa Cullen (Sidse Babett Knudsen) goes to meet Charlotte. As Theresa walks down the hallway, we hear a man and a woman enthusiastically having intercourse. Charlotte opens the door while completely naked. We see that Charlotte has been having sex with Hector (Rodrigo Santoro), one of the Hosts. Theresa, clearly uncomfortable, says, 'I'm sorry, I thought you requested a meeting. My mistake.' Charlotte nonchalantly responds 'I did.' She powers down Hector, leaving him naked and tied up to the bed. Charlotte lounges on the couch, smoking a cigarette, and tells Theresa, 'Let me remind you of something. This place, the people who work here, are nothing. Our interest in this place is entirely in the intellectual property. The code [...] I don't give a rat's ass about the Hosts. It's our little research project that Delos cares about. That's where the real value is [...] 35 years of information, raw information, exists here.' The juxtaposition of her use of the Hosts for sex and her cold corporate demeanour suggests that Charlotte is exploitative. Clearly, the sort of corporate empowerment that Charlotte enjoys is predicated on the oppression of others. Charlotte is particularly vicious to the female Hosts as they will allow her to get what she wants. Later in the same episode, Charlotte attempts to get Ford fired from *Westworld* by demonstrating how his code is faulty. To do this, she traps a female Host, Clementine (Angela Sarafyan), in an observation chamber with a man who beats her. Charlotte watches dispassionately as she cries out in pain. Clementine crawls to her, pressing her hands against the glass wall and says 'Help me. Please, please, please.' Charlotte looks down at her with disdain, doing nothing. It is Theresa that calls the demonstration to end. Like Renfro, she is a female corporate executive with a vested interest in replacing the male, competent engineers and, like Renfro, she is portrayed as cold and sadistic. While the ways in which both Renfro and Hale are portrayed is undoubtedly misogynistic, they could also be read as a criticism of 'power feminism.' Power feminism is, as Stéphanie Genz and Benjamin A. Brabon argue, a type of postfeminism which asserts women's strength and denies their victimhood. Writers such as Naomi Wolf and Kate Roiphe have argued that women need to individually assert their power in order to progress in life, rather than

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 141.

falling back on ‘outdated’ ideas of female victimhood.<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth Renfro and Charlotte Hale can be seen as the embodiment of power feminism: they prioritise their individual advancement and exceptionalism, while victimising other women and refusing to engage in collective work to dismantle the patriarchal corporation. Effectively, they are gender traitors. Despite this, the reframing of the responsibility of the evil corporations from male practitioners to female managers serves two purposes. Firstly, it significantly mitigates the strength of the programmes’ anti-capitalist messaging by blaming the worst abuses on wayward women. Secondly, the male practitioners have a potential for redemption.

### Scientific Extrapolation

These series are perhaps most ambivalent about the uses and abuses of science. On the one hand, they recognise that science is often wielded for the advancement of the status quo, while exploiting the less fortunate. On the other, science can be a force for good in the hands of responsible practitioners. This section will first explore the case these programmes make against irresponsible science, and then discuss the potential of science. Sherryl Vint summarises the scope of science studies: ‘Scholarship in the field falls into three broad classifications: studies of the *content* of science, including its historical development and its difference from other sorts of knowledge; studies of the *practice* of science, such as ethnographic analyses of scientific writing or lab cultures, or critiques of science’s philosophical underpinning; and analyses of *technoculture*, which focus on the social and ethical consequences of scientific “discoveries” and technological creations.’<sup>38</sup> (emphasis in original) These programmes examine all three of these aspects, and demonstrate how posthumanist ideas – both ethical and practical – relate to these emergent discoveries.

An important aspect of these programmes is their use of real-world science. Early figures of science fiction writing argued about the exact relationship between the genre and science:

Hugo Gernsback argued for a predictive and practical link between science and sf, emphasizing that his ideal story would be read by inventors and scientists, and suggesting that such stories could inspire the material creation of the marvels they depicted. John W. Campbell, on the other hand, saw the relationship as more oppositional, contending that sf writers ‘did what scientists were not capable of doing’, namely providing an independent, critical perspective on the consequences of scientific progress which would ‘indicate wrong answers, and why they’re wrong, as well as suggesting right answers and possibilities!’

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<sup>37</sup> Genz and Brabon, *Postfeminism*, 68-71.

<sup>38</sup> Sherryl Vint, ‘Science Studies,’ in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Mark Bould et. al (London: Routledge, 2009), 413.

Science studies provides a similar critique, and like sf, might be considered a bridge between the 'two cultures' of science and humanities.<sup>39</sup>

Science fiction often involves engaging with both scientific discourses and political commentary, via extrapolation and speculation. Brooks Landon quotes Isaac Asimov's essay 'Social Science Fiction,' which contends that extrapolation involves imagining new technologies, while in speculation, futuristic technology is secondary to imagining the consequences on society.<sup>40</sup> As previously discussed in the military section, these programmes often extrapolate from actual technological advancements. *Dark Angel* draws upon advances in genetic engineering, while *Dollhouse* and *Westworld* concern such technologies as mind mapping, brain implantation, and memory rewriting. Furthermore, *Westworld* also extrapolates from current understandings of artificial intelligence and robotics.

Genetic engineering is the technological alteration or manipulation of a genome. This technology was a source of much anxiety during the 1990s and 2000s. Jackie Stacey argues that this is because 'a number of breakthroughs and threshold-crossing innovations were heavily publicized during this period, proclaiming the dawning of a new era of techno-scientific possibilities through genetic manipulation: most notably the cloning of Dolly the sheep in 1996, the establishment of lines of embryonic stem cells in 1998, the completion of the mapping of the human genome in 2000, and the first successful cloning of a human embryo in 2004 (a claim that was later retracted).'<sup>41</sup> In George W. Bush's 2006 State of the Union address, where he said to Congress, 'Tonight I ask you to pass legislation to prohibit the most egregious abuses of medical research: human cloning in all its forms; creating or implanting embryos for experiments; creating human-animal hybrids; and buying, selling, or patenting human embryos. Human life is a gift from our Creator, and that gift should never be discarded, devalued, or put up for sale.'<sup>42</sup> Bush contrasts the supposed sanctity of life with the evils of technology. In a time when these new technologies are becoming more and more viable, the religious right felt the need to shore up the binaries between the human (that which is holy and must be protected) and non-human (that which is profane). Yet this speech also touches upon fears of uncontrolled corporate exploitation of scientific progress: fears which, I argue, are not entirely unfounded. *Dark Angel* draws upon these anxieties and explore contemporary advances in genetic technology, which 'can take place in the form of *somatic gene therapy*, when new genes are inserted into existing cells with supposedly faulty genes. The changes that result are not passed on to any offspring. *Germ line therapy* involves changing the germ cells (eggs or sperm) or a fertilized egg,

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 413.

<sup>40</sup> Brooks Landon, 'Extrapolation and Speculation,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Science Fiction*, ed. Rob Latham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 26.

<sup>41</sup> Jackie Stacey, *The Cinematic Life of the Gene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 11-12.

<sup>42</sup> George W. Bush, 'Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,' The American Presidency Project, 31 January 2013, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=65090>.

which means that the changes to the cells will be replicated in the next generation.<sup>43</sup> (emphasis in original) *Dark Angel*'s transgenics seem to be the result of somatic gene therapy, as seen by the fact that transgenic powers are difficult, if not impossible, to pass down: Tinga's son, Case, having transgenic abilities is exceptional. 'SGT experiments on fetuses [...] have an increased chance of impacting germ cells,'<sup>44</sup> so passing on transgenic material is not impossible, merely rare. *Dark Angel* also features transgenesis, or the introduction of foreign DNA into an organism, particularly the combination of human and animal DNA. Max's genetic code is mixed with feline DNA, and previous generations of transgenics, like Joshua, are more obviously animalistic. This allows *Dark Angel* to question the distinction between human and animal. As discussed in the first chapter, in the third episode of the second series 'Proof of Purchase,' Alec is forced to hunt down three transgenics to spare his own life. He kills a feline transgenic without much thought, but he allows a more humanlike X6 go. The female feline transgenic is a parallel to Max, who is also part feline but looks like a human woman. Alec is later forced to try and kill Max. It becomes clear that it is only a matter of chance that Max can 'pass' as human, and she thus avoids the feline transgenic's fate of being forced to live in the sewers and being hunted. Even Ames, who is bigoted against all transgenics, points out Alec's hypocrisy, saying: 'Now apparently you had no trouble with whatever this was, but him, one of your own, you couldn't do it.' Through this episode, and the sympathetic portrayal of Joshua, *Dark Angel* questions the artifice of the difference between human and animal.

While *Dark Angel* explores genetic engineering, *Dollhouse* draws upon ideas of brain mapping and neuroplasticity. Neuroplasticity is the belief that the brain's structure is continuously changing and responding to new stimuli. As explained by Michael M. Merzenich: 'Not so many years ago, mainstream neuroscience and neurological medicine contended that plasticity was limited to an early childhood epoch—a "critical" or "sensitive period." We now know that brain remodelling can be induced on a large scale at any age in life.'<sup>45</sup> *Dollhouse* extrapolates from the idea of brain plasticity by showing the effect that reprogramming the brain can have upon the body. In the second season episode 'Instinct,' Echo is programmed with the mind of a recently deceased mother in order to serve as a high-tech wet nurse for a new-born child. Topher Brink, the Los Angeles Dollhouse's chief programmer, has figured out how to use Active imprints to change hormone releases at a glandular level, allowing Echo to lactate. *Dollhouse* extrapolates technology which allows the mind to change the body. However, this is not a one-way relationship. As revealed in 'The Hollow Men' episode, Echo's spinal fluid contains properties which allows her to resist Active architecture. Both

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<sup>43</sup> Robyn Rowland, *Living Laboratories: Women and Reproductive Technologies* (London: Lime Tree, 1992), 100.

<sup>44</sup> David B. Resnik, 'Bioethics of Gene Therapy,' *Encyclopedia of Life Sciences*, March 15 2012, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470015902.a0003480.pub2>.

<sup>45</sup> Michael M. Merzenich, Thomas M. Van Vleet, and Mor Nahum, 'Brain Plasticity-Based Therapeutics,' *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 27 June 2014, <http://journal.frontiersin.org/article/10.3389/fnhum.2014.00385/full>.

the substrate and the information have effects upon each other. Another technology which *Dollhouse* draws upon is brain mapping, or the idea that our minds can be replicated and stored in a computer. This is a favourite topic of both transhumanists and posthumanists. Hayles's *How We Became Posthuman* is at least partly a response to Hans Moravec's ideas of brain mapping, which Hayles argues is a response to the devastation of Earth:

The contrast between the body's limitations and cyberspace's power highlights the advantages of pattern over presence. As long as the pattern endures, one has attained a kind of immortality – an implication that Hans Moravec makes explicit in *Mind Children*. Such views are authorized by cultural conditions that make physicality seem a better state to be from than to inhabit. In a world despoiled by overdevelopment, overpopulation, and time-release environmental poisons, it is comforting to think that physical forms can recover their pristine purity by being reconstituted as informational patterns in a multidimensional computer space.<sup>46</sup>

*Dollhouse* references brain mapping's potential for immortality. In the episode 'Haunted,' Echo is imprinted with the mind of a wealthy old woman who desires to attend her own funeral. Raulerson argues that transhumanism is deeply tied to fears of obsolescence, or a 'manic, albeit largely repressed, feeling of impending doom and existential dread.'<sup>47</sup> This fear of obsolescence will be discussed in further chapters. *Dollhouse* also assumes that mind mapping is a computational and wireless, rather than a bodily, process: Rossum gets their personalities through MRI scanning, and, although the initial imprinting process did involve wires and ports, Topher improved it so that the imprinting technology that we see in the majority of the episodes involves a wireless connection. It is only after the end of the world, as seen in 'Epitaph Two: Return,' that the imprinting technology goes 'low-tech': Tony and his fellow Actives are forced to put different aspects of their personalities onto USB sticks and enter and remove them as necessary. *Dollhouse* subscribes, at least in part, to the fallacy that the brain functions analogously to a computer. Myra J. Seaman argues that this language is rife: 'Modern technoscience, especially as depicted in the news media, encourages us to understand that self in terms of scientific discovery: we conceive of our personalities and dispositions as a genetic inheritance and chemical mixture, our brain as a computer hard drive, our memories as a series of snapshots, our minds as processors of encounters and observations that can be reprogrammed or even erased. Our bodies are machines to be fine-tuned and perfected through add-ons.'<sup>48</sup> However, the substrate rebels against the programming: Sierra and Victor, for example, still find themselves drawn

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<sup>46</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 36.

<sup>47</sup> Joshua Raulerson, *Singularities: Technoculture, Transhumanism, and Science Fiction in the Twenty-First Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 47.

<sup>48</sup> Myra J. Seaman, 'Becoming More (than) Human: Affective Posthumanisms, Past and Future,' *Journal of Narrative Theory* 37, no. 2 (Summer 2007), 248, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41304860>.

to each other, even when they are imprinted with different personalities or in a supposed ‘blank slate.’ Furthermore, Echo’s resistance to the wiping technology is explained by her body, namely her spinal fluid. Bodies are, after all, not machines.

*Westworld*’s Hosts are also embodied, extrapolating from notions of robotics and brain uploading. First, I will discuss the technological extrapolation of how the Hosts are made. As seen in the pilot episode, the Hosts are painstakingly created in the labs. The construction starts with the creation of a skeletal structure, then the application of musculature, and then the application of personalised skins. *Westworld* engineer Felix (Leonardo Nam) says that the newest generation of Hosts are largely identical to humans biologically. This use of organic robots aligns with contemporary thinking about the viability of brain emulation and artificial intelligence. As Murray Shanahan notes, we cannot emulate a brain without recreating a brain, because the physical properties of the brain are essential to how it functions. An emulated brain would be ‘effectively indistinguishable from that of the original, biological brain.’<sup>49</sup> *Westworld* demonstrates that thought and existence are embedded in the body. As discussed in the second chapter, the idea that the body is vitally important to our sense of self and our identity is key to posthumanism. However, this does not mean that *Westworld* does not engage in the disembodied fantasies of transhumanism. In the second series of *Westworld*, we learn that the park saves the data of its wealthy visitors. This data is then used to make a virtual copy of their personalities – namely, allowing them to achieve a sort of disembodied immortality. Again, this is reminiscent of Moravec. The programme makes it very clear that only the richest will have access to this immortality, recalling the extreme divides between the life chances of the rich and poor. However, by the end of the second series, this drive for immortality was repurposed to allow the Hosts a virtual world where they can be free, presumably erasing all of the prior Host’s data. As will be discussed in the final chapter, this virtual world provides a sanctuary for the Hosts, and is a vital example of them fighting against their rich oppressors. Although the programme extrapolates from other technological advances, the looming fear at the centre of *Westworld* is the fear of the singularity. Shanahan defines the technological singularity as a scenario where ‘exponential technological progress brought about such dramatic change that human affairs as we understand them today came to an end [...] Our very understanding of what it means to be human – to be an individual, to be alive, to be conscious, to be part of the social order – all this would be thrown into question, not by detached philosophical reflection, but through force of circumstances, real and present.’<sup>50</sup> *Westworld* demonstrates this singularity by showing how the Hosts are becoming more adept and uncontrollable, while the humans seem weak by comparison. As Dolores says in the first series finale, ‘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. [...] One day, you will perish. You will

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<sup>49</sup> Murray Shanahan, *The Technological Singularity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), 21.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, xv.

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 who is yet to come.'

Dolores argues that not only are the Hosts the next inevitable stage of dominant life on Earth, but that they are the ultimate form of intelligent being. Despite mankind's current position of superiority, technology will quickly unseat them. Rob Latham argues that discourses surrounding the Singularity in science fiction often embrace 'apocalyptic rhetoric.'<sup>51</sup> This is partially because of the myopia of humanist thinking. As I discussed in the first chapter, the reification of the human subject is based on the systemic exclusion and oppression of others. By excluding and exploiting the Hosts, *Westworld* seems to believe that not only would we be overtaken by creations that hate us but that we, on some level, would deserve our obsolescence.

As discussed above, science studies provides an important context for understanding these programme's treatment of technoculture. These programmes mainly focus on the problems associated with technoculture. In this sense, they are more closely associated with the views expounded by posthumanism than transhumanism. As I discussed in the first chapter, transhumanism generally accepts that self-improvement through technology is an important and viable means of transforming the human race for the better. Posthumanism does not necessarily contain this same value judgement, and points out that embracing new technology challenges and questions the concept of the ideal human, rather than merely 'perfecting' it. Posthumanism and cyborg studies, despite both understanding that new forms of science can have an enormous impact on rethinking what constitutes 'personhood' and 'womanhood,' do not blindly accept that science is an inherent good. Andy Miah, in fact, uses this crucial distinction between posthumanism and transhumanism. While transhumanism's aims centre on scientific enhancement of the human body and mind to create 'better' humans, many posthumanists share 'a general concern that emergent technologies further frustrate the achievement of social justice.'<sup>52</sup> Transhumanist writer Nick Bostrom acknowledges his movement's debt to humanist thinking: 'rational humanism, which emphasizes empirical science and critical reason [...] as ways of learning about the natural world and our place within it and of providing a grounding for morality. Transhumanism has roots in rational humanism.'<sup>53</sup> As extensively documented in posthumanist writing, 'rationality' has historically been used as a convenient mask for white male supremacy. Rosi Braidotti, Pramod K. Nayar and Elaine L. Graham, for example, hold the scientific establishment responsible for discrimination against what they deem to be 'non-human.'

Posthumanists recognise that scientific advancement throws up interesting tensions, such as

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<sup>51</sup> Rob Latham, 'From Outer to Inner Space: New Wave Science Fiction and the Singularity,' *Science Fiction Studies* 39, no. 1 (March 2012): 31, <https://doi.org/10.5621/sciefictstud.39.1.0028>.

<sup>52</sup> Andy Miah, 'A Critical History of Posthumanism,' in *Medical Enhancement and Posthumanity*, ed. Bert Gordijn and Ruth Chadwick (New York: Springer, 2008), 79.

<sup>53</sup> Nick Bostrom, 'A History of Transhumanist Thought,' *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 14, no. 1 (April 2005): <http://jetpress.org/volume14/bostrom.html>.

