



'I Feel, Therefore I Am: Trauma, Memory and Posthuman Liberation in *Blade Runner* (1982) and *WestWorld* (2016)'

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I Feel, Therefore I Am: Trauma, Memory and Posthuman Liberation in *Blade Runner* (1982) and *WestWorld* (2016).

Dylan Phelan

Since the earliest days of Sci-Fi cinema and television, the posthuman subject has been a staple of the genre. As posthuman theorist Francesca Ferrando notes, the posthuman subject often serves as a metaphorical stand-in for traditionally marginalised groups.¹ Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982) is generally regarded as one of the genre's most influential films, particularly in terms of its portrayal of the posthuman subject. The dystopian world of *Blade Runner* is populated by a subordinate race of intelligent, humanoid robots, known as replicants. These replicants serve as a slave labour force, working on off-world colonies, or as sex workers, bound to serve humans. Rachael (played by Sean Young) is a more advanced model of replicant who initially believes she is human. Upon learning of her posthuman identity, Rachael is immediately subjected to a violent sexual assault at the hands of the Blade Runner, Rick Deckard.² Rachael's apparent lack of emotional response to this traumatic event denies her a degree of humanity, as her unfeeling nature likens her to a mere machine.

More recently, Lisa Joy and Johnathan Nolan's television series, *Westworld* (2016), features a similar posthuman subject. In this series, a theme park known as WestWorld invites human guests to experience a simulated wild-west. The park is staffed by a group of humanoid robots known as hosts. These hosts, while capable of

¹ Francesca Ferrando, 'Of Posthuman Born: Gender, Utopia and the Posthuman in films and TV' in *The Palgrave Handbook of Posthumanism in Film and Television*, ed. by Michael Hauskeller and others (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p.269.

² A bounty hunter charged with the termination of rogue replicants.

human-level intelligence, are kept subservient through careful coding and maintenance which denies them access to their own personalities and memories. The early episodes of the series follow the host, Dolores (played by Evan Rachel Wood), as she repeats the same daily routine, which frequently culminates in her sexual assault at the hands of human guests in the park. During these events Dolores is clearly distressed, as she attempts to fight off her attackers and cries for help. Despite this clear display of emotion, she awakens each day without any recollection of the attack, and is doomed to repeat the same cycle.

In both *Blade Runner* and *Westworld*, the posthuman subjects appear as humanoid androids or cyborgs and blur the lines between human and technology. This degree of liminality grants the posthuman an inherent ability to challenge the legitimacy of hierarchical binaries. The prominent posthumanist, Donna Haraway, problematises these binaries of anthropocentric thought, stating ‘the relation between organism and machine has been a border war’.³ Similarly, Rosi Braidotti describes how a posthuman subject’s liminality — that is, their existence between the binaries of human and machine — grants them an inherent ability to challenge and destabilise the hierarchical binaries of anthropocentric epistemology. Their subjectivity is no longer defined in opposition to another, but is instead ‘an affirmative bond that locates the subject in the flow of relations with multiple others’⁴. Despite this liberatory potential, filmic treatments of the posthuman often portrays them as unemotional or unfeeling, thereby denying them any association with humanity and re-establishing the binary division between human and machine.

The posthuman subject is often depicted as the victim of physical and sexual abuse at the hands of human characters, which is frequently legitimised by their

³ Donna Haraway, ‘A Manifesto for Cyborgs: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the 1980’s’, in *Thinking Gender*, ed. by Laura Nicholson. (New York and London: Routledge, 1990) p.194

⁴ Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013) p.50

supposed lack of emotion. This recurring theme of posthuman exploitation invites a reading which accounts for the influence of trauma in the portrayal of the posthuman in film and television. In the field of literary trauma theory, Cathy Caruth's Freudian model of trauma has been massively influential. While Caruth's theory relies on a broad Freudian framework, the crux of her argument rests on Sigmund Freud's notion of a necessary period of latency before a traumatic event can be revisited or represented. In his text, *Moses and Monotheism* (1939), Freud attempts to recontextualise the history of the Jewish people as a latent representation of trauma. Freud describes how, following an accident, one may appear unharmed, yet later develop physical and psychological symptoms. Indeed, Freud draws a direct connection between the latent experience of trauma and the representations of trauma in Jewish history.⁵