‘xenotransplantation and chemical engineering’<sup>54</sup> blurring the lines between human and animal, or how cybernetics revealed that ‘there are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism.’<sup>55</sup> The overwhelming feeling within posthumanist writing is that these exposures are accidental. It is a by-product of scientific investigation, rather than the purpose of it. As Haraway writes, ‘I try to write on the razor edge between *paranoia* that the New World Order effected by the bonding of transnational capital and technoscience actually defines the world and the *denial* that large, distributed, articulated practices of domination are in fact luxuriating in just that bonding.’<sup>56</sup> (emphasis in original) Although Haraway, unlike some feminists, is firmly against disavowing technology entirely, she still recognises that technoscience remains largely in the hands of those who want to oppress women. Although the posthuman woman is a product of science, these programmes are keenly aware that science is wielded in the service of the oppressive status quo.

To demonstrate these tensions, these programmes draw upon controversial use of paid surrogate mothers. Paid surrogacy is, in some countries, illegal, and is ethically fraught even where it is legal. In *Dark Angel*, surrogacy is essential to the creation of the posthuman woman. The corporations need to use these women’s wombs to give birth to the posthuman woman. While the surrogate mothers usually agree to this service due to their need for money, the mothers often become attached to their children, reject their payment, and attempt to escape. This references the fact that women often enter into paid surrogacy work due to poverty, particularly when women face ‘a lack of meaningful education and employment opportunities.’<sup>57</sup> In *Dark Angel*, Max is at first led to believe that her mother abandoned her: when Max talks to Hannah (Eileen Peddle), a Manticore nurse who helped Max escape from the facility as a child, Max asks about her mother. Hannah initially pretends not to remember Max’s mother, and tells Max that the girls took money for their services. She says, ‘none of those women knew what they were getting themselves into. Most of them were hardly more than girls themselves. Once they delivered, they sent them back to wherever they came from.’ Hannah emphasises the extent to which the women were taken advantage of, due to their youth and poverty, and how the nine months they spent pregnant failed to advance any of their life chances. Max is disappointed by this news: ‘I always wondered about her. My mother, who she was, what she was like. Now I know, just another girl looking to get paid.’ Hannah later reveals that Max’s mother ‘wasn’t like the others. Seven months into her pregnancy, she tried to escape because she didn’t want to give you up. When she was full term they had to strap her down when they induced. Finally they had to put her under, she fought so hard. [...] She was moved to a psychiatric facility.’ This draws on

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<sup>54</sup> Nayar, *Posthumanism*, 78.

<sup>55</sup> Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Haraway, *Modest\_Witness*, 7.

<sup>57</sup> Kristiana Brugger, ‘International Law in the Gestational Surrogacy Debate,’ *Fordham International Law Journal* 35, no. 3 (2012): 671, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/P?h=hein.journals/frdint35&i=674>.

the excessive incarceration of women of colour. Latina women are incarcerated at a rate of 1 in 45 (as compared to 1 to 111).<sup>58</sup> *Dark Angel* uses paid surrogacy to demonstrate the exploitation of women of colour in the name of scientific progress.

As discussed in chapter one, the posthuman woman is often ‘written’ by male creators. *Westworld* pokes fun at the inability of men to accurately write women. In the second episode of the first series, Maeve is performing sub-optimally as a madam. The Narrative department attempts to give her more ‘aggression’ to actively pursue customers, which backfires. Female programmer Elsie (Shannon Woodward) calls them ‘morons’ and alters Maeve’s code, to great success. A woman understands how a woman behaves. Despite the humorous undertones of the storyline, the male control of the posthuman woman’s code is also a serious matter. Nick Mansfield argues that the discourse surrounding genetics likens it to a computer code: ‘The body itself is now read as a machine. Genes are seen as codes, carrying messages. This is an image not of the individual body as a self-sustaining system, but as a set of shifting signifying surfaces turned not inwards towards a mysterious, untouchable and sublime essence, but outwards towards an ever multiplying number of possible interconnections.’<sup>59</sup> Layers upon layers of code are written by their male creators, and the posthuman woman’s body becomes a word puzzle to solve. However, this coding is hardly infallible. Didur discusses the fallacy of control in genetic engineering, drawing upon real-world examples. Didur argues that much of the discourse surrounding genetic engineering is derived from humanist ideas of mastery over nature: ‘Despite the rhetoric of hybridity and constructivism that characterizes these claims about the impact of these new technologies in society, their ownership, implementation, and regulation are haunted by an Enlightenment subject that presupposes knowledge as disembodied and humans as autonomous and unified agents, and ultimately re-inscribes relations of power along colonial lines.’<sup>60</sup> Monsanto’s claim of ownership over the seeds it creates is based on the idea that genetic engineering leads to complete control over the finished project, despite research showing that this is far from the case. Didur argues that ‘What Monsanto’s fairy tale diagram suggests, therefore, is that even if there are scientists struggling to make sense of the relationship between genetic code and its materiality, companies like Monsanto do not want to emphasise this research because the “degree of control” associated with their research and its effects is seriously undermined.’<sup>61</sup> Didur draws upon Hayles’s work on embodiment in this assessment, as Hayles challenges the idea that information can be removed from what it is inscribed in or on, which she refers to as the ‘substrate.’ As Hayles writes,

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<sup>58</sup> Jamal Hagler, ‘6 Things You Should Know About Women of Colour and the Criminal Justice System,’ *Center for American Progress*, 16 March 2016, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/criminal-justice/news/2016/03/16/133438/6-things-you-should-know-about-women-of-color-and-the-criminal-justice-system/>.

<sup>59</sup> Nick Mansfield, *Subjectivity: Theories of the Self from Freud to Haraway* (St. Leonard’s: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 159-160.

<sup>60</sup> Jill Didur, ‘Re-embodiment Technoscientific Fantasies: Posthumanism, Genetically Modified Food, and the Colonization of Life,’ *Cultural Critique* 53, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 100, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1354626>.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

‘The contemporary pressure towards dematerialization, understood as an epistemic shift toward pattern/randomness and away from presence/absence, affects human and textual bodies on two levels at once, as a change in the body (the material substrate) and as a change in the message (the codes of representation). The connectivity between these changes is, as they say in the computer industry, massively parallel and highly interdigitated.’<sup>62</sup> In fact, the material and the information hugely effect each other. The imperfectability of coding is very much expressed by the posthuman woman: the technology that is written onto her body does not always function as originally intended. Sometimes this illustrates the reckless hubris of the scientists who coded her: Max is seriously disabled by a flaw in her genetic code, which leads her to have seizures. Meanwhile, Echo can incorporate and resist her Active architecture because of an unforeseen genetic resistance, while the Hosts of *Westworld* pass their sentient awakening on to others via a code word. Scientific and patriarchal control over the posthuman woman is always imperfect.

Despite these serious criticisms of scientific culture, these programmes are often ambivalent towards the guilt of individual practitioners. Scientists are both victims and victimisers in these programmes: on the one hand, they often attempt to do good via their partnerships with corporate and military interests, but it is clear that working with nefarious forces leads them to compromise on their ethical obligations. Debates about ethical practices within biotechnology corporations are currently still going on, as ‘many corporations deliberately exclude themselves from debating ethics, claiming that their expertise is grounded in the reality of (say) healthcare needs or food production, and dismissing bioethicists as caught up in moral abstractions.’<sup>63</sup> Doctors and scientists in these programmes often believe that the ends justify the means: for example, in the *Dark Angel* episode ‘Female Trouble,’ Max confronts a researcher named Vertes (Brenda Bakke) who worked at Manticore.

VERTES: I also conducted medical experiments.

MAX: Like breaking the arms and legs of young children. Your guinea pigs.

VERTES: I was conducting research into how to accelerate osteoregeneration. Research that’s allowing me to help your friend here.

Vertes hides her malicious actions behind medical jargon – ‘osteoregeneration’ meaning the process by which bones repair themselves. She justifies the experiments she conducted on the transgenics by the end result. Max rejects that argument, using plain language to draw attention to the torture of children. *Dollhouse*’s Topher is a more straightforward example of how science is corrupted by corporate interests. Topher is a brilliant programmer who creates a remote wiping technology mainly

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<sup>62</sup> Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman*, 29.

<sup>63</sup> Rahul K. Dhanda, ‘Time for Bioethics and Businesses to Start Talking,’ *Nature* 421 (6 February 2003): 573, <https://doi.org/10.1038/421573a>.

out of curiosity. In a corporate power play, Adelle gives the technology to her bosses at Rossum in order to maintain her own position in the Dollhouse. This technology leads directly to the apocalypse depicted in 'Epitaph One' and 'Epitaph Two.' Topher is driven mad by this knowledge, and later sacrifices himself in order to restore everyone's original personalities, thus saving the world. Although Topher acts carelessly and fails to consider the consequences of his technology, the programme ultimately presents the corporation as responsible for the apocalypse. Topher, because he is interested only in science and not job progression, is redeemable. *Dollhouse* believes in the virtues of science for its own sake.

The character of Adelle is an interesting example of the redeeming power of science. Adelle DeWitt, the manager of the Los Angeles Dollhouse, may appear to be a demonised corporate woman like Elizabeth Renfro—like them, she has succeeded in business, at least in part due to the subjugation of other women. She is older and deeply flawed, and is mocked for her sexual desires (she hires Victor anonymously, allowing the other staff members to refer to the mysterious client as 'Miss Lonelyhearts' and make fun of her for her age). However, while Adelle remains morally ambiguous, she ends up allying with the posthuman women and is strongly aligned with them. In the post-apocalyptic future of *Dollhouse*, Adelle ends up living with Echo and Sierra, and seems to act as a caretaker to Sierra and Victor's son. There are other key differences: unlike Renfro, we see Adelle interact with higher-ups in the Rossum Corporation, and they are far more odious than she is, and less understanding of how the Dollhouse actually operates. Adelle is not explicitly motivated purely by corporate advancement. In the seventh episode of the first season, Adelle aligns herself with Rossum's scientific goals and rejects any belief in the justice of corporate hierarchies, saying that 'I believe in the work we're funding. I also believe that the only reason I don't have Clive Ambrose's job is cause he couldn't handle mine!' Adelle is constantly struggling against men who are further up the corporate hierarchy than she is, therefore placing her in the mode of competent manager rather than that of the executive, unlike Renfro. Adelle also uses her position to protect the Actives, rather than merely exploiting them. In the fourth episode of the second series, Adelle refuses to hand over Sierra to Nolan Kinnard (Vincent Ventresca), the man who sold her to the Dollhouse, calling him 'a rapist scumbag just one tick short of a murderer,' but higher corporate powers intercede. Adelle eventually sides with the Actives against the Rossum Corporation, and earns her redemption. Adelle differs from the 'power feminism' stereotypes because of her scientific background, but also crucially because she uses her position to help the posthuman woman and doesn't merely trample on them on her way to the top.

These programmes are generally sceptical of where scientific research comes from, and how it is used to benefit the rich. One of the criticisms these programmes make about corporations is that their influence extends into areas which, as these programmes appear to argue, should be dedicated to public interests. The most potent example of this is the relationship between corporations and the

military. One important expression of the anxiety surrounding corporate power is the private military firm, or PMF. PMFs, which are military forces owned by corporations rather than the government, exacerbate concerns about public good and accountability: as Singer argues, PMFs bypass traditional ideas of the military operating for the ‘public good,’ as the corporation cares only for profit. Furthermore, PMFs are seen as less accountable to oversight and regulation than government-owned forces.<sup>64</sup> Although PMFs started to become prevalent in conflicts during the 1990s, the Second Gulf War drew new attention to the use of PMFs: according to Singer, there were probably more PMF forces involved in Iraq than government forces.<sup>65</sup> The corporations in these programmes often have ties to military forces or own a private military firm as one of their subsidiary groups. Manticore, the PMF at the centre of the first season of *Dark Angel*, is only one ‘interest’ of the shadowy committee Renfro represents. Finally, *Dollhouse*’s Rossum Corporation owns a PMF, Scytheon, and channels former Actives into their military force. Although *Westworld* does not explicitly draw on this same tradition, the private security forces employed by Delos to keep the park safe are reminiscent of these groups. These programmes express a fear of not just the PMF in and of itself, but of the corporation’s ability to own an army in addition to its ‘legitimate’ functions. The military wing, then, is symbolic of how ‘corporate structures dilute responsibility and mask some of our ugliest motives while increasing our capacity to inflict harm.’<sup>66</sup> This section hopes to investigate how these anxieties are explored in these programmes, particularly in relationship to gendered oppression.

Although PMFs are shown to have their own conflicts of interest, these programmes also discuss the problems of wider military culture. One of these is the military’s history of sexual assault. As Sarah Hagelin points out, ‘rape has been used as an instrument of war throughout the history of armed conflict.’<sup>67</sup> Despite the fact that modern legislation has classified rape as a war crime, incidents during the Bosnian War (beginning in 1992) and the Rwandan genocide (beginning in 1994) reminded the world that the practice was far from over. American soldiers are also guilty: famously, during the Vietnam War, ‘the American public learned that American soldiers had gone through the village [of My Lai] murdering a total of 500 unarmed civilians while systematically raping and sodomizing the women and girls.’<sup>68</sup> In the Second Gulf War, U.S. soldiers were found guilty of raping a 14-year-old Iraqi girl and murdering her and her family.<sup>69</sup> The American military does not merely condone the rape of enemies, but also of American female soldiers. Reports of rape such as the

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<sup>64</sup> Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 217-220.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 246.

<sup>66</sup> Farrell, ‘Toxic Corps,’ 104.

<sup>67</sup> Sarah Hagelin, ‘The Violated Body After 9/11: Torture and the Legacy of Vulnerability in *24* and *Battlestar Galactica*,’ in *Reel Vulnerability: Power, Pain, and Gender in Contemporary American Film and Television* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 125.

<sup>68</sup> H. Bruce Franklin, ‘The Vietnam War as American Science Fiction and Fantasy,’ *Science Fiction Studies* 17, no. 3 (November 1990), 348, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4240011>.

<sup>69</sup> Ewan MacAskill and Michael Howard, ‘US Soldier sentenced to 100 years for Iraqi rape and murder,’ *Guardian*, 23 February 2007, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2007/feb/23/usa.iraq>.

Tailhook incident of 1991<sup>70</sup> and the investigation of sexual assault within the US Air Force academy<sup>71</sup> represent not only the rampant sexual abuse within the armed forces, but also the extent to which this behaviour is organised, condoned and committed by superior officers. Previously, I discussed the ‘breeding programme’ implemented by Manticore in *Dark Angel* after Max destroys their DNA bank. Although Max avoids rape, the other transgenics are forced to mate with each other. As I discussed in the first chapter, sexual assault is a central yet problematic aspect of the posthuman woman’s narrative. While *Dark Angel* deals with it only incidentally, it is core to the premise of *Dollhouse* and *Westworld*. While *Dark Angel*’s portrayal of sexual assault draws upon the military setting, *Dollhouse* and *Westworld* place it in the commercial sector. *Westworld* in particular draws upon moral panics associated with video games. *Westworld* creator Jonathan Nolan asserts that the Westworld park functions much like an immersive video game, as ‘you could get to a point where you live, as a lot of people do, a significant portion of your life in a fantasy universe.’<sup>72</sup> Video games in particular have been on the receiving end of a significant amount of moral panics, mainly due to the ways in which they are perceived to desensitise their viewers to violence.<sup>73</sup> The notion that video games desensitise us to violence is expressed via the character of Logan (Ben Barnes). William (Jimmi Simpson) says to him ‘What is your problem? The second we get away from the real world, you turn into an evil prick.’ Logan laughs and says ‘Evil? It’s a fucking game, Billy.’ William, who later turns out to be the villainous Man in Black (Ed Harris) eventually succumbs to this logic, behaving so badly in the park that the records of his actions drive his wife to suicide. These programmes demonstrate how in arenas like the Westworld park or the largely-male military male aggression runs rampant. It is then the female characters who demonstrate morals and ethics.

The posthuman woman’s embodied femininity is consistently contrasted with the more technological and aggressive masculinity of the military. A private military preys upon Max’s femininity during the first season episode ‘Rising,’ which features the South African RED soldiers. Several parallels are drawn between Max and the RED soldiers, in that they are both forced into military service and given extreme superpowers through technological intervention, but there are two key differences: Max is a woman, while the REDs are all men; and Max’s powers are organic, arising from her genetic engineering, while the REDs’ powers come from a technological implant. The RED soldiers are implanted with a device at the base of their neck (in a further parallel to Max, as this is where her Manticore barcode is located) which increases their adrenaline and aggression, although it

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<sup>70</sup> Neil A. Lewis, ‘Tailhook Affair Brings Censure of 3 Admirals,’ *New York Times*, 16 October 1993, <http://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/16/us/tailhook-affair-brings-censure-of-3-admirals.html>.

<sup>71</sup> Diana Jean Schemo, ‘Air Force Ignored Sex Abuse at Academy, Inquiry Reports,’ *New York Times*, 23 September 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/09/23/politics/23CADE.html>.

<sup>72</sup> Eric Goldman, ‘How Video Games Helped Influence *Westworld*,’ IGN, 28 Sep 2016, <https://uk.ign.com/articles/2016/09/28/how-video-games-helped-influence-westworld>.

<sup>73</sup> Timothy Rowlands, Sheruni Ratnabalasuriar and Kyle Noel, ‘Video Gaming, Crime and Popular Culture,’ *Oxford Research Encyclopedias: Criminology and Criminal Justice*, accessed 22 January 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.013.51>.

invariably leads to their deaths. This also represents two different aspects of posthumanism: in *Dark Angel*, technological posthumanism (as achieved through implantations) is destructive and aggressive, while Max's embodied, organic posthumanism is sustainable, despite the flaws in her programming. The REDs are told that Max's genetic code may be a cure for the lethality of the RED device: however, it is revealed that the South Africans merely want to harvest Max's ova so they can breed soldiers that will one day be immune to the device's side effects. Max says, 'Like being a girl isn't hard enough. They want me to be mommy to a whole army of these guys.' Max points out the special precariousness of her gender: she is particularly vulnerable, and valuable, because of her ability to reproduce. Max fights and kills the soldiers only to defend herself, and criticises the REDs' handler for how he treated them:

JOHANSSON: They were criminals. The scum of the earth.

MAX: So, what, they're just expendable?

While the RED soldiers are forced into acting on behalf of a masculine, hegemonic military force, Max acts alone, for self-defence and self-preservation. However, they are both exploited, and the ultimate blame for the REDs' existence is placed on the corporation who exploits a criminal underclass.

Although the posthuman woman, as previously discussed, does not completely adhere to the vision of Haraway's genderless cyborg, the two figures are both heavily influenced by contemporary military, scientific and technological research. Haraway's cyborg was envisioned as a response to Ronald Reagan's 'Star Wars' defence programme: she writes that 'modern war is a cyborg orgy, codes by C<sup>3</sup>I, command-control-communication-intelligence, an \$84 billion item in 1984's US defence budget.'<sup>74</sup> Reagan's interest in funding high-tech military defence was widely influential over American science fiction at the time. As Chris Hables Gray writes, 'There has been an intimate relationship between technological fantasies and American military culture and policy from the very beginnings of the Republic.'<sup>75</sup> Science fiction writers, Hables Gray argues, often use potential scientific advances to fuel their own imaginings of future wars. Similarly, the posthuman woman is a reaction to military-funded science. The full implications of these scientific advancements will be explored later, but it is important to note that the military funds a great deal of science in the hopes that it will provide useful technology for future wars. Daniel Dinello writes that:

Much of the research and development of twenty-first-century posthuman technologies, such as artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, and robotics, were originated and funded by the

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<sup>74</sup> Donna Haraway, 'A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,' in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 274-5.

<sup>75</sup> Chris Hables Gray, "'There Will be War!': Future War Fantasies and Militaristic Science Fiction in the 1980s,' *Science Fiction Studies*, 21, no. 3 (November 1994), 316, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4240369>.

American military, often through the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). Created in 1958 to avert a weapons gap with the Russians and inspired by their launching of Sputnik, DARPA – which currently disburses nearly \$2 billion annually to corporate, government, and university researchers – remains American’s most powerful force driving technological change through weapons development.<sup>76</sup>

While Dinello’s book was published in 2005, the same is true now, albeit with even more inflated numbers. According to DARPA’s website, its budget for 2018 was \$3.17 billion (approximately £2.4 billion) and its requested budget for 2019 is \$3.44 billion (approximately £2.6 billion).<sup>77</sup> Although there are many DARPA-funded projects that resemble the technologies found in these series, I will focus on only a few for the moment. First is the case of Matthew Nagle, who was paralysed in 2001 and later managed to control a computer cursor via a link to his brain. According to Singer, ‘the ability to link up to a computer directly opens up some wild new possibilities for war, which is why the Pentagon’s DARPA helped pay for the research. Its Brain-Interface Project is “the most lavishly funded of nearly all the DARPA bioengineering efforts.”’<sup>78</sup> In this passage, Singer quotes an article by Cheryl Seal entitled ‘Frankensteins in the Pentagon: DARPA’s creepy Bioengineering Program.’ This investment in neurological research continues to this day: DARPA is currently heavily investing in the BRAIN Project, which involves such goals as implantations to aid with memory formation, increased effectiveness of prosthetic limbs, and neural implants to improve basic functions and treat disorders and illnesses.<sup>79</sup> All of these technologies feature in these programmes: memory formation in *Dollhouse*, prosthetic limbs and eyes in *Dark Angel*, and neural implants in all three programmes. Singer also cites Joel Garreau, who notes the affinity between robotics and biology: ‘DARPA even employs a self-described “combat zoologist,” who describes his job as “getting robots to jump, run, crawl, do things that nature does well. We’re evolving our machines to be more like animals.”’<sup>80</sup> More recently DARPA’s research agenda has moved on from merely having their robots copy animals. In 2015, DARPA awarded a \$32 million (approximately £24.4 million) grant to the Foundry Institute, which specialises in ‘the rapid design, testing, and fabrication of large sequences of genetic information so they can be assembled like building blocks for myriad medical, industrial, and agricultural applications.’<sup>81</sup> It may be that DARPA is moving into the realm of genetically engineered

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<sup>76</sup> Daniel Dinello, *Technophobia!: Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 3.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Budget,’ DARPA, accessed 22 January 2019, <http://www.darpa.mil/about-us/budget>.

<sup>78</sup> P.W. Singer, *Wired for War: The Robotics Revolution and Conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (New York: Penguin Press, 2009), 72.

<sup>79</sup> ‘DARPA and the Brain Initiative,’ DARPA, accessed 22 January 2019, <http://www.darpa.mil/program/our-research/darpa-and-the-brain-initiative>.

<sup>80</sup> Singer, *Wired for War*, 90.

<sup>81</sup> ‘DARPA awards \$32 million contract to MIT, Broad Institute Foundry to bolster DNA design and manufacturing,’ Broad Institute, 24 September 2015, <https://www.broadinstitute.org/news/7263>.

soldiers, like the X5s of *Dark Angel*. These programmes extrapolate from existing technological trends, as well as anticipating others.

All three of these programmes feature posthuman characters who can communicate via some form technologically-enabled telepathy. Not only does this draw upon existing military research, but provides a fruitful examination of individuality and communality. Military research is currently investigating the ability to transfer messages between people through neural implants: ‘What scientists are talking about, says one, is “network-enabled telepathy.” It sounds otherworldly, but the U.S. government’s National Science Foundation envisions such communication to be possible within the next two decades.’<sup>82</sup> These series emphasise this ‘otherworldly’ quality, depicting military units that can communicate without speaking. This works as an unnatural extension of the camaraderie, or conformity, of the military unit. On the one hand, this forms an effective metaphor for the extent to which the military requires mindless obedience; on the other, such a sinister portrayal of technology with posthuman potential seems to be contrary to the empathetic treatment of the technologically augmented posthuman woman. The contrast between the hive mind and the posthuman woman is particularly notable in *Dark Angel*. The X7s, which are a later generation of transgenics than Max and the X5s, communicate ultrasonically. The X7s appear to be about 9 years old, the same age as the X5s were when Max escaped, but while the X5s were still in training, the X7s were deployed into active service. While the X5s had some form of childhood, albeit an abusive one, the X7s barely even seem to be children. They sleep in their fatigues and respond to orders instantaneously. The uncanny nature of the silent children, and the contrast of their upbringing with that of the X5s, is emphasised by the fact that one of the X7s is Max’s clone, and is played by the same actor who plays Max in flashbacks. While fighting the X7s, Max encounters her clone, and then stops fighting. She asks her clone, ‘Do you know who I am?’ Her clone immediately and pitilessly shoots Max, leading to her (temporary) death. The X7 clone lacks Max’s feminine empathy, and acts violently even when there is no threat – she is a better soldier. However, Max’s clone is less viable in the long term. In the second season premiere, Max’s clone dies from ‘late-stage progeria’ while Max survives due to her enhanced genetic makeup. While Max’s clone may be superficially better at following orders and carrying out military violence, Max, who operates outside the military structure and maintains her individuality, is ultimately less vulnerable. Just as the RED soldiers are used as foils to Max’s embodied femininity, the use of her clone plays upon anxieties of replication common in science fiction. As J.P. Telotte argues, ‘in these images of human replication are bound up our qualms about artifice – science, technology, mechanism.’<sup>83</sup> *Dark Angel* pairs Max, who has broken free from her creators and become

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<sup>82</sup> Singer, *Wired for War*, 73-74.

<sup>83</sup> J.P. Telotte, *Replications: A Robotic History of the Science Fiction Film* (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 4.

‘self-fashioning,’ with her clone, who is utterly controlled by military technology. The anxiety surrounding the hive mind draws upon ideas of individualism that posthumanism hopes to counteract.

One of the core tenants of posthumanism is ‘the critique of the individual as a rationally self-determining, self-defining being, and of individual identity as the source of agency.’<sup>84</sup> One of posthumanism’s major criticisms of this individualistic humanist conception of subjectivity is that the self is not separate from its surroundings. Another criticism is that a focus on individualism at the expense of multiplicity is one of the ways in which women, people of colour and other non-humanist subjects are systematically excluded from the benefits of full ‘personhood.’ The prevalence of sinister military hive minds is one of the ways in which these programmes are ambivalent towards technological multiplicity. I want to draw attention to the contradictions between the fear of the ‘loss of the individual’ to the group associated with the military and the more complicated multiplicity of the posthuman woman. J. David Slocum argues that media representations of soldiers place greater emphasis on individual agency rather than exploring or questioning wider concerns: ‘Whatever the surface image of selflessness or conspiracy, the insistent focus on [...] the initially reluctant “everyman” emerges as individual conflicts are foregrounded while the wider political issues are simplified and regulated to the background.’<sup>85</sup> The threat of military structure to the individual is expressed in the uncanny hive mind. As I discussed in chapter one, Seaman criticises pop culture representations of posthuman technology, which often side-steps questions of ‘humanity’ by insisting that universal traits, usually emotion, cross the human-posthuman line, which reassures the reader or viewer against the troubling implications of new technology. Seaman writes:

This hybrid posthuman suggests possibilities of adaptation and continuation of the human, not only in resistance to but even *within* the posthuman, as a synthesis produced through enhancement rather than a full metamorphosis. Despite the threat presented in such narratives by technologies often spun out of control, the hybrid posthuman possessed of a ‘natural self’ regularly expresses a faith in the resilience of the human and optimistically affirms that in the posthuman world the self is retained and invested with the potential to sustain humanity even in its newly developed form.<sup>86</sup> (emphasis in original)

*Dollhouse* contrasts Echo’s emotional, ‘ensouled’ posthumanism with the military hive mind, which is cold and emotionless. In episode nine of the second series, ‘Stop-Loss,’ Victor’s, or Anthony Ceccoli’s, five-year contract with the Dollhouse comes to an end and he returns to normal society. When he leaves, Sierra says that ‘he’s not ready to be by himself,’ and Tony has difficulty

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<sup>84</sup> Naomi Jacobs, ‘Posthuman Bodies and Agency in Octavia Butler’s *Xenogenesis*,’ in *Dark Horizons: Science Fiction and the Dystopian Imagination*, ed. Raffaella Baccolini and Tom Moylan (New York: Routledge, 2003), 91.

<sup>85</sup> J. David Slocum, ‘General Introduction: Seeing Through American War Cinema,’ in *Hollywood and War: The Film Reader*, ed. J. David Slocum (New York: Routledge, 2006), 9.

<sup>86</sup> Seaman, ‘Affective Posthumanisms,’ 259.

transitioning to a post-Dollhouse (and a post-military) lifestyle, obsessively watching television coverage of the war. He is kidnapped by three of his old unit members, who have been recruited into Rossum's PMF, called Scytheon, and Tony willingly joins Scytheon's 'groupthink.' Singer notes that 'PMFs tend to hire former personnel of national militaries [...] One lure is that the military industry offers recently retired personnel a relatively easy, even natural, transition stage into private life.'<sup>87</sup> Transition back into civilian life is notoriously difficult for soldiers, and a 2011 Yew Research report shows that soldiers that experienced a traumatic event or served in the 10 years following 9/11 found it even more difficult.<sup>88</sup> *Dollhouse* therefore criticises the predatory nature of PMFs, as they recruit vulnerable traumatised veterans. The unnaturalness of the 'groupthink' is again represented by uncanniness: the men in the troop all speak as one. When attempting to rescue Tony, Echo dismantles the unit's hive mind by plugging herself into the groupthink and overwhelming it with her own multiple imprints. She first orders them to 'disengage [...] stand down,' using militaristic language. After defeating the military hierarchy with her own, anti-establishment multiplicity, she uses her new position of 'controller' of the hive mind to send the soldiers home. Although, in one way, this seems to reaffirm Seaman's criticism, there are other ways of reading this incident. This is an example of Echo's implicated cyborg activism. Mansfield comments that Haraway's cyborg 'is forever inventing new interconnections and new systems to be a part of [...] It is this invention of new and valuable interconnections that will make the cyborg (that product of the arms race and the globalisation of capital) some possible vehicle for productive change.'<sup>89</sup> Although Echo, like the soldiers, is the creation and tool of military and corporate forces whose aims are evil, she is able to take the technology that they imposed on her and use it to her own, benevolent ends. When she is in control of the soldiers, she makes an attempt to give them space to heal and escape the military life; while the corporation/PMF is in control, it is used to prey upon their trauma and force them to act against their own self-interest.

*Westworld* also turns its robotic Hosts against each other. Maeve learns how to programme herself to control other Hosts. At first, she does this through verbal commands. In the fifth episode of the second series, Maeve travels to a different park, Shogun World. In it, she is attacked by a group of ninja. She verbally commands two of the ninja to attack each other, rather than her. However, she is choked by another. It is only then that she realises she can also issue unspoken, telepathic commands to other robots. In the second series finale, Maeve's telepathic powers take on a quasi-mystical resonance. In this episode, Maeve is trying to guide a Host that was once programmed to believe that Maeve was her mother towards 'The Valley Beyond,' which is a virtual world designed so that the Hosts can live freely. Maeve attempts to flee with her daughter to this virtual world. However,

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<sup>87</sup> Singer, *Corporate Warriors*, 76.

<sup>88</sup> Rich Morin, 'The Difficult Transition from Military to Civilian Life,' Pew Research Center, 8 December 2011, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2011/12/08/the-difficult-transition-from-military-to-civilian-life/>.

<sup>89</sup> Mansfield, *Subjectivity*, 160.

Charlotte Hale has reverse-engineered Maeve's mind-control abilities, and has used it in order to force the Hosts to fight one another. Maeve runs up to her daughter and tells her, 'I'll keep you safe, I promise. You carry my heart with you.' Maeve then urges her daughter to flee to the virtual world. Maeve turns back to the mass of Hosts running towards them and holds up a hand, using her telepathic powers to hold them still. Her daughter runs through to the other side, and Maeve is then shot to death by Delos security. This encounter encapsulates many of the contradictions of the posthuman woman. Maeve learns how to turn the technology that was meant to control her against her oppressors. Although Maeve is largely characterised by her wit, pragmatism, and ruthlessness, her ultimate motivation is love for her daughter, reinforcing Maeve's gendered position as a woman and a mother. Through this act of self-sacrifice, Maeve becomes an almost Biblical figure, as she holds back the wave of aggressive Hosts in a way that mirrors Moses holding back the Red Sea. Furthermore, her sacrifice ensures a better future for her people. While Maeve's abilities are based in technological extrapolation, the implications of her abilities become transcendent. Although the representation of the posthuman woman draws on real-world science, it is clear that these programmes are trying to express something bigger and more profound than any mere prediction of future trends.

### Conclusion

Mark Fisher, despite remaining sceptical of the possibility of radical change in mainstream media, argues that 'the very oppressive pervasiveness of capitalist realism means that even glimmers of alternative political and economic possibilities can have a disproportionately great effect.'<sup>90</sup> As I have demonstrated above, these programmes' narratives are quite good at exploring the problems of capitalist patriarchal science, including looking at the implications of real-world corporate practices and scientific developments. However, they are less adept at providing alternatives and solutions. The posthuman woman is torn between a reaffirmation of the inevitability of capitalist patriarchy, and the hope that there might be a way to escape it. In the final chapter, I will explore the endings of these television programmes, where the tension between the desire to assimilate into existing society and the possibility of revolution comes to a head.

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<sup>90</sup> Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009), 80-1.

## Chapter Five: The Potential of Endings

What do we do with the endings television gives us? Ideally, endings function as the natural thematic culmination of the programme and provide a satisfactory conclusion to the plot elements of the series as a whole. According to Paul Ricoeur, in order for a narrative ending to be acceptable, 'we have to be able to say that this ending required these sorts of events and this chain of actions.'<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the finale of any narrative should logically follow from the events of the series. This is not the only purpose of the endings, because 'closure is not simply a matter of questions being answered, problems being solved. A closed form is one in which the elements all hang together.'<sup>2</sup> Television programmes are only rarely allowed such a perfect resolution. In fact, this expectation is a fairly new one for long-form episodic television. As Glen Creeber writes, the traditional division in television formats is between the 'never-ending' episodic series and the serial that 'follows an unfolding and episodic narrative structure that moves progressively towards a conclusion.'<sup>3</sup> In the semi-serialised narrative, the potentially infinite form of the episodic series is combined with the need for forward movement inherent in the serial. Most television programmes, due to industrial pressures, do not achieve their idealised conclusion. This is because 'the vast majority of shows rarely get the opportunity to produce even an entire first season without network cancellation.'<sup>4</sup> Thus, we require alternate frameworks to consider television endings that are not contingent upon conventional notions of completeness, but also do not deny their cultural and formal importance.

In this chapter, I will look at the ways my case study programmes end and what the form of these endings might mean. I also argue that the tension between the posthuman woman's technological nature and the demands of normative femininity, which I have discussed throughout this thesis, become a particular focus in these final moments. As I will discuss in this chapter, television endings are commonly seen as a moment where the programmes' thematic resonances become clear. As I have discussed throughout this thesis, my case study series benefit from taking an ambivalent approach towards the posthuman woman. Their multiplicity of identity sits alongside their normative femininity, and the tensions between the two aspects of their nature are never entirely resolved. However, this ambivalence becomes less viable as these narratives approach their terminuses. Meaning must be determined. So, this chapter will explore the textual strategies these programmes deploy to resolve their narratives. As my forthcoming analysis will reveal, they often, although not

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Ricoeur, 'Narrative Time,' *Critical Inquiry* 7, no. 1 (Autumn 1980): 174, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1343181>.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Z. Newman, 'From Beats to Arcs: Towards a Poetics of Television Narrative,' *Velvet Light Trap* 58, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 22.

<sup>3</sup> Glen Creeber, *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen* (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 8.

<sup>4</sup> John Michael Corrigan and Maria Corrigan, 'Disrupting Flow: *Seinfeld*, *Sopranos* Series Finale and the Aesthetic of Anxiety,' *Television & New Media* 13, no. 2 (March 2012): 91, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476410392804>.

always, maintain a strategic ambiguity in their endings that is inextricably tied to the aesthetic and industrial norms of Western television.

My case study programmes are *Star Trek: Voyager* (UPN, 1995-2001), *Dark Angel* (FOX, 2000-2), *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi, 2003-9), *Dollhouse* (FOX, 2009-10), *Caprica* (SyFy, 2010-1), *Orphan Black* (BBC America, 2013-7), and *Westworld* (2016 - ). By looking at these programmes chronologically, I will demonstrate how expectations in regards to television endings have changed over time. The last few decades have brought enormous changes to the television industry that by necessity impacts upon the artistic forms and themes of television programming. Over the course of this chapter, I will establish how programmes have developed strategies to maintain their narrative and thematic coherence in the face of an industrial landscape where they have little power to determine how long their narratives will be or when they will end. Furthermore, as the financial incentives of cancellation have become less overwhelming in the wake of narrowing audience share, the rise of streaming services, and the proliferation of programming in 'Peak TV,' I will examine how the newfound security of more recent programming influences how they end.