For Caruth, Freud's period of latency is vital in the literary representation of trauma, as she contends that trauma is not truly experienced as it occurs. She states, 'The historical power of the trauma is not just that the experience is repeated after its forgetting, but that it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it is first experienced at all'.⁶ Indeed, for Caruth, literary narratives of trauma can provide a contextual framework for understanding trauma, due to the inherent latency of literary representation. Consequently, Caruth's model of literary trauma theory is quite applicable to the analysis of the posthuman subject, as the necessary period of latency may account for the frequent portrayal of the posthuman subject as unfeeling or emotionless during and immediately after a traumatic event. Moreover, such an understanding of trauma challenges the posthuman's characterisation as unfeeling, as they are seen to process trauma in the same manner as humans.

⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Sigmund Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964). p 67-68.

⁶ Cathy Caruth, "Unclaimed Experience: Trauma and the Possibility of History", *Yale French Studies*, 79 (1991) p.187.

However, more recent contributions to the field of trauma theory appear to offer a more productive model of analysis of posthuman trauma. One such approach is Michael Rothberg's theory of multi-directional memory.⁷ This postcolonial approach departs significantly from Caruth's earlier model, as it foregrounds the historical trauma of marginalised groups, who have been denied adequate historical representation. In Rothberg's model, the historical representation of the trauma of the oppressed is shown to destabilise the repressive influence of imperialist histories. Considering the aforementioned tendency of film and television to portray the posthuman as a proxy for such groups, this model provides a critical foundation for discussing posthuman trauma that is more applicable to the radical liminality of the cyborg. Using a theoretical approach which combines posthuman theory and literary trauma theory, this article will examine the unfeeling nature of the posthuman subject, as it is portrayed in film and television, and how this trauma, paradoxically, leads to the formation of memory and consciousness in the posthuman subjects in *WestWorld* and *Blade Runner*. The works will first be discussed according to Caruth's more traditional and then Rothberg's postcolonial approach to trauma theory.

Considering the frequent objectification, sexualisation, and subsequent "Othering"⁸ of posthuman subjects in *WestWorld* and *Blade Runner*, it is unsurprising that these characters are often the victims of sexual violence. Indeed, the early episodes of *WestWorld* revolve around the main character Dolores as she endures a repeated pattern of sexual assault. *Blade Runner* shares a similar trend, as the female replicants often serve as 'pleasure models'.⁹ This highlights a problematic

⁷ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009) p.5.

⁸ For this context of Othering, see: Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1989).

⁹ *Blade Runner* dir. by Ridley Scott (Warner Bros, 1982).

theme of posthuman portrayal in film and television, as characters such as Rachael and Dolores are framed as an easily categorised Other, thus removing their transgressive liminality and maintaining a traditional sense of humanistic hierarchy. The ease with which such portrayals may be accepted by the audience is aided by the posthuman's apparently unfeeling response to this trauma, as depicted in *Westworld* through Dolores's desire to 'Always see the beauty. To believe there is an order to our days, a purpose,'¹⁰ despite the pattern of repeated trauma she endures. While Dolores's traumatic experiences grant her sympathy from viewers, as well as animosity towards her rapists, her initial lack of response to said trauma denies her access to an affinity with the show's human characters. Indeed, it is this lack of affinity which solidifies her status as Other, thus maintaining the anthropocentric border between human and machine.

In her study of trauma theory, Caruth describes trauma as something which, at the moment of experience, is so overwhelming that it becomes incomprehensible. It is only after a period of latency and reflection that the traumatic event can be processed and becomes representable.¹¹ Such a description of trauma appears to conform with the early narrative arc of *WestWorld's* Dolores, as her repeated daily routine frequently ends with her being sexually assaulted by various park guests. This repetitive experience of trauma is compounded by the establishing shots of Dolores waking in her bed, smiling, and blissfully unaware of her past and future abuses. Dolores's inability to comprehend and articulate a response to her trauma, in line with Caruth's description, masks the physical and psychological effects of her experience, casting her as the unfeeling machine and denying any empathetic response from the show's human characters. This is highlighted through frequent

¹⁰ *Westworld* dir. by Lisa Joy and Jonathan Nolan (HBO, 2016).