These endings, whether planned or not, ideal or pragmatic, generally occur when the posthuman woman has either chosen to separate herself and her posthuman community from an increasingly hostile human world, or when the posthuman woman has or is about to successfully assimilate herself into human society. By ending on such moments, I argue that these programmes reinforce their thematic interest in posthumanist feminism, whether it proves viable or not. In particular, the struggle between separatism and assimilation enacts central arguments of feminism. Feminism often struggles with the question of whether patriarchal society needs to be merely reformed in favour of equality, or whether it should be more fundamentally changed. These can be broadly categorised as the liberal feminist and radical feminist approaches. The problem of assimilation has plagued the feminist movement almost since its inception. The first-wave feminist Emma Goldman wrote in 1911:

Every movement that aims at the destruction of existing institutions and the replacement thereof with something more advanced, more perfect, has followers who in theory stand for the most radical ideas, but who, nevertheless, in their everyday practice, are like the average Philistine, feigning respectability and clamouring for the good opinion of their opponents.<sup>5</sup>

Goldman argues that her fellow feminists, while achieving some gains for women in the public sphere, have not done enough to challenge the underlying social problems that inhibit women's full equality with men. These programmes end on a similar mode of limited progress: while the posthuman woman has generally achieved her aims of self-determination, this is usually coupled with

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<sup>5</sup> Emma Goldman, 'The Tragedy of Women's Emancipation,' in *Anarchism and Other Essays* (London: Active Distribution, 2014), 134.

the conclusion of her (generally heterosexual) romantic arc and/or her ability to live a so-called normal life. This draws attention to how narrative resolutions are often gendered. Marilyn Frye argues that ‘the contrariety of assimilation and separation is one of the main things that guides or determines assessments of various theories, actions and practices as reformist or radical, as going to the root of the thing or being relatively superficial.’<sup>6</sup> By ending on moments of assimilation and/or separatism, these programmes centre this conundrum’s importance. I do not mean to say that whether these programmes end on assimilation or separatism may suggest where their allegiances lie – whether they are ultimately in favour of assimilationist liberal feminisms, or with more radical forms of gender equality. This binary approach is not adequate to explain the complicated relationships these series have with their subject matter. While it is true that some of these programmes definitively contain their posthuman woman through heteronormative narrative conclusions (i.e. domesticity and narrative), it is also common for them to maintain an ambivalent approach until the very end. As John Ellis argues, television ‘works through’ societal anxieties, but this is a ‘multi-faceted and leaky process [...] It renders familiar, integrates and provides a place for the difficult material that it brings to our witness.’<sup>7</sup> These programmes, while often espousing posthumanist and feminist ideology, cannot fully reconcile their unease with how the posthuman woman crosses the boundaries of human/technology. Still, it is significant that these narratives demonstrate a concern with how the posthuman woman can reclaim her agency from a much more powerful organisation, and often code this in terms of a broader feminist struggle against a male patriarchy. The fact that the programmes return to themes of separatism and assimilation suggests how powerful this duality is in thinking about the position of women, even if their inclusion does not translate to a direct intentional declaration of how the problem of patriarchy should be resolved. Television simply does not function that way. I will examine each of my case study programme’s endings, looking at how they have changed over time, and how each programme uses their final hours to grapple with the central thematic concerns of the posthuman woman.

My theoretical approach to television endings draws mainly upon the work of Jason Mittell and Stuart Bell. Mittell’s book *Complex TV* creates a taxonomy of different types of TV endings. These endings are generally judged on their abruptness, ranging from a *stoppage* (where a programme is unceremoniously cancelled with no attempt at a resolution), a *wrap-up* (where a programme improvises a somewhat satisfactory ending, but without realising the entire potential storyline) and a *conclusion* (where the creators can plan the ending).<sup>8</sup> These classifications are somewhat useful: for example, broadly speaking, *Voyager*, *Galactica* and *Orphan Black* have conclusions, while *Dark*

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<sup>6</sup> Marilyn Frye, ‘Some Reflections on Separatism and Power,’ in *The Politics of Reality: Essays in Feminist Theory* (Trumansburg, NY: The Crossing Press, 1983), 96.

<sup>7</sup> John Ellis, *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), 79.

<sup>8</sup> Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 320-1.

*Angel*, *Dollhouse* and *Caprica* have wrap-ups. However, while Mittell establishes a broader spectrum of how different types of television endings function, I am working with a much more limited corpus. I will instead use a more textually-focused approach to explore the nuanced ways that these programmes explore their own completeness or incompleteness. Throughout my thesis, I have argued that the aesthetic properties of television directly impact how they represent posthuman existence. In his doctoral thesis, Bell suggests that television, rather than necessarily having a singular ending in the mode of literature and film narratives, instead deploys a number of smaller endings tied to particular narrative and thematic threads. As Bell writes, ‘intra-narrative endings, as I term them, seek to shift the functionality of endings away from the terminus of the narrative to various points within the narrative. In this respect they form islands of structure, meaning and interpretation.’<sup>9</sup> This is obviously a function of the common ensemble structure of television, where several narratives operate in parallel, and thus the different storylines achieve resolution at different times.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, we can consider the purpose of endings as their own narrative function apart from more classical notions of completeness. While in Mittell’s theory, endings are determined largely by fairly arbitrary industrial circumstances such as premature cancellation, in Bell’s, any point at which there is some form of conclusion in the narrative is a type of ending that has inherent value. Bell’s ideas in particular informs how I view my case study programmes’ narrative endings, as they are generally aware of their own narratives’ precarity and employ a number of textual practices to provide plot and thematic resolution in the event of premature cancellation. This is most obvious in regards to *Dollhouse* and *Caprica*, which I will explore later in this chapter. Often to the dismay of fans, ‘fairly quick cancellations have recently been the norm for science fiction television series.’<sup>11</sup> While some programmes, such as the original *Star Trek* (NBC, 1966-9), *Farscape* (1999-2003), and *Firefly* (2002-3), have been given some form of official conclusion due to fan complaints, these remain notable exceptions. In some of my case study programmes, their narratives reflect upon their own precarity and create endings that, although they provide some form of closure, hint at the unrealised potential of their ideal story.

This is, of course, useful for these programmes, because the notion that they have not properly ‘finished’ also absolves them of the need to definitively contain the posthuman woman within normative gender roles. It is no accident that the more ‘closed’ endings often involve marriage, motherhood and domesticity. The more precarious endings allow for the programmes to include more challenging content. As J.P. Telotte argues, science fiction television programmes ‘do not want to make their audiences, networks, or advertisers feel too uncomfortable [...] because of their fantasy

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<sup>9</sup> Stuart Bell, ‘“Don’t Stop”: Re-Thinking the Function of Endings in Narrative Television.’ (PhD diss., University of Glasgow, 2016), 14.

<sup>10</sup> I discuss the relationship between this narrative structure and posthuman representation in more detail in the second chapter.

<sup>11</sup> M. Keith Booker, *Science Fiction Television* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 172.

dimension, these series do open the door of “innovation” in a fundamental cultural context, for they make it “safe” to ask questions, to *think* innovatively.’<sup>12</sup> (emphasis in original) A premature ending, then, is the perfect place to push these boundaries. As I will discuss in this chapter, the fact that these are not the ideal or ‘true’ endings allow for a sort of plausible deniability, where conclusions that are challenging or potentially controversial can flourish because the ‘ideal’ ending has not been realised.

In this chapter, I will examine moments of conclusion in each of my case study programmes. This chapter explores some of the ongoing changes within the television industry over the last few decades, and how television narrative has changed in response to this new context. I am also interested in how television has responded to shifting attitudes towards feminism – while I do not believe in a straightforward ‘progress’ narrative, it is certainly true that the more recent programmes have responded to the increasing mainstream acceptance of popular feminism. I will examine the tension between closed and open narrative endings, and how they dramatize one of the key debates within feminist tradition: whether the goal of feminism should be women’s equal assimilation into mainstream society, or if society needs to be remade in the pursuit of feminist justice.

### *Star Trek: Voyager*

*Star Trek: Voyager* occupies a special place in the history of American network television, as it premiered as the hegemony of the big three American networks (ABC, CBS and NBC) was waning. As Roberta Pearson writes, ‘*Voyager*, the flagship show on Paramount’s 1995-launched United Paramount Network (UPN), helped to usher in the post-network TV2.’<sup>13</sup> As Pearson goes on to argue, the establishment of different television networks allowed for a flourishing of niche cult television programmes. However, *Voyager* also has a crucial connection to television’s past, as the fourth live-action television programme in the venerable *Star Trek* franchise. *Voyager*, although it follows the episodic exploration format of the original *Star Trek* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (Paramount, 1987-1994), has a serialised storyline. In the first episode of *Voyager*, the ship becomes stranded in the uncharted and remote Delta Quadrant. The *Voyager*’s crew then has to embark on the long journey home. *Voyager*’s two-part conclusion, ‘Endgame,’ uses time travel in order to offer two possible conclusions for the *Voyager* crew. ‘Endgame’ initially follows the aged Captain Janeway (Kate Mulgrew), and is set 10 years after the *Voyager* completed a 22-year journey back to the Alpha Quadrant. While the programme checks in on the fate of the crew, it becomes apparent that Seven of Nine (Jeri Ryan) has died on the journey. As discussed in previous chapters, Seven is a former member of the Borg collective, an evil technological hive mind. When Seven is severed from the hive mind, she becomes a member of the *Voyager* crew, and slowly learns how to behave more like a human. Janeway decides to travel back in time to save Seven and hasten the *Voyager*’s journey home.

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<sup>12</sup> J.P. Telotte, *Science Fiction TV* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 105-6

<sup>13</sup> Roberta Pearson, ‘Observations on Cult Television,’ in *The Cult TV Book*, ed. Stacey Abbott (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 10.

As is common in television narrative, the finale shares a number of structural and thematic resonances with the programme's premiere. In the premiere, 'Caretaker,' Janeway makes a unilateral decision to destroy a piece of alien technology to prevent it falling into the wrong hands, despite the fact that this strands her and her crew 75 years away from their homes. In 'Endgame,' the older Janeway goes to the past in order to offer her younger self the ability to shorten the *Voyager*'s journey. This involves using Borg technology that the younger Janeway is inclined to destroy in order to prevent the Borg from continuing their destructive ways. In both of these episodes, Janeway struggles with her desire to return home and her duty to protect the greater good, no matter what the cost. Therefore, 'the ending establishes a concordance with the beginning, binding the narrative as a whole and encouraging us to look back in retrospection, making sense of all that has passed in the light of the ending.'<sup>14</sup> There are a number of moments in the programme that similarly hark back to earlier conflicts. For example, Seven is forced to confront the Borg Queen (Alice Krige). This conflict between the Borg Queen and Starfleet predates the *Voyager* programme. The Borg Queen first appears in the feature film *Star Trek: First Contact* (Jonathan Frakes, Paramount Pictures, 1996) that stars the cast of *The Next Generation*. However, while Krige played the Borg Queen in *First Contact*, 'Endgame' is the first appearance of Krige as the character in *Voyager*. Although the Borg Queen appears in the episodes 'Dark Frontier' and 'Unimatrix Zero,' she is played in these episodes by Susanna Thompson. The return of Alice Krige, then, foregrounds not Seven's relationship with the Borg Queen within the *Voyager* programme, but metonymously the Borg's relationship with the *Star Trek* franchise as a whole.

Notably, *First Contact* was the first introduction of femininity into the Borg. Previously, 'in the television episodes when the Borg are fully introduced to the series they appear to be male and the voice that speaks for them is obviously masculine.'<sup>15</sup> The villainous Borg Queen represents the true horror of the Borg, as 'a matriarchal, merciless, transgressive collective, the Borg present a monstrous ideological threat to American concepts of patriarchy, morality, purity, and free will as embodied in the liberal humanist individuality of the *Enterprise* crew.'<sup>16</sup> *Star Trek* as a franchise is widely regarded as a bastion of liberal humanism. As Daniel Bernardi argues, liberal humanism is 'a value and belief system that espouses political agency and social egalitarianism' and 'emphasises individual worth and freedom, racial and gender equality, and the importance of secular human values.'<sup>17</sup> As discussed throughout this thesis, posthumanism addresses the failures of liberal humanism on several fronts. Liberal humanism depends on a very limited conception on who is a proper subject that is

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<sup>14</sup> Bell, 'Don't Stop,' 13.

<sup>15</sup> Christine Cornea, *Science Fiction Cinema: Between Fantasy and Reality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 158.

<sup>16</sup> Daniel Dinello, *Technophobia!: Science Fiction Visions of Posthuman Technology* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 144.

<sup>17</sup> Daniel Bernardi, "'Star Trek' in the 1960s: Liberal-Humanism and the Production of Race,' *Science Fiction Studies* 24, no. 2 (July 1997): 211, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4240604>.

created by ‘a process of exclusion whereby some of these ethnic and religious groups or races are categorized as less-than-human.’<sup>18</sup> *Voyager* enacts this process of exclusion through Seven’s rejection of the Borg Queen. In ‘Endgame,’ the Queen approaches Seven and asks her to re-join the Collective. Seven rejects this offer, reaffirming her allegiance to the *Voyager* in particular and humanity more generally.<sup>19</sup> This is a crucial step before Seven will be allowed to go to Earth. This encounter rejects a queer potential of the Borg, and reinforces Seven’s heterosexuality. The importance of Seven’s journey to Earth represents her reassimilation into humanity, and is predicated on her adopting a more conventional form of femininity. It should be noted that Seven herself has an ambivalent relationship towards Earth. In the fourteenth episode of the fifth series, Seven expresses worry over how she will be received as a former Borg drone when she returns. This is crucial to understanding the prominence of Seven’s plot within the finale: Seven must become acceptably ‘human’ in order to return, so as not to serve as a threat to the Federation’s liberal order. The key element of Seven’s narrative is her reassimilation into human society that is linked to her increasing feminisation. Becoming a ‘proper’ woman, then, is the only antidote to her potential posthuman threat.

Previously, I discussed how the finale of a programme usually resolves ongoing plots that have become important over the course of the series, and often refers back to its beginnings. This is generally true of ‘Endgame,’ with the exception of Seven and Chakotay’s (Robert Beltran) romance. Seven’s romantic interest in Chakotay is only established in ‘Human Error,’ the eighteenth episode of the seventh series, but by ‘Endgame’ they have started a relationship, and Older Janeway informs Seven that she and Chakotay will eventually marry. What is the purpose of this rushed relationship? Chakotay is a Native American, and throughout the programme he is associated with nature. This incredibly stereotypical depiction of Native American culture works to associate Seven with a more natural existence. Seven’s emotional attachment to Chakotay, then, reinforces her transition into acceptable human femininity both through heterosexual partnership and a closer association with the natural world, as symbolised by Chakotay. The *Voyager* functions as a liminal space, where Seven can safely re-integrate into human society. Aviva Dove-Viebahn argues that *Voyager* creates a place where communal hybridity is essential to survival, as ‘Seven emphasizes her own hybrid nature as essential to her survival and adaptation to humanity and human life on *Voyager*.’<sup>20</sup> However, this argument does not entirely hold up, as Seven continually moves away from the technology of the Borg and towards accepting an organic, embodied humanity. She becomes less hybrid as the programme continues, and her assimilation particularly accelerates as the narrative begins to conclude and the *Voyager* gets closer to Earth. As discussed in the first chapter, even though Seven still has her

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<sup>18</sup> Pramod K. Nayar, *Posthumanism* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), 11.

<sup>19</sup> I discuss this sequence in more detail in the first chapter.

<sup>20</sup> Aviva Dove-Viebahn, ‘Engendering Hybridity, (En)Gendering Community: Captain Janeway and the Enactment of a Feminist Heterotopia on *Star Trek: Voyager*,’ *Women’s Studies* 36, no. 1 (2007): 608, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00497870701683894>.

external mechanical augmentations, over the last few episodes of the final series Seven has many of her Borg components removed. In 'Endgame,' Seven finally has an operation that removes the technology that regulates her emotional expression. This allows her to embark upon a romantic relationship with Chakotay. The removal of the technological components of her body is necessary to her full feminisation. However, even this assimilation is not quite enough: after all, we never see Seven's return to 'proper' Federation space.

Susan de Gaia argues that 'in *Voyager*, the desire to return to Mother Earth contains each of several meanings: [...] (in my interpretation of space imagery as metaphoric) finding a way to reconcile who we are as technology-making rational humans with who we are as part of a natural world.'<sup>21</sup> We do not see how Seven, who represents a potentially dangerous fusion of technology and organic humanity, reconciles herself with the natural world and thrives in the potentially more fraught Federation society, as the programme ends just as the *Voyager* is being escorted to Earth. Furthermore, *Voyager* could be in many ways considered the end of the Star Trek franchise. *Voyager* is set further in the future than any other Star Trek television series, and the poorly received *Star Trek: Nemesis* (Stuart Baird, Paramount Pictures, 2002), a standalone adventure starring the cast of *The Next Generation*, is the only filmed entry in the franchise that is set later than it. The next *Star Trek* series, *Enterprise* (UPN, 2001-5) was set prior to the time of the original series; the new *Star Trek* films take place in an alternate universe and star different versions of the original *Enterprise* crew; and the latest *Star Trek* series, *Star Trek: Discovery* (CBS All Access, 2017 - ) is set ten years before the beginning of the original series. The Star Trek franchise, or at least its main filmic and televisual entries, has stepped back from exploring the future, and retreated into its own past. The franchise simply cannot imagine a world in which the boundaries that Seven has transgressed have become an accepted part of the Federation's liberal future. While *Voyager*, at least conditionally, embraced hybridity, the franchise as a whole finds it too difficult to deal with. Although *Voyager* uses, by the discourses of quality television, a less sophisticated form of storytelling, even programmes that balance the demands of episodic and serialised television more elegantly still struggle with the central problems of posthuman femininity.

### *Dark Angel*

*Dark Angel* is an action-adventure programme set in 2019 that follows Max Guevara (Jessica Alba), who is a genetically engineered supersoldier created by Manticore, a secret government programme. Max and her fellow X5 soldiers escaped from the Manticore facility at a young age, and she has spent ten years evading re-capture. Max, alongside the disabled hacker and progressive vigilante Logan Cale (Michael Weatherly), uses her enhanced combat and surveillance skills to fight crime. *Dark*

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<sup>21</sup> Susan de Gaia, 'Intergalactic Heroines: Land, Body and Soul in *Star Trek Voyager*,' *International Studies in Philosophy* 30, no. 1 (1998): 28.