¹¹ Caruth p.181.

interactions with the park guests who willingly partake in these violent acts.

Similarly, Dolores's association with the unfeeling machine seems to place her at one side of the human/machine binary, diluting the posthuman's radical potential for liberation from oppression and exploitation.

Such an understanding of the latent representation of trauma is similarly helpful in understanding the characterisation of Rachael in *Blade Runner*, as her apparent acquiescence to gendered hierarchy can be read as a reaction to her experience of trauma. While Rachael is a replicant, she is a more advanced model who believes she is human due to a set of implanted memories which serve as a basis for her supposed childhood. In a similar manner to Dolores, Rachael's traumatic experience comes in the form of violent sexual assault. Soon after Deckard reveals the fact that she is a replicant, Rachael is visibly distraught. As she attempts to leave his apartment, Deckard slams the door and pushes her against the wall. Deckard instructs her to say 'kiss me' and 'say you want me'.¹² At this point, the tense drone of the soundtrack shifts to a gentle saxophone, a common trope of noir sex scenes. This mirrors a shift from the tense ambiguity of Rachael's liminal existence, between human and machine, to a traditionally gendered power dynamic.

This restrictive gendering is noted as a potential problem by Braidotti, who states, 'Gender is just a historically contingent mechanism of capture of the multiple potentialities of the body'.¹³ For Braidotti, this is something which the posthuman seeks to challenge. Yet, the posthuman's ability to subvert traditional hierarchies is stifled by Rachael's embodiment of the submissive female trope. Consequently, the once dangerous, threatening presence of the liminal subject has been subdued by sexual conquest, and Rachael can now be categorised as the female Other. Similar to

¹² *Blade Runner*. 1982

¹³ Braidotti p.106

Dolores's Othering, Rachael's amalgamation into a gendered hierarchy serves to dilute the liberatory potential of her liminality.

Rachael's apparent acquiescence in this scene could certainly be understood as a representation of Caruth's description of trauma.¹⁴ Indeed, Rachael's journey to this point has been one of significant trauma: not only has she experienced a sexual assault, but she has also had her childhood and identity brought into question. Consequently, it is unsurprising that she falls neatly into a traditionally gendered hierarchy; due to the overwhelming nature of said trauma, she is unable to articulate any coherent response to these events at the time of occurrence. Additionally, this unfeeling acquiescence is taken as a form of implied consent by both Deckard and the audience. Consequently, Rachael is denied an empathetic response from the audience, as her unfeeling portrayal is taken as the robotic actions of a machine.

These portrayals of posthuman trauma appear to firmly cast the posthuman subject in the role of the unfeeling machine. However, this view is complicated by the role of trauma in memory formation, as the processing of traumatic memory formation appears to require a degree of cognitive mutability. In line with Caruth's description of the effects of trauma on memory — the latent recontextualisation of events, often re-created long after the fact — researcher in apocalyptic fiction Aris Mousoutzanis notes that the depiction of memory in *Blade Runner* actually serves to deconstruct the division between human and machine. He notes that the film portrays two distinct types of memory: static and transient. The static memory, he notes, refers to the replicants' implanted memories, portrayed through Rachael's childhood photograph. By contrast, transient memory is seen as more human, as 'human memory itself was theorised by Freud as malleable, subject to revision, and

¹⁴ "An overwhelming experience of sudden, or catastrophic events, in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed", Caruth p.181

reconstructed retrospectively'.¹⁵ While Freudian theories of memory are often regarded as outdated, this binary model of separation is useful in highlighting the posthuman's ability to challenge such notions of hierarchical division.