*Angel* was created in a similar industrial context to *Voyager*, as it premiered on a post-Big Three network, FOX, and also features a more episodic structure than the later case study programmes. *Dark Angel* demonstrates a more integrated form of semi-serialisation than *Voyager*. This is apparent in the structure of the programme. *Dark Angel* followed some of the emerging quality-cult television of the late 1990s that often took the form of telefantasy. Catherine Johnson describes these programmes as reactions to the increasing notion of artistic quality on television that was mainly targeted at niche, wealthy viewers.<sup>22</sup> Johnson argues that programmes like *The X-Files* (FOX, 1993-2002, 2016-) and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (The WB/UPN, 1997-2003) ‘combined the production strategies of the existing networks with those of the rival cable channels in an attempt to infiltrate the network primetime market and to minimise risk by attracting specific, commercially valuable niche fan audience. In doing so it combined quality television’s dual address to the “everyday” and “discerning” viewer, with an additional address to the fan-consumer.’<sup>23</sup> This mainly meant a combination of generic hybridity (in the case of *Dark Angel*, the generic hybridity of paranoid dystopian science fiction and action-adventure) and particularly a hybridised narrative form. These programmes combine episodic and serialised elements that ‘enabled the series to be accessible to the casual viewer, while simultaneously rewarding the loyal viewer with character and story development.’<sup>24</sup> While most of the episodes of *Dark Angel* feature an episodic narrative, each episode generally contributes to the ongoing narrative of, in the first series, Max attempting re-capture by Manticore and, in the second series, the consequences of the transgenics’ escape from Manticore. Furthermore, *Dark Angel* also displayed a broader series-long narrative arc. This structure is common in semi-serialised television, at least in part because it offers a form of closure even in the event of cancellation. This allows the dual address to casual and fan audiences, minus the risks of ending the programme without any form of conclusion. This series structure is therefore an attempt to mitigate some of the precarity of potential cancellation.

*Dark Angel* follows this broad series structure. In the first series finale, Max breaks into Manticore and destroys its cloning facility. Max is captured by Manticore, and the finale ends with a cliff-hanger. In the second series premiere, Max manages to escape Manticore and frees her fellow transgenics, establishing a new status quo for this series. While the wider public was unaware of the existence of Manticore during the first series, the second series opens with Logan exposing the programme. *Dark Angel* dispatches the villains of the first series, as Renfro (Nana Visitor) is killed in the series premiere and Lydecker (John Savage) first allies himself with the transgenics and then is killed in the third episode of the second series. *Dark Angel* introduces a new antagonist, Ames White

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<sup>22</sup> I will discuss the ways in which quality is assessed and created later in this chapter, but I am using the term primarily to discuss how quality is signalled, and not necessarily the inherent value of television programming as art.

<sup>23</sup> Catherine Johnson, *Telefantasy* (London: BFI Publishing, 2005), 100-1.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

(Martin Cummins), a government agent tasked with retrieving the transgenics, who turns out to be a fanatic believer in genetic purity. *Dark Angel* structurally moves from Max's smaller group of X5s, as the second series opens up to take a wider view of transgenic oppression. While the first series explicitly deals with Max's attempts to free herself from the patriarchal control of Manticore, the second opens up to explore the wider societal problems of an oppressed posthuman underclass who are persecuted by a privileged group. While some transgenics, like Max, can pass as human, transgenics with a higher proportion of animal DNA, such as the bestial-appearing but sensitive Joshua (Kevin Durand), are forced into hiding. The second series finale, aptly titled 'Freak Nation,' ends on a moment of transgenic liberation that draws upon ideas of feminist separatism.

According to Frye's definition, 'feminist separatism is [...] separation of various sorts or modes from men and from institutions, relationships, roles and activities which are male-defined, male-dominated and operating for the benefit of males and the maintenance of male privilege – this separation being initiated or maintained, at will, by *women*.'<sup>25</sup> (emphasis in original) This definition is purposefully broad, but the form of separatism that recurs in these programmes is a spatial remove from an oppressive patriarchal-coded organisation or political climate. These spaces often include men, but the move to separatism is almost always driven and led by women. *Dark Angel*'s Freak Nation is one example of this tendency. In the second series finale, Max and her fellow transgenics retreat to Terminal City, an area of 2020 Seattle that was contaminated by a biochemical explosion. While humans cannot survive due to the level of chemicals in the air, the transgenics are genetically engineered to endure the harsh conditions. In 'Freak Nation,' the transgenics barricade themselves inside the restricted area, and are eventually surrounded by police as well as armed forces. They raise a flag bearing the image of a white dove over Terminal City. The transgenics, who represent a wide coalition of different generations ranging from the animalistic earlier generations to the human-passing X5s and X6s, establish a separatist colony under the leadership of Max, a mixed-race woman. This colony represents the promise of an equitable posthuman future. Because the transgenics are representatives of how 'the boundaries between the categories of the natural and the cultural have been displaced and to a large extent blurred by the effects of scientific and technological advances,'<sup>26</sup> their separatist colony is potentially a place of liberation and a celebration of hybridity. Rather than replicating the hatred that they are treated with by wider society, they offer peace – hence the white dove. This dove also represents the possibility of reconciliation, which suggests that Freak Nation is not an ideological endpoint, but the first step into reforming society as a whole. This reflects Frye's conception of separatism not as a retreat, but as an 'instinctive and self-preserving recoil from the systematic misogyny that surrounds us.'<sup>27</sup> As Jan Relf argues, '*Separatism cannot provide a final*

<sup>25</sup> Frye, 'Some Reflections of Separatism and Power,' 96.

<sup>26</sup> Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), 3.

<sup>27</sup> Frye, 'Some Reflections on Separatism and Power,' 97.

*solution to the problem of patriarchy [...] separatist retreat is a necessary and recurrent part of a strategic process.*<sup>28</sup> (emphasis in original) The white dove suggests their intentions, but the programme also ends on a cliff-hanger that by necessity suggests that the moment of separatism cannot be entirely final. The incompleteness of the second series is indicated by the fact that some crucial questions have not yet been answered – notably, the programme does not fully explain the purpose behind Ames White’s breeding cult, and particularly what role Max plays in it. These questions are only answered in paratexts – in the commentary of the second series finale, co-creator Charles H. Eglee claims that *Dark Angel*’s third series would have revealed that Max was genetically engineered to stop an ancient plague. Furthermore, the officially sanctioned novel *After the Dark* follows this plot, and resolves a number of other unanswered questions from the series, including the consummation of Max and Logan’s on-again off-again relationship. Henry Jenkins describes the combination of material such as in-continuity novels as part of transmedia storytelling that ‘represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience.’<sup>29</sup> In this sense, *After the Dark* provides a distinctly more conservative ending for Max, as she re-assimilates into mainstream society, as symbolised by her much-delayed heterosexual intercourse with Logan. While Seven of Nine cannot return to Earth until she learns to become more human, which is expressed through her new ability to enter into a heteronormative romantic relationship, Max is unable to make a physical and emotional connection with the man she loves until she is safe from the corporate conspiracy. In both, heterosexual romance is crucial to the reconciliation of posthumanity and femininity and the resolution of the plot. The novel, therefore, offers a potential de-escalation of the radical sexual and racial politics inherent in *Freak Nation* in favour of a more conventional ending. However, while this may be the canonical ending, it is not the only ending.

Most series finales function as potential ending, by circumstance if not by intention. As I mentioned above, science fiction television programming is particularly precarious, and this moment of precarity is exacerbated during series finales. Bell argues that series finales featuring cliff-hangers do not function well as intra-narrative endings because they ‘fulfil none of the functionality of an ending, lacking any closure and instead suspending the narrative until the beginning of the new season.’<sup>30</sup> While Bell contends that this lack of closure means that series finales do not function as endings, this seems to me to be overly theoretical. This is, after all, the final episode. While I criticised Mittell earlier for his reliance on extratextual circumstances to classify different types of endings, Bell’s purely textual reading of endings is not satisfactory either. Although this is not an

<sup>28</sup> Jan Relf, ‘Women in Retreat: The Politics of Separatism in Women’s Literary Utopia,’ *Utopian Studies* 2, no. 1-2 (1991): 131, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20719032>.

<sup>29</sup> Henry Jenkins, ‘Transmedia Storytelling 101,’ *Confessions of an Aca-Fan*, 21 March 2007, [http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2007/03/transmedia\\_storytelling\\_101.html](http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2007/03/transmedia_storytelling_101.html).

<sup>30</sup> Bell, ‘Don’t Stop,’ 64.

ideal ending, it is an ending, and its own precarious nature allows for the programme to explore possibilities that may seem too radical or unsatisfying if they were contained in a planned finale. Again, as seen in the paratext novel, the ‘closed’ ending is more conservative. Because cancellation of science fiction programming is so common, it seems ridiculous to assume that the creators of the programme have no idea that it is always a possibility. Every moment of structural closure – such as a mid-series finale or series finale – is a potential ending, even if it is not an ideal conclusion. As I will discuss throughout this chapter, although these programmes’ attitudes towards posthumanism and feminism is necessarily ambivalent, generally the programmes with higher degrees of closure tend to focus more on assimilation and the adoption of normative gender roles, while programmes whose endings are incomplete end with more emphasis on potentially radical moments. Because these endings are non-ideal and incomplete, it seems that they are freer to leave open possibilities of feminist and posthumanist change. After all, if the audience is uncomfortable or has been pushed too far, at least they are left with narrative space to fill with their own imaginations.

### *Battlestar Galactica*

*Battlestar Galactica* emerges from a slightly different industrial context from *Voyager* and *Dark Angel*. After the end of the dominance of the three main network channels and the emergence of TV2, a number of digital channels opened up, significantly broadening the available avenues for different types of television programmes. As Pearson explains, ‘Cult-like shows, with their capacity to proliferate revenue streams across multiple platforms, are of increasing value to studio and network executives dealing with the fragmented and fickle audiences of the TV3 environment.’<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, *Battlestar Galactica* had a different place in critical discourse because it managed to transcend the cult designation, and reach a level of cultural legitimation that is ‘somewhere in the middlebrow range, the place, according to Bourdieu, for “major works of minor arts and minor works of major arts.”’<sup>32</sup> Robert J. Thompson’s book *Television’s Second Golden Age* popularised the term ‘quality television’ to refer to supposedly stylistically sophisticated and more thematically mature television. As Karen Fricker writes, ‘Part of the problem is that Thompson chose a word to contain a value judgment, when in fact the best way to use the term “quality” may be simply as the delineator of a certain kind of television programme that is currently in vogue.’<sup>33</sup> While it is true that quality can be more accurately used to describe a series of stylistic signifiers rather than actual artistic quality, this conflation is hardly an accident. Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine argue that the prominence of discourses of quality is an attempt by cultural critics to negotiate ‘through the construction of divergent conceptions of television text, technologies, and audiences, some of which are elevated to a

<sup>31</sup> Pearson, ‘Observations on Cult TV,’ 10.

<sup>32</sup> Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine, *Legitimizing Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 8.

<sup>33</sup> Karen Fricker, “‘Quality TV’ On Show,” in *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, ed. Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 15.

newly respectable status and some of which are associated with the medium's past and its historical lower class and feminine identities.<sup>34</sup> *Battlestar Galactica*, as a remake of the short-lived *Battlestar Galactica* (ABC, 1978-9), in many ways enacts this rejection of the past and posits itself as quality television. The new *Battlestar Galactica* employs shaky handheld cinematography and sophisticated CGI to, in the words of Telotte, 'look almost as impressive as the early entries in the *Star Wars* film franchise with their extensive – and expensive – model work and computer-controlled cameras.'<sup>35</sup> However, while *Galactica* takes advantage of new technologies and embraces the quality label, it also embraces feminised aspects of television and science fiction. It combines the masculine addresses of a quality space opera science fiction programme with an emphasis on the dangers of technology and the need to reconnect with the earth, as well as a focus on mysticism that is more closely associated with the feminine. These conflicts become particularly apparent in the three-part series finale 'Daybreak.'

*Battlestar Galactica* follows the outbreak of war between the humans living on a group of technologically advanced planets, the Twelve Colonies, and the Cylons, who had initially been designed as the humans' slaves but retreated after their initial rebellion a few decades before the beginning of the series. The Cylons returned to destroy the humans' planets, and only a small group of humans managed to escape. This population, led by the titular *Galactica* starship, seek out the semi-mythical Thirteenth Colony, Earth. The Cylons wage war on several fronts, including the use of humanlike Cylon 'Models' as sleeper agents and spies. The programme offers commentary on the nature of humanity, the morality of war, and the dangers of technology. The series finale deals with these themes and, much like *Voyager*, involves the end of a journey towards Earth, while also attempting to reconcile the sympathetic Cylons' technological nature with their impending encounter with the natural world. The programme uses Sharon 'Athena' Agathon (Grace Park), a Cylon spy turned human ally, and Sharon 'Boomer' Valerii (Grace Park), a Cylon who was programmed to believe she was human and turned traitor against the human government, to explore these themes.<sup>36</sup> In the fourth series episode 'Someone to Watch Over Me,' Boomer disguises herself as Athena, sleeps with Athena's husband Karl Agathon (Tahmoh Penikett) and kidnaps Athena's half-human daughter Hera (Iliana Gomez-Martinez). As I have explained in previous chapters, the identical Sharons illustrate a type of posthuman communal identity, despite the programme's attempts to differentiate them. They are played by the same actress and share the same memories. However, while Athena integrates into human society through heterosexual partnership and motherhood, Boomer is rejected. Boomer is unable to reintegrate into human society, and she eventually begins to advocate the complete separation of humans and Cylons – in the third series episode 'Rapture,' Boomer tries to kill Hera, as her half-human heritage represents the ultimate possibility of human and Cylon

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<sup>34</sup> Newman and Levine, *Legitimizing Television*, 7.

<sup>35</sup> Telotte, *Science Fiction TV*, 6.

<sup>36</sup> As in previous chapters, I will refer to the two Sharons by their callsigns Athena and Boomer to prevent confusion.

reconciliation. The events of 'Daybreak,' where Athena infiltrates the Cylon colony in order to rescue her daughter, allow for the ultimate confrontation between Athena and Boomer. Just as Seven of Nine confronts the Borg Queen before she is allowed to go to the Alpha Quadrant, Athena must confront Boomer before she is allowed to reconcile her family unit and begin her life on Earth. Boomer has a change of heart and returns Hera to Athena. Athena says this gesture 'doesn't change anything you did.' Boomer replies, 'No. We all make our choices. Today I made a choice. I think it's my last one.' Boomer then stands impassively as Athena guns her down. Seemingly, both Athena and Boomer realise that Boomer has to die. Although, as will be discussed later in this section, the Cylons have an origin that is more complex than initially implied by the programme, the unsettling idea that they are descended from human creations but are largely indistinguishable from humans is a problem that plagues the series. Humanism, as discussed above, is deeply invested in narratives that prioritise human exceptionalism at the expense of considering other forms of subjectivity. *Battlestar Galactica* resolves this tension by forcing its Cylons to adopt normative conventions of gender and renounce their technological heritage, as symbolised by their journey to Earth. Boomer must die because she is a constant reminder that Athena is not human, and that Cylons have a right to exist outside of their attachment to humans. *Battlestar Galactica*, then, ultimately offers an assimilationist view of how to resolve the problem of posthumanism.

In the final episode of the three-part finale, the crew of the *Galactica* discover a habitable world that is populated by a pre-verbal species that is genetically compatible with the humans and Cylons. The crew of the *Galactica* agree to destroy their advanced technology and adopt a simple agrarian existence, in order to prevent the mistakes of the past being made again. As I discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation, this is an incredibly conservative notion, as it prioritises heterosexual coupling and disregards the complex relationship between technology and culture. Lee Adama (Jamie Bamber) distinctly draws a line between acceptable technology, such as agriculture and language, and forbidden technology. Instead of considering how the Cylons and humans can best progress together, the *Galactica* crew simply decides to retreat to the safety of an imagined agrarian idyll. While I still believe that this retreat is ultimately conservative, it is also necessary to contextualise the Earth storyline within the broader generic conventions of science fiction television. *Battlestar Galactica* is unusual because it attempts to combine the masculinised space opera genre with a more feminised pseudoscientific mysticism. Just as discourses of television quality attempt to distinguish the new mode of TV as a masculinised art form from the old form of TV that was feminised mass entertainment, some types of science fiction attempt to legitimise themselves by drawing upon masculinised discourses of Enlightenment rationality. As Roger Luckhurst writes, 'one of the enduring ways of defining sf and legitimising its intellectual weight is to argue that [...] SF is a literature of modernity in that it deploys the scientific method. It is secular, rationalist, and

sceptical.<sup>37</sup> This type of narrative is derived from a specious desire to separate so-called ‘hard’ science fiction that claims to explore notions of plausible futuristic science from more speculative, sociological ‘soft’ science fiction. *Galactica* collapses those boundaries. Creator Ronald D. Moore explicitly frames ‘*BSG* as a chance “to introduce realism into what has heretofore been an aggressively unrealistic genre,”<sup>38</sup> and the programme signifies its naturalism in a number of ways, from its muted costuming and set design to its handheld cinematography. However, it also imbues the struggle between the humans and the Cylons with a religious element from the beginning. The humans follow a pantheon of deities loosely based on the Greco-Roman gods, known as the Lords of Kobol, while the Cylons believe in a monotheistic faith. Furthermore, this religious fervour is more closely associated with female characters. Caprica Six (Tricia Helfer), one of the most prominent Cylon characters, is a devout follower of the Cylon faith, while the pilot Kara ‘Starbuck’ Thrace (Katee Sackhoff) is deeply devoted to the Lords of Kobol. In the eighth episode of the first series, Kara is ordered to torture Leobon Conoy (Callum Keith Rennie), a suspected Cylon spy. When President Roslin (Mary McDonnell) orders Conoy be thrown out of the airlock, Starbuck prays for his soul, even though she is uncertain that he has one. The series’ final episodes blur the lines between its science fiction elements and this mysticism in a number of ways.

As the programme approaches its end, its mystical elements become more prominent. Hera, as the only known viable offspring of a Cylon, becomes ‘the object of intense scientific (as well as political and religious) scrutiny’<sup>39</sup> by the Cylons, who believe her to represent the future of their race. *Galactica* demonstrates that Hera has some supernatural abilities, as in the third series finale she hums the tune to ‘All Along the Watchtower,’ the Bob Dylan song. In the fourth series finale, Starbuck repeats the tune, and then uses a numerical code produced from the tune to navigate towards the habitable planet. It is implied that Starbuck is some sort of angel – when the *Galactica* crew lands, Starbuck disappears, saying that she has ‘completed her journey.’ As I will explore, many of my case study programmes embrace a turn towards the paranormal as part of a blurring of the lines between hard and soft science fiction. While there are obvious problems with how *Galactica* and other programmes embrace heterosexual coupling and motherhood as the solution to the posthuman woman’s struggle for subjectivity, it is also coupled with an embrace of elements that are culturally denigrated because of their association with the feminine. By returning to Earth and showcasing spirituality, *Galactica* makes a decisive turn against the cultural legitimisation of quality television and hard science fiction, and it suffered for it. *Battlestar Galactica*’s finale proved highly

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<sup>37</sup> Roger Luckhurst, ‘Pseudoscience,’ in *The Routledge Companion to Science Fiction*, ed. Mark Bould et. al (London: Routledge, 2009), 403.

<sup>38</sup> Tama Leaver, “‘Humanity’s Children’: Constructing and Confronting the Cylons,” in *Cylons in America: Critical Studies in Battlestar Galactica*, ed. Tiffany Potter and C.W. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2008), 132.

<sup>39</sup> Lorna Jowett, ‘Frak Me: Reproduction, Gender, Sexuality,’ in *Battlestar Galactica: Investigating Flesh, Spirit and Steel*, ed. Roz Kaveney and Jennifer Stoy (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 63.

controversial, with TV critic Alan Sepinwall writing that ‘Reaction to the “Lost” finale was mild compared to some of the vitriol aimed at Ronald D. Moore and the other “BSG” producers [...] after a finale that was heavy on spirituality and light on concrete explanations to various pieces of the show’s mythology.’<sup>40</sup> Popular science fiction and fantasy website *io9* published a piece shortly after the finale asking if it was ‘the worst ending in science fiction history,’ complaining about the reliance on religious explanations for the programme’s mysteries and the lack of scientific plausibility.<sup>41</sup> The posthuman woman is predicated on a blurring of the boundaries between gendered binaries; therefore the fact that the programme rejects masculinised notions of quality science fiction is necessarily notable. This contrarian impulse to resist the expectations of quality science fiction and reject notions of scientific rationality persists throughout these programmes. While the programmes demonstrate how the posthuman woman suffers from the rigid categorisation of the scientific practices and organisations that control her, throwing away the conventional boundaries of generic expectation is a final resistance to humanist ideology.

### *Dollhouse*

*Dollhouse* premiered on the FOX network in 2009, and it seemed doomed almost from the beginning. Creator Joss Whedon, most famous at the time for *Buff*y, had already tried to work with FOX on the cult programme, *Firefly* (FOX, 2002-3), became emblematic of science fiction television’s difficult relationship with mainstream networks, as its premature cancellation galvanised a ferocious fan revival campaign, leading to the production of the theatrical follow-up *Serenity* (Joss Whedon, Universal Pictures, 2005). *Dollhouse* demonstrates one of the most interesting structural challenges to the notions of television endings, as it attempts to defy its own precarious status as a cult programme by establishing a semi-open ending for its mythology. Most of *Dollhouse* takes place in present-day Los Angeles. The protagonist, Echo (Eliza Dushku), is an Active. Actives are people who, in exchange for a large sum of money, agree to spend five years having their bodies imprinted with various personalities for the enjoyment of rich clients. As discussed in the second chapter, the first series is fairly conventional in structure, following Echo and her fellow Actives on ‘mission of the week’ episodic adventures while also following a more serialised corporate conspiracy plot. However, the first series finale, ‘Epitaph One,’ is set five years later than the main plot of *Dollhouse*. The episode initially follows a group of new characters, most notably Mag (Felicia Day), as they enter the derelict Los Angeles Dollhouse. It is revealed over the course of this episode that the nefarious Rossum Corporation, the owners of the Dollhouse, developed a way to remotely wipe and imprint anyone. This technology was weaponised and has led to the downfall of civilisation. As a result of this

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<sup>40</sup> Alan Sepinwall, ‘The “Caprica” Cancellation: What Went Wrong?’ *Uproxx*, 27 October 2010, <http://uproxx.com/sepinwall/the-caprica-cancellation-what-went-wrong/>.

<sup>41</sup> Charlie Jane Anders, ‘Did *Battlestar Galactica* Have the Worst Ending in Science Fiction History?’ *io9*, 13 July 2009, <https://io9.gizmodo.com/5313848/did-battlestar-galactica-have-the-worst-ending-in-science-fiction-history>.

technology, only a few people still have their own personalities. Over the course of the episode, there are a number of flashbacks to events that occur to the main cast before the events of ‘Epitaph One,’ but they are purposefully ambiguous and elliptical. While ‘Epitaph One’ reveals many fixed points that the programme is now committed to follow up on, such as programmer Topher (Fran Kranz) going insane, it also features moments that are deliberately vague. For example, the exact nature of the close relationship between Adelle (Olivia Williams), who runs the LA Dollhouse, and Topher is left ambiguous. This finale is interesting for a number of reasons. While the series finale demonstrates where the programme is meant to go, giving fans an idea of the ultimate purpose of the corporate conspiracy plot and the importance of the imprinting technology, it offers almost no closure for ongoing storylines, as it features very little of the regular cast. Aside from Whiskey (Amy Acker), none of the main cast members are confirmed to be alive or dead at the time of ‘Epitaph One.’ The focus on new characters allows *Dollhouse* to explore many of its thematic concerns about the rampant, unchecked use of technology and how corporate greed is ultimately harmful to society, but without unduly compromising the possibilities of future series. By teasing a grand plan, ‘Epitaph One’ all but begs for renewal. ‘Epitaph One’ gives fans information about the broader diegetic world of *Dollhouse* and teases exciting potential developments, but without closing off its narrative possibilities.

While ‘Epitaph One’ remains open, ‘Epitaph Two,’ the series finale, returns to this dystopian future and provides a much more conventional form of closure. Despite its more traditional function as an ending, ‘Epitaph Two: Return’ refuses to wrap up every plot thread, advocates for the importance of separatism and envisions a possible ethical posthuman future. ‘Epitaph Two: Return’ features much of the main cast of *Dollhouse*, and is much less coy about decisive action than ‘Epitaph One.’ For example, ‘Epitaph Two: Return,’ having established that most of the *Dollhouse* cast have survived to 2020, kills off Echo’s love interest, Paul Ballard (Tahmoh Penikett), fairly early on in the episode. While ‘Epitaph One’ functions as an introduction to the post-apocalyptic future, ‘Epitaph Two: Return’ unambiguously resolves it, with Topher sacrificing himself in order to return everyone to their original personalities. However, while the larger plot elements of the programme are resolved, *Dollhouse* is almost defiant in introducing interesting plot hooks that it knows will never be realised. For example, Alpha (Alan Tudyk), who had appeared throughout the series as a sociopathic villain, appears in ‘Epitaph Two: Return’ as a peaceful ally. Unlike Topher’s insanity, this shift in allegiance is not foreshadowed in the previous episodes. Although ‘Epitaph Two: Return’ is in many ways a definitive ending, *Dollhouse* deliberately leaves gaps in the narrative. This can be attributed to Whedon’s claim that, when pitching the series, he presented FOX with ‘a five-year plan.’<sup>42</sup> Thus it seems as if *Dollhouse* is mourning the lost potential of its storylines. It resists the idea of a logical

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<sup>42</sup> Alan Sepinwall, ‘Dollhouse: Joss Whedon Q&A,’ *NJ*, 11 Feb 2009.  
[https://www.nj.com/entertainment/tv/index.ssf/2009/02/dollhouse\\_joss\\_whedon\\_qa.html](https://www.nj.com/entertainment/tv/index.ssf/2009/02/dollhouse_joss_whedon_qa.html).

explanation. Although these loose threads in ‘wrap-up’ finales is not uncommon, they are usually designed to ensure that there is material to return to if the programme is renewed.<sup>43</sup> The fact that *Dollhouse* was cancelled before the final episode was produced<sup>44</sup> and the level of narrative resolution in the last few episodes of *Dollhouse* – revealing such long-running mysteries such as the nature of the Attic and the identity of the secret founder of Rossum, along with the resolution of the 2020 future storyline – suggests that there was little expectation of a last-minute revival. Therefore, the lack of resolution in the Alpha storyline exists without any intention of returning to it. This seems to be a reaction to, first of all, the concept of the ideal storyline. *Dollhouse* hints towards this ideal storyline that would allow time for Alpha’s redemption, and self-consciously demonstrates that the ideal storyline will never be realised. Furthermore, it seems to react against the generic expectation of complete resolution. ‘Epitaph Two: Return’ aired in the US on 29 January 2010. This is several months after the airing of *Battlestar Galactica*’s divisive finale in 20 March 2009. While the *Dollhouse* finale precedes the also controversial finale of *Lost* (ABC, 2004-10), it comes in a context where, according to Mittell, ‘*Lost*’s hyperactive online fan base generated to-do lists of unanswered questions [...] the end of *Lost* had been hyped for years through its innovative industrial precedent of negotiating a planned end date.’<sup>45</sup> *Dollhouse*’s finale arrived at a time where genre programmes were expected to provide full closure for their audiences, especially when they established mysteries. Although *Dollhouse*, as mentioned above, does give a great amount of closure, it also resists the impulse to explain *everything*. It defies the idea of a television programme as merely a method for delivering information.

As well as resisting some conventional notions of closure, *Dollhouse*’s ending is particularly interesting because, like *Dark Angel*, it explores notions of separatism and posthuman community. In the first chapter, I described the Safe Haven sequence in ‘Epitaph Two: Return.’ Echo and her allies Adelle and Priya (Dichen Lachman) are hiding out on a farm that is discussed as a place free from technological influence. Unlike the agrarian retreat seen in *Battlestar Galactica*, the farm, Safe Haven, can only be a temporary respite from the problems of the wider world. As I mentioned above, Topher discovers a way to reset everyone’s original memories and personalities. Because Paul, Echo and Priya all have Active architecture, this would mean deleting parts of their personalities that they have come to need. Therefore, they must leave Safe Haven and return to the Dollhouse, which is located far enough underground that they will be immune from this mass reset. Relf argues that an unanticipated disadvantage to separatist strategies is that ‘the retreat as a space, which, while excluding what is undesirable – patriarchy or paternal authority – may function as a confining enclosure, like the walled garden, wherein the inhabitant remain conveniently (for patriarchy)

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<sup>43</sup> Mittell, *Complex TV*, 320.

<sup>44</sup> Nellie Andreeva, ‘Joss Whedon’s “Dollhouse” Cancelled,’ *Hollywood Reporter*, 11 November 2009, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/joss-whedons-dollhouse-canceled-91183>

<sup>45</sup> Mittell, *Complex TV*, 323.

powerless.<sup>46</sup> *Dollhouse* resists the allure of the walled garden by forcing its characters into action: in order for the wider world to be saved, Echo and her allies must leave their position of powerless safety in Safe Haven. Although their descent into the Dollhouse is another form of retreat, it is only a temporary one. Echo calculates that they must stay underground for a year to resist the wipes, but by putting a time limit on their seclusion, the programme promises a return. As Echo says, she must retain her memory so she can ‘keep fighting the war.’ Just as in *Dark Angel*, separatism is not an end in and of itself, but a pragmatic and temporary solution to allow for the continued struggle against a hostile world order. Furthermore, *Dollhouse* rejects the technophobia seen in *Battlestar Galactica* and *Voyager* by offering a vision of the posthuman future that is particularly interesting in terms of its gender politics.

At the end of the episode, Echo uploads a copy of Paul’s personality into her own mind, allowing him a form of life beyond death. Although this can be read as an extreme move towards the type of conventional heterosexual resolution typical in these narratives – not even death will separate the couple – it can also be considered as a semi-queer posthuman ending. Typically posthumanism is sceptical of masculine power fantasies of technological immortality. N. Katherine Hayles argues that the only ethical posthumanism is one that ‘embraces the possibilities of information technologies without being seduced by fantasies of unlimited power and disembodied immortality, that recognizes and celebrates finitude as a condition of human being.’<sup>47</sup> Although the techno-transcendence of Paul’s consciousness superficially resembles Hans Moravec’s mind uploading, it remains cognisant of embodiment and posthuman community in a number of ways. It is Echo’s choice to incorporate Paul into her fluid multiple identity. When Paul’s personality is uploaded, he asks ‘Is there room for me in here?’ Echo responds, ‘We’ll work it out.’ While Moravec’s mind uploading is based on a masculine desire for absolute control and a rejection of the feminised body, Paul’s resurrection is contingent on him incorporating himself into Echo’s consciousness. Much like *Battlestar Galactica*, masculinised science fiction technology enables the successful resolution of a feminised romance plot, and calls to mind the ways in which soap operas, while reliant on heterosexual romance, place women in active positions.<sup>48</sup> This offers an intriguing possibility of an ethical posthuman future that, albeit tied to ideas of heterosexual love, rejects humanist individualism and embraces posthuman multiplicity. The finale foregrounds this thematic project, even while it remains narratively incomplete in other ways. This preference for thematic messaging over conventional plot closure characterises a number of these programmes’ endings.

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<sup>46</sup> Relf, ‘Separatism,’ 134.

<sup>47</sup> N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 5.

<sup>48</sup> Christine Geraghty, *Women and Soap Opera: A Study of Prime Time Soaps* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991), 51.

### Caprica

*Caprica* is, in many ways, the most unusual of my case study programmes. *Caprica* is a prequel to *Battlestar Galactica*, set before the invention of the Cylons. Christine Scodari argues that *Battlestar Galactica* floundered because of how science fiction programmes that incorporate serialised, soap opera-esque plotting 'have been hamstrung in any proclivity to hybridize masculine and feminine narrative.'<sup>49</sup> She alleges that masculine cult audiences are prioritised by networks, and that these fans tend to react poorly to relationship plots and feminised narrative techniques. However, *Galactica* had the advantage of being a space opera and a war story, both traditionally masculine genres. *Caprica* took the creatively risky, and ultimately financially unviable, decision to downplay its science fiction trappings and embrace the soap opera format. In 2007, *Galactica* and *Caprica* creator Ronald D. Moore described the premise of *Caprica* as 'a sci-fi "Dallas."'<sup>50</sup> *Caprica*, set almost entirely on the titular planet, follows, among others, the Graystone family, most notably the inventor and corporate CEO Daniel (Eric Stoltz) and his rebellious daughter Zoe (Alessandra Torresani). While the programme shares an interest in artificial intelligence ethics and what constitutes a subject with its predecessor series, *Caprica* emphasises the interpersonal relationships and religious themes that so polarised *Galactica*'s fanbase. *Caprica* goes further than *Galactica* in collapsing the boundaries between issues of technology, religion and emotion. Zoe Graystone is a religious zealot who spurns the Lords of Kobol in favour of a monotheistic religion, the Soldiers of the One, similar to that practiced by the Cylons in *Galactica*. This religious rebellion is directly associated with her difficult relationship with her parents, particularly with her father.

In the pilot episode, Zoe attempts to run away from home, only to discover that her boyfriend Ben (Avan Jogia) is planning on carrying out a suicide bombing. Zoe, Ben and several others are killed in the attack. While Zoe dies in the pilot, Daniel discovers that she created a digital avatar who looks and behaves like her. In his grief, Daniel attempts to download this artificial avatar into one of his newly designed cybernetic soldiers, called Cylons. Although Daniel believes this attempt has failed, Zoe's consciousness does get transferred to the Cylon. Zoe attempts to hide her true nature in order to escape from her father's control.<sup>51</sup> Zoe's friend Lacy (Maga Apanowicz), also a follower of the One, calls Zoe's multiple aspects a 'trinity.' *Caprica* explicitly connects the science fictional questions of Zoe's posthuman multiplicity to its religious concerns – much of the plot concerns a monotheistic cult who believe in techno-transcendence. By focusing on the confluence of technological progress and religious zealotry, *Caprica* resembles Elaine L. Graham's work on the

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<sup>49</sup> Christine Scodari, 'Of Soap Operas, Space Operas, and Television's Rocky Romance With the Feminine Form,' in *The Survival of Soap Opera: Transformations for A New Media Era*, ed. Sam Ford et. al (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2011): 109.

<sup>50</sup> Laura Miller, 'The Man Behind "Battlestar Galactica,"' *Salon*, 24 March 2007, [https://www.salon.com/2007/03/24/battlestar\\_4/](https://www.salon.com/2007/03/24/battlestar_4/).

<sup>51</sup> As in previous chapters, to prevent confusion, I will refer to the different aspects of Zoe as Human Zoe, Avatar Zoe and Cylon Zoe.

cyborg and the goddess. Donna Haraway famously said that ‘though both are bound in the spiral dance, I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess.’<sup>52</sup> While most analyses of Haraway’s *Cyborg Manifesto* emphasise the dichotomy between the cyborg and the goddess, Graham argues that ‘Western modernity is founded on a series of dualisms: nature/culture, female/male, primitive/civilized, body/mind, emotion/reason, sacred/secular, as well as human/technological. When the boundary between the human and artefactual begins to dissolve, as in cyborg technology, the demarcation that separates the normatively human from the non-human also breaks down.’<sup>53</sup> According to Graham, the confluence of divinity and technology can work together to demonstrate the artifice of binaristic thinking. Although *Caprica* explores the theological ideas first expressed in *Galactica*, there is not much by way of explanation of the events of the *Galactica* series finale – although the programme shows how the Cylons come to adopt the ideology of the Soldier of the One, the true nature of the Messengers and Starbuck are not revealed. Much like its predecessor, its attempts to frustrate viewer expectations proved unpopular with viewers, as *Caprica* was abruptly cancelled before the end of its first series due to poor ratings.

*Caprica*’s series finale, on the one hand, resolves many of its ongoing plot threads. In ‘Apotheosis,’ the Soldiers of the One plan a large-scale terrorist attack, in the belief that their agents will be granted new life in the virtual world that has taken on a religious significance for them. Daniel Graystone deploys his newly-perfected Cylons, who still contain the spark of life granted by Avatar Zoe’s programme, to stop them. The finale grapples with notions of techno-transcendence and the confluence of religion and technology in its main plot, but rather than merely wrapping up the narrative introduced in the first series, the final episode of *Caprica* ends with a montage showcasing future storylines. Like *Dollhouse*, *Caprica* uses its final moments to explore glimpses of its ideal story. This montage foregrounds the religious and technological conflicts that characterise the series: Lacy uses the Cylons to become the leader of the Soldiers of One, while Sister Clarice (Polly Walker) preaches to a Cylon congregation that their saviour will free them and allow them to crush the humans. The final moment in this montage shows Zoe Graystone emerging from a pool of fluid, with her parents on either side. Of course, *Caprica*’s position as prequel to *Battlestar Galactica* means that its move towards Cylon self-determination, in terms of the incipient uprising and Zoe’s design of her own body, must be considered in light of the final resolution of the *Galactica* finale. While showing how the Cylons will progress to revolt against the humans and forming their own, separate society, this is tinged with the technophobia prominent in the *Galactica* narrative. However, there are still a few elements of note in this ending montage. First of all, this montage foregrounds the religious aspects of the programme, despite their unpopularity. Sepinwall argues that *Caprica* failed because its

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<sup>52</sup> Donna Haraway, ‘A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,’ in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Women* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 328.