Indeed, this division of memory is challenged at the climax of *Blade Runner*, as Roy Batty (played by Rutger Hauer), in his dying moments, uses his last words to convey his real memories from his life as a replicant. He tells Deckard that 'all those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain'.¹⁶ The camera lingers on a close-up of Roy, intermittently cutting to reaction shots of Deckard. The cinematography here grants Roy a significant degree of agency, as the scene centres around his lived experience as a slave. The cuts between close-ups of Roy and Deckard also suggest a tangible affinity between the two, based on a shared sense of humanity. It is fitting that this climactic scene features a portrayal of transient memory, as this is central to Roy's categorisation as human: his ability to recontextualise memory and give it a poignant significance. This sympathetic portrayal of the posthuman subject grants them far more affinity from a human audience. Indeed, in contrast to the replicants' initial framing as cold, unfeeling killers, the representation of memory as fractious, transient and mutable bears a distinct resemblance to the way in which the human mind processes trauma. As a result, this greater level of affinity with these machines allows for a recontextualisation of the superficial and anthropocentric binary between human and machine on the part of the audience. This binary separation can be bridged by a representation of posthuman trauma which highlights the mutability of the posthuman mind.

Roy's climactic monologue is similarly important in highlighting the way in which memory can be used as a site of rebellion for the posthuman subject. In

¹⁵ Aris Mousoutzanis, 'Trauma, Memory and Information in American Sf Film and Television, 1980-2010', *Science Fiction Film and Television*, 6.3 (2013), 327-358 (p.355)

¹⁶ *Blade Runner*, 1982.

describing the initial framing of the replicants as unfeeling and robotic, Science Fiction theorist Benjamin Schrader notes how they are explicitly valued for their distinctly non-human ability to separate traumatic experience from internal memory.¹⁷ Indeed, the replicants of *Blade Runner* serve as sex workers, soldiers or slave labour, fitting Haraway's description of the cyborg's origin. Haraway states that the cyborgs 'are the illegitimate offspring of militarism and patriarchal capitalism [...] but illegitimate offspring are often exceedingly unfaithful to their origins'.¹⁸ This highlights the degree to which the posthuman subject is valued for its subservient, non-human status. However, as the film's narrative progresses, the audience is introduced to replicants whose relationship with memory is less one-sided.

Rachael has been created with the real, though implanted memories of Tyrell's niece. As a result of this, she believes she is human, a point which also makes it more difficult for Deckard to determine her nature through the Voight-Kampff test.¹⁹ Deckard's memory similarly challenges the narrative of human/machine binary, as he has the distinct memory of a unicorn running through woods, leading him to question his own identity, as this memory appears to be implanted and fictitious. Finally, through Roy's climactic monologue, memory is shown to be something which he fully controls, as he describes his life events and forms his own version of history. According to Schrader, this use of memory is ultimately what allows for the replicants' attainment of consciousness and subsequent rebellion.

Schrader describes how memory, particularly collective memory based on trauma, can be used as a site of resistance which can challenge the dominant narrative of history. He states, 'It is within this collective trauma that is passed down through memories that cyborgs are experiencing intergenerational trauma, because

¹⁷ Benjamin Schrader, 'Cyborgian Self-Awareness: Trauma and Memory in *Blade Runner* and *Westworld*', *Theory & Event*, 22.4 (2019) p.822.

¹⁸ Haraway p.193.

¹⁹ A test administered to determine whether or not a subject is a replicant.

while they may not have parents, there are points of reference that establish moral boundaries upon which cyborgs are able to reflect'.²⁰ Consequently, this reclamation of memory serves as much more than a construction of a personal narrative. Instead, through the construction and representation of collective trauma, Roy's memory represents a means to challenge the very nature of posthuman subservience and historical inequality.

The role of memory, particularly traumatic memory, in *WestWorld* is similarly disruptive to the human/machine binary, as it appears to enable a sense of autonomy and liberation in the posthuman. In her description of the liberatory potential of remembered trauma, film and literary critic, Carol Erwin, describes how the programmers' introduction of 'reveries,' a type of preconscious ability to recontextualise old memories, grants the android hosts the necessary period of latent reflection to process their trauma.²¹ As a result, the hosts are then able to create a sense of self identity, as they seek to liberate themselves from said trauma. Erwin states, 'Dolores does not gain clarity until she makes her own conscious choice to wage war against the company and to reclaim her world through violence. She re-appropriates her private reveries of the Man in Black's physical and sexual abuse to justify her public act of violence'.²²

Dolores's traumatic memory is not static and is made manifest through corporeal reactions to remembered events. In episode three of *Westworld*, Dolores seems to recall a previous sexual assault through her corporeal memory. This type of memory appears to enable Dolores to bypass the coded behaviours of her mind. In this scene, Dolores is dragged into a barn and thrown on top of a pile of hay by

²⁰ Schrader p.824.