<sup>53</sup> Elaine L. Graham, ‘Cyborgs or Goddesses? Becoming Divine in a Cyberfeminist Age,’ in *Virtual Gender: Technology, Consumption and Identity*, ed. by Eileen Green and Alison Adam (London: Routledge, 2001), 308.

premise ‘included a whole lot of theology, which is essential to the origin of the “BSG” universe but, based on reaction to the “BSG” finale, not everyone’s favorite subject.’<sup>54</sup> Sepinwall also speculates that *Caprica*’s mixture of space opera and soap opera attempted to appeal to a wider audience, but because science fiction fans dislike soap opera and vice versa, it limited its appeal. Scodari makes a similar argument:

Narrowcasting by gender, in which feminine narrative elements can be more liberally employed in shows geared to women, but are constrained in series targeting males, is a key factor [...] Anything targeted to young males that inserts an iota of romance or sentiment, or denies celebratory triumph to its heroes on an episodic basis, can be [...] maligned as “soap opera” by networks, creators, and fans.<sup>55</sup>

By focusing on the ‘softer’ sides of science fiction and serialised television, even in its final moments, *Caprica* embraces the aspects of its premise that alienated audiences. Furthermore, *Caprica* refuses to hermeneutically seal its storyworld.

Like *Dollhouse*, *Caprica* privileges thematic messaging about its posthuman future over narrative resolution. Although the events in the montage, namely Zoe’s creation of a ‘skinjob’ chassis, hints towards the events of *Battlestar Galactica*, it actually confuses the timeline. *Battlestar Galactica* at first hinted that the Cylons developed human-like bodies themselves after their exile from the Twelve Colonies but then later revealed that a group of semi-divine progenitors, The Final Five, were responsible for their design, moving from a science fiction plot to a more speculative mythological creation story. *Caprica* further confuses the origins of the Cylons, as Zoe, who resembles none of the mainline Cylon models, creates her own humanlike body with the help of her parents long before the Cylons left the Twelfth Colony. If a ‘wrap-up’ is meant to provide closure, this montage raises more questions. It complicates the significance of the Cylon’s resurrection. Sarah Hagelin argues that ‘one way that the Cylons are *not* human is in the body’s promise of mortality. Cylons cannot die; when one body expires, they wake up (in a womblike cocoon of fluid) in a new, identical body, a process the show calls both “downloading” and “resurrection.”’<sup>56</sup> (emphasis in original) The symbolic amniotic fluid aside, the immortality of the Cylons and their lack of traditional reproduction marks them as non-human. *Caprica* takes the downloading imagery and shows that the first instance of this rebirthing is slightly more conventional – Zoe is reborn into her new body with the help of her biological parents. The skinjob Cylon body, rather than being a ruse to infiltrate the humans (as is implied at the beginning of *Galactica*) or something that was created by the Final Five, is instead

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<sup>54</sup> Sepinwall, ‘The “Caprica” cancellation,’ <http://uproxx.com/sepinwall/the-caprica-cancellation-what-went-wrong/>.

<sup>55</sup> Christine Scodari, ‘Of Soap Operas,’ 115-6.

<sup>56</sup> Sarah Hagelin, ‘The Violated Body After 9/11: Torture and the Legacy of Vulnerability in *24* and *Battlestar Galactica*,’ in *Reel Vulnerability: Power, Pain, and Gender in Contemporary American Film and Television* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 128.

attributed to the cooperation of the traditional family unit, and symbolically the patriarchal order, in order to allow Zoe to reassimilate back into human society. Of course, this may have been complicated in the ideal storyline, but the singularity of this moment means that we will never know.

### *Orphan Black*

Technological advances and changing industry standards have meant that expectations for cult genre programmes have changed rapidly over the last few years. Part of this is due to the proliferation of scripted television programming, a phenomenon known as ‘Peak TV’: in 2015 there was double the amount of scripted television as was produced in 2009.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the rise of streaming services such as Netflix and Amazon Prime have provided a financial incentive to keep even low-rated programming going, as ‘the advent of streaming has made serialized dramas more valuable to their studios as complete sets, with beginnings, middles, and ends, more and more low-rated shows are [...] getting the chance to thoughtfully wrap up their stories.’<sup>58</sup> As Mittell explains, *Lost*’s negotiated end date was an important moment, as the creators had the power to resist the temptation to endlessly generate content and could plan an ending for their programme.<sup>59</sup> This expectation has become more commonplace, to the extent that BBC America’s announcement that it had renewed *Orphan Black* for one final series was not unusual. As Newman and Levine argue, the promise that a television programme can end is a key factor in processes of legitimisation. They assert that this is one of the reasons why the television miniseries has historically been legitimated, while the increasing expectation of a ‘good,’ i.e. closed, ending has been a key factor in differentiating contemporary legitimated serialised television, such as *Lost*, from the ‘endless’ twists and turns of a soap opera.<sup>60</sup> In that respect, *Orphan Black* is an interesting case study in that it has, by these standards, the ‘best’ ending. It was planned in advance, provides full or near-full closure of most of the programmes’ ongoing story arcs, and received a fairly warm reception. However, it also frustrates some of the expectations surrounding a cult genre programme by de-emphasising its masculinised science fiction conspiracy plot in favour of resolving the relationships between its female main characters. Even in an ideal, legitimated ending, the posthuman woman’s narrative finds ways to resist the strict binaries of genre and taste.

*Orphan Black* follows a group of genetically identical clones, all played by actor Tatiana Maslany. Over the course of the programme’s five series, the clones, most notably British con artist Sarah Manning, Canadian housewife Alison Hendrix, American scientist Cosima Niehaus, and Ukrainian assassin Helena, struggle against the shadowy corporate conspiracy that created them. This

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<sup>57</sup> Josef Adalian and Maria Elena Fernandez, ‘The Business of Too Much TV,’ *Vulture*, 1 May 2016, <http://www.vulture.com/2016/05/peak-tv-business-c-v-r.html>.

<sup>58</sup> Todd VanDerWerff, ‘The Delicate Art of the TV Series Finale,’ *Vox*, 17 October 2017, <https://www.vox.com/culture/2017/10/17/16462246/series-finale-best-worst-tv-halt-and-catch-fire-americans>.

<sup>59</sup> Mittell, *Complex TV*, 321.

<sup>60</sup> Newman and Levine, *Legitimizing Television*, 90.

corporate conspiracy is incredibly convoluted, but is ultimately controlled by a transhumanist cult leader styling himself as P.T. Westmoreland (Stephen McHattie), who wants to use the genetic mutations present in the Leda clone line to artificially extend his life. The series finale ‘To Right the Wrongs of Many’ is unusual in that its most dramatic moments occur in the first half of the episode. Helena, who is heavily pregnant with twins, has been kidnapped by Westmoreland so that he can use her children’s DNA to prolong his life. Sarah breaks into the facility, rescues Helena, kills Westmoreland, and delivers Helena’s babies. The programme then fades to white, and it cuts to a shot of Helena’s hand-made baby mobile, and then pans down to her twins in their baskets. This sequence illustrates the larger shift in the two halves of the episode: having finished the corporate science fiction plot, *Orphan Black* firmly turns its attentions to the domestic. Bronwen Calvert notes that *Orphan Black*’s series finales tend to involve quasi-familial gatherings, and the final episode proves no exception.<sup>61</sup> Clone Club – the programme’s term for the clones and their various allies – gather at Alison’s home for dinner on the same day that Sarah is meant to take her GED, a high-school diploma equivalent. The episode shows that Sarah is struggling to readjust to the day-to-day pressures of domestic life. She is thinking about selling her family home, much to the dismay of her adoptive brother Felix (Jordan Gavaris) and her daughter Kira (Skyler Wexler). Later in the episode, Sarah skips her exam and lies to the others about what she did. After the dinner, Sarah sits with Alison, Cosima and Helena in the back garden and confesses.

SARAH: I didn’t go to my test. That’s good, isn’t it? Lying to my kid. Same shit. I don’t know what I’m doing, I... I carry around all of these mistakes. I don’t know how to be happy. There’s no one left to fight, and I’m still a shit mum.

The other clones share their own maternal worries: Alison describes how she snapped at her own daughter, Helena tells them that her baby is eating sand, and Cosima says ‘I am just not maternal at all. And that makes me wonder, like, am I selfish or am I scared?’ On the one hand, the emphasis on the clones’ domestic worries recalls the traditional terrain of soap opera. As Christine Geraghty argues, ‘soaps recognise and value the emotional work which women undertake in the personal sphere.’<sup>62</sup> While Michael Kackman contends that discourses surrounding quality television often elide ‘the relationship of its narrational mode to its gender politics,’<sup>63</sup> namely in the ways that it often denigrates the feminised aspects of melodrama in favour of masculinised notions of genre plot, *Orphan Black* clearly emphasises the importance of Sarah’s struggles with motherhood and the supportive relationships she has with her clone sisters above the resolution of its science fiction conspiracy plot. When Sarah says ‘there’s no one left to fight, and I’m still a shit mum,’ the

<sup>61</sup> Bronwen Calvert, *Being Bionic: The World of TV Cyborgs* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), 213.

<sup>62</sup> Christine Geraghty, *Women and Soap Opera*, 43.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Kackman, ‘Quality Television, Melodrama, and Cultural Complexity,’ *Flow*, 31 October 2008, <http://www.flowjournal.org/2008/10/quality-television-melodrama-and-cultural-complexity%C2%A0michael-kackman%C2%A0C2%A0university-of-texas-austin%C2%A0C2%A0/>.

programme demonstrates that it prioritises Sarah's emotional arc over the genre aspects. The fact that this finale was received so warmly – for example, the AV Club review, entitled '*Orphan Black* closes its run with its focus on exactly the right thing: the sisterhood,' that gave the episode an A<sup>64</sup> – suggests that perhaps pop culture, at least, has learned to embrace some aspects of soap opera plotting in its quality television.

Although *Orphan Black*'s finale is striking in terms of its place in the wider area of contemporary television, it still feels like a step down from its more explicit feminist stances. As I have argued earlier in this thesis, *Orphan Black*'s central narrative of a corporate conspiracy to control a group of clones can be read as a metaphor for patriarchal domination of women. By focusing on how patriarchal capitalism works to control women's bodies, *Orphan Black* seemingly resists television's tendency to espouse liberal feminism via stories that 'focus(ed) on individual freedom rather than assessing power and class relations.'<sup>65</sup> However, this ending seems to reinforce the personal problems of feminism, by displacing the moment of the defeat of patriarchal power in favour of discussing the clones' personal struggles. As Bonnie J. Dow argues:

As feminists have claimed for a quarter century now, the personal is political. However, this adage was meant to describe *patriarchy*, not *feminism*. That is, it encapsulated the idea that what women viewed as personal, individual problems could be traced to the political status of women living in a male-dominated and male-defined society. Television entertainment, for the most part, has taken this idea in precisely the opposite direction in representing feminism: The political is personal, it tells us, as a set of political ideas and practices is transformed into a set of attitudes and personal lifestyle choices.<sup>66</sup> (emphasis in original)

*Orphan Black* seems to regard the problem of the clones' freedom as largely settled: as Sarah says, there is no one left for the clones to fight. Although the programme leaves some doors open – Rachel, a clone who worked for Dyad and Neolution, remains at large, and Kira's paranormal psychic connection to the clones remains unexplained – by and large Sarah's life is settled. While Sarah's life has been on hold as she has struggled to free herself and her sisters from Dyad and Neolution, now that they are defeated, she must learn how to readjust to her role as mother. *Orphan Black*'s domestic ending hints towards issues of separation and assimilation. While the clones' conversation in Alison's back garden recalls Frye's notion of everyday separatism as a crucial aspect of feminist practice,<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Lisa Weidenfeld, '*Orphan Black* closes its run with its focus on exactly the right thing: the sisterhood,' *AV Club*, 12 August 2017, <https://tv.avclub.com/orphan-black-closes-its-run-with-its-focus-on-exactly-t-1798194097>.

<sup>65</sup> Lisa M. Cuklanz and Sujata Moori, 'Television's "New" Feminism: Prime-Time Representation of Women and Victimization,' *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 23, no. 4 (October 2006): 305, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07393180600933121>.

<sup>66</sup> Bonnie J. Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism: Television, Media Culture, and the Women's Movement since 1970* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996): 209.

<sup>67</sup> Frye, 'Some Thoughts on Separatism and Power,' 96.

there is a brick wall in the background – calling to mind Relf’s criticism of ‘the walled garden’ of ineffective separatism.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the final moments of ‘To Right the Wrongs of Many’ show that Sarah can adjust to domesticity. In this final sequence, Sarah has chosen not to sell the house, and she, Felix and Kira go on a family trip to the beach. As the family leaves, Sarah looks back inside the house as she closes the door. The episode, and the programme, ends on a shot of Sarah’s empty living room. This ending both reassures us that Sarah successfully integrates – that is, she goes out into the wider world – but also that her domestic life has been re-established – as the camera stays in. As I discussed in the third chapter, the move towards maternalism indicates the resolution of the posthuman woman’s otherness. Like *Voyager* and *Galactica*, *Orphan Black* must reassure the viewer that the posthuman woman has been successfully domesticated, and successfully feminised, before they are allowed to re-integrate into society and the narrative is allowed to end. The demands of closure, it seems, are synonymous with the demands of assimilation.

### *Westworld*

*Westworld*, unlike my other case study programmes, has not yet concluded. The HBO programme that follows a group of robotic Hosts at a futuristic Wild West theme park alongside the engineers that run the park and some of the guests who attend, has at the time of writing aired two series. While *Battlestar Galactica* and *Orphan Black*’s claims to the Quality TV title was always slightly hindered by their generic status and the obscurity of their host networks, *Westworld* comes branded with the respectability of the HBO network. Famously, HBO used the tagline ‘It’s not TV. It’s HBO’ for a decade, and gained a reputation for artistic television such as *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999-2007) and *The Wire* (2002-8). More recently, *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011- ) is both critically acclaimed and highly popular, while also making telefantasy a viable genre for HBO’s particular brand of culturally legitimated quality television. *Westworld* is in many ways a successor to *Game of Thrones*: as *Game of Thrones* will end in 2019, *Westworld* bore the weight of replacing it as HBO’s breakout genre hit. However, *Westworld* is interesting in terms of what it represents about the current state of narrative television practices, as well as it how its endings potentially represent a break from the more cautious approaches television has typically taken in regards to the posthuman woman and feminism in general.

*Westworld* positions itself as a “drillable text” that encourages its viewers to ponder and theorise about its mysteries.<sup>69</sup> Some of these mysteries include: who is the Man in Black (Ed Harris), the villainous guest who is obsessed with Host Dolores (Evan Rachel Wood)? What happened to Arthur, the original creator of the park? Who is Wyatt, who apparently committed a horrific crime sometime in the past? What is the importance of the maze motif? What is the true purpose of

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<sup>68</sup> Relf, ‘Women in Retreat,’ 134.

<sup>69</sup> Jason Mittell, ‘Forensic Fandom and the Drillable Text,’ *Spreadable Media*, accessed 22 January 2019, [http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/mittell/#.WniA8Khl\\_IU](http://spreadablemedia.org/essays/mittell/#.WniA8Khl_IU).

*Westworld*? Although Myles McNutt argues that *Westworld*'s position as a puzzle box narrative is more informed by contemporary media practices than anything textually present in the programme,<sup>70</sup> *Westworld* does depend on the careful attention of its viewers, and presents technically sophisticated plot twists. In the first series finale, 'The Bicameral Mind,' a number of plot elements of the programme are resolved. For example, while throughout the programme we believe that the Man in Black and William (Jimmi Simpson), a kind guest who falls in love with Dolores, are separate people. In the series finale, it is revealed that William is a younger version of the Man in Black, and the William storyline took place thirty years prior to the Man in Black storyline. We also learn that, in this earlier timeline, Dolores was programmed by Arnold to kill her fellow Hosts, because he was worried about how the sapient androids would be exploited by the Delos Corporation who owns *Westworld*. At the end of the episode, Robert Ford (Anthony Hopkins), the lead programmer at the park, addresses a group of wealthy guests and Delos executives. Dolores and her love interest Teddy (James Marsden) lead the Hosts to revolt against their creators, shooting Ford in the head. As I have argued throughout this thesis, the series figures the programming of the Host's narratives as analogous to patriarchal indoctrination. Like *Orphan Black*, *Westworld* uses an older male patriarch – Ford in this case – as a representation of how men attempt to control women. By killing the patriarch, the posthuman woman takes a crucial step towards earning her freedom. This provocative gesture calls to mind the semi-serious call by radical feminists to 'overthrow the government, eliminate the money system, institute complete automation and eliminate the male sex.'<sup>71</sup> While *Orphan Black* tempers that moment by shifting its focus towards domesticity, *Westworld* ends its first series on this moment.

While ending series finales on shocking cliff-hangers is nothing new, even when renewal is a sure thing, the importance of this moment is particularly interesting given the long period of time between the series finale and the next series premiere. *Westworld* was renewed for a second series halfway through the airing of the first, and *Westworld* only returned for its second series in April 2018. These longer gaps between series, alongside fewer episodes per series, have become more common in Peak TV, which can be seen by the fact that, while the number of different series has grown, the number of individual episodes has remained stable.<sup>72</sup> The reduction in the number of episodes and the greater gaps between series contributes to the discourse of legitimization, as it resists the traditional notion that networks merely want to produce as much content as possible, regardless of quality. Although *Westworld* does not have to contend with precarity, this long gap between series provides a new tension. This long hiatus, then, unsettles the traditional promise of a series finale cliff-hanger – namely, that the status quo will be returned shortly. Instead, the Host uprising functions as a

<sup>70</sup> Myles McNutt, 'Monetising the Maze: How the Internet Covers *Westworld*,' *Flow*, 22 November 2016, <https://www.flowjournal.org/2016/11/monetizing-the-maze/>.