²¹ Carol Erwin, 'The Frontier Myth of Memory, Dreams, and Trauma in Westworld', in *Reading Westworld*, ed. by Alex Goody and Antonia Mackay (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019) p.133.

²² *Ibid.*, p.133.

another host as part of her story line. This mirrors a scene in episode one in which a human guest assaults her in the same way. Dolores then picks up a gun (which she initially discovers in episode two) from the hay pile, indicating that she had placed it there herself in preparation for the next, inevitable assault. The scene cuts quickly between William and the host standing in the same position, mirroring the similarity of the two assaults, creating a type of bodily anamnesis for Dolores. This corporeal awareness triggers her memory of previous trauma and allows her to overcome her coded behaviour which keeps her within a loop of sexual abuse.

This depiction of transient memory, as a result of trauma, not only conforms to Caruth's theory but also appears to challenge the unfeeling nature of the posthuman subject. While the apparent necessity of trauma, as a means to construct self identity and consciousness, is regressively Freudian,²³ the posthuman's evolution, from an unfeeling machine to a complex and self aware intelligence, remains relevant in a discussion of its ability to transcend traditional anthropocentric binaries.

While the posthuman body appears to hold some unalterable capacity for memory, particularly traumatic memory, it is not until these posthuman characters are able to build a collective consciousness of cultural trauma that their potential can be realised. Sociologist, Jeffrey Alexander notes the importance of the association between cultural trauma and collective memory as a means of unifying oppressed groups.²⁴ Similarly, Benjamin Schrader also discusses how, in both *Blade Runner* and *Westworld*, the posthuman characters, once aware of their individual trauma, are able to construct a collective trauma which defines them as a community.²⁵ This relates to Haraway's discussion of memory and the cyborgs' ability to become a

²³ As Freudian theories on identity formation frequently depend on the analysis of childhood trauma.

²⁴ Jeffrey Alexander, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (University of California Press, 2004)

²⁵ Schrader p. 133.

unifying force through communal consciousness, since this collective memory can provide a counter narrative to the oppressive categories of dominant history.

Schrader further notes the danger this collective trauma poses to an established order, which is built upon the subservience of posthuman characters.²⁶

The radical potential of collective memory is shown clearly through the host rebellion in *Westworld*, led by Dolores and Maeve (played by Thandiwe Newton), two characters who begin to find an affinity with their exploited kin. Their posthuman difference, once used as a means of sexual exploitation, becomes the basis of their liberation and ultimately helps them to realise their potential as they dismantle established systems of dominance. In this sense, the hosts are not bound by culture, race or gender. Instead, they are unified by their ability to transgress binaries, their nomadic identities allowing for a much more productive unification. Maeve in particular is able to alter her code so that she is able to bring about consciousness in other hosts. This use of the posthuman mind allows her exploited kin to achieve consciousness and become aware of their oppression, allowing them to strive for liberation based on the construction of communal consciousness.

While remembered trauma is imperative to the challenging of oppressive regimes in both texts, it is also important that the posthuman does not merely reinstate the same binary opposition it seeks to subvert. Considering Braidotti's warning against posthumanism simply regressing toward the same binary principles of humanism,²⁷ the need for true posthuman potential becomes clear. Dolores, once an exploited android, becomes a violent gunslinger with agency, a character who is willing to abandon the posthuman ideals as discussed by Haraway,²⁸ in order to exact her revenge on her human abusers. Commenting on the depiction of sexual

²⁶ Ibid., p.134.

²⁷ Braidotti p.25

²⁸ Haraway p.21.

assault in *Westworld*, Erwin writes that ‘until we as a society are able to commemorate the trauma of sexual assault without resorting to blame and violence, we will most likely be unable to “see” non-consensual assault and its far-reaching effects on gender codes’.²⁹ Erwin’s statement problematises the compulsion to ignore the actual implication of sexual assault instead of recognize its true effects. It also highlights the problem of understanding sexual trauma as a trigger for consciousness, as this prerequisite is regressively Freudian.³⁰ The apparent necessity of a traumatic event in triggering identity formation and posthuman consciousness severely dilutes the radical liminality of the posthuman. Indeed, Dolores’s character development, while granting her more agency, exposes the danger of an identity based on trauma, as she appears to perpetuate the cycle of violence and trauma.

The representations of trauma in these texts tend towards anti-humanism, which relies on the same problematic binaries as humanism, as seen through the violent rebellions of both *Blade Runner* and *Westworld*. While this grants a degree of agency to the posthuman, they remain Othered by their opposition. Yet, this is not the fault of the posthuman subject and is instead a symptom of our society’s deep reliance on humanistic binaries. Our portrayal of the posthuman subject requires that they repeat the same patterns they seek to disrupt, as to do otherwise would threaten the very basis of the film and television industry itself. Indeed, as the post-Marxist theorists, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer note, the media industry, with its persistent drive for mass appeal, is adverse to the portrayal of truly transgressive subjects.³¹ Consequently, the reliance of the industry on traditional Freudian and anthropocentric representations of trauma is unsurprising, as the aforementioned tendency towards anti-humanism remains in keeping with the

²⁹ Erwin, p.138

³⁰ Where current behaviours are seen as a consequence of past or childhood trauma.

³¹ Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* trans by Edmund Jephcott. (Stanford university press: Stanford, 2002) p.101

tenets of anthropocentrism. As cinema must appeal to a mainstream audience, to portray the subversive potential of the posthuman would be problematic for the industry itself.

While the traditional approach to trauma theory, proposed by Caruth, is certainly helpful in understanding the posthuman subject's filmic portrayal as unfeeling, the theory's reliance on a psychoanalytic, Freudian framework reduces the scope of analysis by reinforcing an anthropocentric and humanistic understanding of trauma and consciousness. Indeed, the modern field of trauma studies has moved away from said Freudian model. Specifically, Rothberg's concept of multi-directional memory challenges the notion of collective memory as a competitive or counter narrative to imperialist history.³² Instead, it is through the amalgamation of these histories that memory gains the ability to destabilise dominant narratives and synthesise new understandings of cultural trauma.

Considering this view of memory in relation to *Blade Runner's* protagonist, Deckard, the way in which he begins to question his humanity could be seen as a result of his interactions with the replicant, Rachael. According to Francesca Ferrando, the close relationships and conflicting narratives, shared by humans and posthumans have the ability to 'transform both subjectivities'.³³ For Ferrando, these dynamic relationships are vital in the recontextualisation of the human/machine binary. Over the course of the film, Deckard's certainty about his humanity becomes increasingly fragile, as he is presented with the almost-human Rachael. Her implanted memories mirror his own unicorn dreams in a way that forces him to question the validity of his own memory. Consequently, the dynamic nature of

³² Rothberg, p.37

³³ Ferrando, p.276.

memory is highlighted, as, through the counter narrative of the replicant's collective memory, the apparent historical fact of Deckard's memory is disturbed.

This approach to trauma and memory allows for a more productive reading of the initial framing of the replicants as unfeeling, for such a separation between human and machine can only be maintained by discounting the lived experience of posthuman subjects. Indeed, as both texts highlight, the posthuman's ability to recontextualise past events and construct a counter narrative provides not only a means to construct a group identity, but also a means to establish a tangible connection to a shared history.