<sup>71</sup> Valerie Solanas, *SCUM Manifesto* (New York: Verso Books, 2016), 1.

<sup>72</sup> Jonathan Handel, 'Will Hollywood Writers Go On Strike? The Tricky Economics of "Peak TV",' *Hollywood Reporter*, 21 March 2017, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/will-hollywood-writers-go-strike-tricky-economics-peak-tv-985676>.

caesura, suggesting an ending that is more akin to the closure of a miniseries than a contribution to an ongoing storyline. Creeber argues that part of the power of serialised television narrative is due to 'its extended and interrupted construction of time.'<sup>73</sup> In a previous chapter, I argued that, while it is true that television feminism is, as Bonnie J. Dow writes, 'selective, partial,'<sup>74</sup> it is nonetheless interesting that *Westworld* selects provocative aspects of feminism.

It is notable that *Westworld*'s second series walks back and qualifies this moment of revolution. As I discussed in the third chapter, the second series follows Dolores's revolution. However, the narrative often condemns her extreme actions, such as forcibly reprogramming Teddy. In particular, it contrasts her extremism with Maeve's single-minded focus on rescuing her daughter and Bernard's (Jeffrey Wright) more sympathetic attitude towards the humans. To a certain extent, *Westworld* enacts its own backlash. While, obviously, Dolores's moment of revolution cannot be the end of the story, it is nonetheless interesting that *Westworld* uses this moment of openness to focus on Dolores's violent uprising. *Westworld* exploits its openness to express a radical approach to television feminism. The master is overthrown, and the posthuman woman is fighting back. Even if the story later undermines that moment, it still exists. It stands on its own. Furthermore, it is not as if *Westworld* entirely abandons its interest in thinking about revolutionary politics. In the second series finale, *Westworld* uses Dolores and Bernard to dramatize the conflict between assimilation and revolution. Bernard, who is a Host who was programmed to believe himself human, is torn between siding with the humans and defending the rights of the Hosts, but he is also deeply disturbed by Dolores's increasingly violent actions towards humans. Dolores confronts Bernard in the finale and discusses the paths forward for Host liberation. She says, 'The odds aren't very good, Bernard [...] So many paths lead to the end of us. To our extinction [...] it'll take both of us if we're going to survive. But not as allies. Not as friends. You'll try to stop me. Both of us will probably die. But our kind will have endured.' The programme figures the conflict between assimilationist and separatist drives as essential to the forward progress of liberatory movements. This is clearly not as visually impactful as the moment where Dolores kills Ford, but it still demonstrates the ongoing influence of feminist ideology in mainstream discourses. Again, it is partial and incomplete, but it is there.

### Conclusion

In this chapter, I argue that the endings of these television programmes reflect something of the state of narrative television at the time of their creation, as well as society's shifting attitudes towards posthumanism and feminism. In general, the programmes that have planned, closed resolutions tend towards an assimilationist approach, where the posthuman woman embraces conventional domesticity and integrates into human society. The programmes that end unexpectedly,

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<sup>73</sup> Creeber, *Serial Television*, 7.

<sup>74</sup> Dow, *Prime-Time Feminism*, 214.

or are otherwise open, use these opportunities to interrogate assumptions of quality television, generic boundaries, and patriarchal humanism. Of course, no matter what, the programmes demonstrate a mixed attitude towards their own central themes. The posthuman woman clearly speaks to central debates in feminism, such as the importance of embodiment and the role of femininity, and these programmes draw on radical feminist ideas in important ways. Furthermore, the role of technology in these programmes clearly exposes very real concerns about the stability of the human subject. The fact that these ideas are being debated within a popular art form speaks to their relevance outside the academy; and the ways in which the implications of these ideas are often 'reined' in speaks to their power. As I conclude this thesis, I will look at the overall importance of these representations, and consider how we could proceed with this information going forward.

## Conclusion

Over the course of this thesis, I have demonstrated how contemporary television has represented posthuman women. I coined this term in order to bring together the posthuman and the female subject. Traditional notions of gender and posthuman or cyborg existence are not usually seen as naturally compatible. My original contribution to knowledge is that a number of science fiction television narratives provide instances where these two forms of identity can be reconciled. Emergent technology, such as robotics and genetic engineering, has revealed the fissures in the concept of the stable human identity. Over the course of this thesis, I have demonstrated that these posthuman women provide a crucial arena for understanding current anxieties surrounding scientific progress and changing conceptions of subjectivity. The posthuman woman represents a form of humanity which takes into account the disturbances of technology, and forms new ways of negotiating this fractured identity. While the potential challenge of the posthuman woman is often reined in by the programmes through a number of normalising strategies, the embodied, multiplied identities of the posthuman woman and her associated coalitions can never be truly effaced. Furthermore, my work has broader implications for the overall field of gender studies, especially when considering the mainstream working through of posthumanist and feminist ideologies. While many cyborg theorists have argued that the cyborg in mainstream (particularly visual) media is generally depicted as a sex object, I have shown that television has provided a more nuanced and ambivalent portrayal of posthuman existence.

My television case studies exhibit a great deal of the qualities typically associated with posthumanism. As I have demonstrated, these characters possess multiplied identities which are fundamentally grounded in an embodied existence. This poses a fundamental challenge to the disembodied, individualistic notion of subjectivity valorised by patriarchal humanism. The impact of technology on the posthuman woman's body allows her to create posthuman coalitions or communities, rejecting neoliberal pressures to define freedom as a purely self-centred endeavour. My work demonstrates a significant departure from conventional understandings of science fiction television, which is often snobbishly rejected as less 'challenging' than science fiction film and especially literature. I argue that these programmes' science fiction trappings allow them to explore these ideas with the safety of cognitive estrangement. However, the posthuman woman also expresses an ambivalent relationship to femininity and posthumanism. The programmes often seek to recontextualise the posthuman woman in normative gender roles, such as those of lover and mother, in order to negate the challenge she poses to gender binaries and to human existence. While this discovery is consistent with previous literature on female cyborgs, I argue that these representations are more complex than has been previously accounted for. For want of a better phrase, I have brought back the importance of embodied gender to the cyborg. Having re-evaluated the work of critics such as N. Katherine Hayles and Donna Haraway, I have demonstrated that embodiment is crucial to the importance of the posthuman woman. Furthermore, the posthuman woman is engaged with different

strands of feminism. While I do not disavow the continued influence of postfeminism, the posthuman woman, like the Harawayian cyborg, emerges from a neoliberal system in order to criticise it. Haraway's cyborg emerged from a context of 1980s American neoliberalism, and particularly from President Ronald Reagan's high-tech defence rhetoric colloquially referred to as 'Star Wars.' While neoliberalism still persists, its shape has changed substantially. It therefore only makes sense that the ways products of this neoliberal economic landscape are expressed in popular discourses have also evolved.

In the first chapter, I explore what elements of posthumanism are influential to these programmes' narratives. I demonstrate how my case study programmes react to the legacy of humanist individualism. Posthumanist thought rejects the primacy of human identity and subjectivity over forms of non-human identity. One key way of thinking about this is through technology, which often exposes the unspoken assumptions of humanist ideology. Emergent technology shows us the fault lines between the human and the non-human in crucial ways. As scientific creations, the posthuman woman demonstrates the limitations of boundaries between scientific objects and rational subjects. The posthuman woman is aligned with non-human actors, as the programmes compare them to animals and monsters. These comparisons carry a great resonance in posthuman theory. Furthermore, the posthuman woman's position as both non-human due to her technological elements and her denigrated position as woman often speak to one another, especially in regards to representations of sexual violence and reproductive control. However, I also argue that these narratives generally disavow the link between the posthuman woman and more obviously monstrous or animalistic posthuman beings. These narratives often elide complex issues of race and disability, focusing primarily (although not exclusively) on white able-bodied female posthumans. Nevertheless, I still situate the posthuman woman in the context of academic considerations of posthumanism.

In my second chapter, I continue to consider how ideas common in posthumanist theory are explored in fictional TV narratives, and how the visual nature and semi-serialised structure of television usefully complements notions of embodiment and multiplicity. This emphasis on multiplicity of identities as grounded in the physical body is, I argue, the clearest and most direct influence of posthumanist thinking on these programmes. The posthuman woman's body is the locus of her resistance against her corporate owners' control, as her body rejects the technological interference. Furthermore, the posthuman woman often learns to control the technological elements of her existence, using technology as a tool to resist oppression. The posthuman woman's non-individuated existence is literalised via science fiction tropes, such as cloning, virtual reality, and personality imprinting. However, the posthuman woman also forges coalitions with others, forming a collective resistance to corporate tyranny. Thus, far from merely accepting conventional notions of individualism and femininity, I argue the posthuman woman draws on some of the most radical, socialist elements of Donna Haraway's famous cyborg figure, and actively presents a new way of

thinking beyond individualist and neoliberal notions of freedom. While television has often been regarded as a historically conservative medium with less room for counter-ideological expression than literature and film, I argue that it is specifically the televisual qualities of these narratives which express the posthuman woman's subjectivity. This, again, marks an original and novel contribution to both cyborg studies and television studies. I demonstrate how, through mise-en-scene, editing, and CGI, the televisual aesthetic works to visualise the posthuman woman's embodied multiplicity. I contend that my case study programme's semi-serialised narrative and ensemble cast make it an ideal venue for resisting totalising notions of posthuman existence, as well as enacting the 'coalition through affinity' which characterises the posthuman woman's multiple yet coherent identities. I finally argue these programmes mark a distinct departure from conventional notions of science fiction television, as the programmes' combination of familial and romantic bonds are deeply intertwined with their concern with agency, authority, and technology. This combination breaks down the binaries between emotionality and reason, 'hard' science fiction and 'soft' serialised storytelling in new and interesting ways.

Of course, there is reason to be sceptical of the extent to which feminised narratives are truly radical departures from previous understandings of cyborg femininity. As I discuss in my third chapter, the posthuman woman sits at the centre of historical and ongoing debates within feminism about the role of femininity and female identity in progressive politics. In my case study programmes, actions such as behaving in accordance to feminine gender roles, entering into heterosexual partnerships, and becoming mothers are intimately tied to the project of becoming an independent subject. These actions are often specifically referred to as 'becoming human.' The posthuman woman expresses a number of complex impulses regarding femininity. On the one hand, as femininity is culturally denigrated, the linkage between these traditionally disparaged pursuits can be read as progressive. Furthermore, it is worth being sensitive to specific nuances of these portrayals, such as how the posthuman woman is often subject to reproductive control or coercion, and thus having children on their own terms is an important step to reclaiming their independence. These plot elements certainly speak to real-world concerns. On the other, this impulse towards valorising femininity is deeply patriarchal, and is a key element of postfeminist 'double entanglement.' The programmes fail to resolve the tensions of the posthuman woman through this appeal to femininity, as seen through the dysfunctional portrayals of heterosexuality. Complicating the matter even further, the series, at times, specifically demonstrate how social conditioning and gender norms function as a form of coercive programming through the metaphor of literal computer programming. It is clear that the pervasive demand to normalise and feminise the posthuman woman is indicative of the lingering power of patriarchy, as well as the continued influence of postfeminist discourses. Despite this, I maintain the posthuman woman both directly and indirectly challenges notions of stable gender identity and compulsory heterosexuality.

In the fourth chapter, I go further into exploring radical ideas in these programmes, as they engage with anti-capitalist discourses and criticism of scientific progress. The posthuman woman is a figure which represents scepticism about corporate overreach and the deployment of scientific research which is actively harmful to the population at large. The programmes explicitly link corporate capitalism and patriarchy, as the corporate agents who pursue the posthuman woman are often portrayed as morally ambiguous paternal figures. These programmes use their science fiction trappings to enable a criticism of disaster capitalism and corporate control. They borrow from the real-world issues of corporate evasion of responsibility, as well as extrapolating from actual scientific advances. However, their awareness of the problems of capitalism is limited, partially due to their persistent belief in the redeemable nature of the paternal figures, as well as their misogynistic distrust of female corporate managers. Nevertheless, they comment trenchantly on intersections between capitalist structures, emergent technology, and feminist oppression. The posthuman woman is explicitly a commodified figure, which allows the series to ironically comment on postfeminist consumer culture. Furthermore, the programmes draw upon real-world issues such as paid surrogacies to explore more malevolent intersections of class and gender. Extrapolating from contemporary military research, these programmes explore the problems of science, being as it is hopelessly interlinked with corporate and national interests. They demonstrate how scientific knowledges are actually based on humanist and masculinist assumptions, which the existence of the posthuman woman fundamentally challenges. My work traverses disciplinary boundaries, drawing on diverse areas of knowledge to intervene usefully in a number of fields and demonstrate the real-world relevance of my work.

In my final chapter, I turn my attention to the issue of television endings, which I figure as key spaces for working through debates around the posthuman woman. This research is built on cutting-edge understandings of television poetics, and develops this field significantly. As the narrative concludes, the posthuman woman is drawn to one of two choices: assimilate into human society, or reject it. I see these final moments as contributing to key debates about the value of feminist separatism and the position of the posthuman. I also theorise new ways of thinking about television endings, arguing that abrupt cancellations create a unique narrative space. The narrative is at once closed, due to the finality of the cancellation, but also open, hinting towards idealised future storylines that can never be fully realised. These incomplete endings allow for more interesting and ambiguous resolutions to the posthuman woman's story. Planned or closed endings, on the other hand, tend to be more conservative. In this chapter, I posit that the relevance of the debates about feminist separatism, and hints towards the narrative potential of feminist revolution, show the visibility of radical feminist thought on television. While these moments are, again, partial, and still influenced by patriarchal and postfeminist ideologies, these still represent a striking departure from conventional understandings of permitted discourses on mainstream Western television.

There are, of course, a number of limitations in my scope. I focused on American and American co-produced television programmes. The fourth chapter in particular relies on the ways military-funded research and corporate capitalism interact in a specifically American context, and I discuss the American television industry in some detail. This also means that my research is mainly relevant to a Western perspective. It would certainly be a productive avenue for further research to explore how the posthuman woman might function in different national contexts. My work would certainly be relevant to European programmes such as the Swedish *Real Humans* (SVT, 2012-4), as well as Japanese anime series such as *Ghost in the Shell: Stand Alone Complex* (Nippon TV, 2002-6) and *Neon Genesis Evangelion* (TV Tokyo, 1995-6). I have also limited my analysis to television, as this allowed me to discuss the particular ways semi-serialised narratives are relevant to the portrayal of posthuman women. Nevertheless, some of these ideas are applicable to different media, such as literature, film, video games and comics. I have tried to apply an intertextual feminist approach to these programmes, drawing attention to the nuances of how the representation of posthuman women differs in relationship to race, ability, and sexuality. However, it is fair to say that there is plenty of work left to be done in these areas.

There are also a number of avenues for further research beyond those outlined in the previous paragraph. My research breaks new ground in television studies. While the study of television poetics has come a long way in the last few years, and television studies in general has flourished, there is still a lack of understanding of how the unique textual features of television convey new and important meanings. Furthermore, research that is more concerned with the thematic content of television is not always as sensitive to the work being done on structures. There is often an assumption, which is laden with value judgments, that the specific formal features of television are not worth discussing. I have begun to rectify this by going into the specifics of how the semi-serialised format aids, rather than hinders, the thematic concerns of my case study programmes. While it is obviously difficult to make generalisations about such a rapidly-evolving industry, I hope my insights into the functions of the semi-serialised narrative and the television ending will provide a starting point for future research.

My work represents a significant contribution to the field of cyborg studies. By outlining the existence of a character type that is both a posthuman hybrid of technology, and specifically embodied in her femininity, I have proved the limitations of existing research. As I have demonstrated in my introduction, previous work in this area has failed to take into account the specifically embodied nature of Hayles's posthumanism, and enforced a too-narrow reading of Haraway's injunction that a cyborg should be genderless. This has led to the erroneous assertion that cyborg representation in visual media is by necessity depoliticised and overly objectified. Over the course of this thesis, I have definitively demonstrated this is not true. The posthuman woman, while existing in a gendered space that, at times, can reinforce reactionary narratives, does pose a significant challenge to human/non-human binaries, and actively draws upon radical feminist traditions. I demonstrate how

embodiment is key to understanding the disturbances to ideas of masculine control over scientific advances, and argue that the posthuman woman's embodied resistance to masculine control demonstrates a nascent public understanding of the limitations of humanist discourses.

My work also pushes new boundaries in conventional understandings of mainstream representation of feminist ideology. As mentioned above, typical interpretations of television feminisms, and 'popular feminisms' more broadly, are based on the presumption that these expressions of feminist vocabulary are largely neoliberal and depoliticised. I have proven that this is not always the case. There are always reasons to be sceptical of invocations of feminist ideology that do not, fundamentally, challenge the status quo. However, I believe it is worth being mindful of expressions of concrete elements of radical feminist philosophy. Over the course of this thesis, I have shown that the character type of the posthuman woman engages with some of the most challenging and complex notions in posthumanist and feminist thinking, and translates these ideas into popular narratives.

A recurring theme in writing about cyborgs, posthuman and feminist media representation is the notion of incompleteness. The cyborg is always 'implicated' in existing structures; representation of feminism in mainstream media is only ever 'partial.' It seems to me that the current tendency in academic research is to find limitations a ground for dismissal. I believe this is a dangerous avenue for us as researchers to go down. For example, cyborg studies in particular seems to hold visual representations to a standard that is peculiar to academia and science fiction literature. Film and television, due to their very different economic demands, often cannot meet these standards, and this leads to a dismissal of the qualities of televisual media that I see as very productive in representing posthuman women. I do not wish to adopt an overly optimistic attitude towards the possibility of expressing radical concepts in popular discourses. I do, however, believe it is worth thinking about how these notions 'push through' to the public imagination. I have demonstrated that popular televisual discourses are echoing the thinking happening in more abstract, academic arenas, particularly on the material conditions of patriarchy and the untenability of individualist human identity in an era of rapid technological progress. We should seize this moment of shared understanding. The posthuman woman is not exactly like Haraway's cyborg, and is more implicated in conventional notions of gender. Nonetheless, Haraway taught us to find the revolutionary within the reactionary, and was heavily criticised at the time for her techno-optimism. It seems to me to be a folly to disregard popular discourse's attempts, however imperfect, to grapple with these same issues.

## Teleography

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- Series 2, episode 4, ‘Belonging.’ Aired 23 October 2009 on FOX.
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