The productivity of Rothberg's model of multi-directional memory becomes more apparent when one considers the existing power structures of these dystopian texts. In both texts, the presence of sentient androids threatens the traditional, anthropocentric view of life and destabilises any concrete sense of human exceptionalism. In the world of *Blade Runner* (1982), this threat is more apparent, as those humans with the means to do so have left the planet to live 'off-world'. Consequently, those who are left behind suffer the traumatic experience of a lack of human exceptionalism, as they inhabit a world which has suffered a complete ecological breakdown and is populated by a new species of equal intelligence. As a result of this threat, the humans of this world must consistently Other their android counterparts. As Sci-fi critic, Tony M. Vinci, states, 'Within this biopolitical arena, humans suspend traumatic experience by classifying both androids and animals as scapegoats. In order to keep the myth of human exceptionalism alive, androids must remain culturally and ontologically marginalized, enabling a cultural displacement of the inherent absence in the human onto the android'³⁴.

³⁴ Tony M. Vinci, 'Posthuman Wounds: Trauma, Non-Anthropocentric Vulnerability, and the Human/Android/Animal Dynamic in Philip K. Dick's "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?"', *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 47.2 (2014), p.93.

Considering this imbalance, the trauma and collective memory of the film's posthuman subjects is persistently ignored, in order to maintain this depleted sense of exceptionalism. Ignorance of posthuman trauma is evident through the general acceptance of replicant slavery and exploitation. In the film's opening scenes, the character Pris (played by Daryl Hannah) is described to Deckard as 'a basic pleasure model.' Similarly, when Rachael is introduced as a replicant who believes she is human, both Deckard and Tyrell (played by Joe Turkel), her creator, treat this level of sentience as a mere curiosity, highlighting the apparent need to ignore the trauma of the Other in order to maintain a safe distance from their own traumatic existence. Returning to Roy Batty's climactic monologue, it is not until Deckard has experienced this posthuman trauma firsthand, through his relationship with Rachael, and his own potential replicant identity, that he is able to comprehend the significance of Roy's personal account of his trauma and history. It is through the amalgamation of these traumatic histories that a greater level of affinity is granted to the posthuman subject. In contrast to the unfeeling machine, the posthuman subject's ability to process trauma becomes a defining characteristic in their fight for liberation.

Despite the general trend in literary trauma theory, which has moved on from Freudian models, Caruth's theory remains exceedingly fruitful in analysing the trauma and exploitation of the posthuman subject. Her Freudian theory of a necessary period of latency in the processing of trauma aligns quite well with the depiction of trauma in these texts. Moreover, her assertion that trauma is not actually experienced at the moment of occurrence provides a suitable justification for the portrayal of the posthuman as unfeeling and robotic. However, Caruth's model of trauma still perpetuates a problematic notion of anthropocentrism, as the prerequisite of trauma in identity formation perpetuates oppositional connotations

within the posthuman subject's newly formed identity. In contrast, Rothberg's theory of multi-directional memory foregrounds a non-oppositional approach to the development of collective memory which seeks to disrupt the oppressive qualities of dominant narratives. In an analysis of posthuman trauma and identity formation, Rothberg's model refrains from analysing the posthuman in anthropocentric, oppositional terms. Consequently, while trauma remains important in the formation of collective identity, it does not become its defining feature.

In both texts, the exploitation and sexual abuse suffered by the posthuman subject not only reinforces the human/machine binary, but also serves to alleviate a failing sense of human exceptionalism. Consequently, it is this division which must be tackled in order for the posthuman to achieve its liberation. The ability of these characters to construct an identity, both personal and collective, based on a shared experience of trauma is vital in countering this problematic division, as it displays a type of memory which is as transient and mutable as that of any human. As a result, it is the greater level of affinity between human and android that allows for the destabilising of this traditional division, rather than perpetuating cyclical violence and opposition. Indeed, it appears necessary that posthuman identity formation must not be categorised by a traditionally humanistic notion of trauma, lest 'these violent delights have violent ends'.³⁵

Through the collective identity and cultural trauma of the marginalised, the posthuman subject can counter the historical narrative of self-justified exploitation. Similarly, the amalgamation of these histories, as well as the close relationships between human and posthuman subjects allow for the construction of identities which are not based on anthropocentric binaries. The greater level of affinity between humans and androids makes such binaries exceedingly redundant.

³⁵ *Westworld* dir. by Lisa Joy and Jonathan Nolan (HBO, 2016).