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## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Complex TV: On the Increase of Ambitions in Contemporary TV Series**

The main purpose of my thesis is to prove that it is genuinely possible to speak of artistic complexity in some contemporary TV series. The theoretical part of my thesis presents definitions and scholarly approaches towards defining art, aesthetics, formal properties of art, the history of the development of TV series, differences between standard and contemporary television programmes, and to the thematic preoccupations of the TV series. Also, I include examples of crucial TV texts, a list of example features of highbrow TV narratives, and a definition of dystopia. The analytical part of my work is focused on *Westworld*, an outstanding contemporary TV series that serves as an example to prove my thesis. I shall analyse it from a narratological perspective in order to show its multilevel narration, as well as to discuss its themes and motifs, and its dystopian features.

### **1.2. Definition of Art**

The etymology of the word “art” suggests that art is every product of human mastery, a result of acquiring knowledge and perfecting certain skills. ("Art | Origin And Meaning Of Art By Online Etymology Dictionary") Undoubtedly, this broadest definition can potentially accommodate other, more progressive approaches responding to subsequent cultural developments. The emergence of new artistic concepts is frequently followed by acknowledging them as a new type of art; still, the underestimating of new manifestations of art is a frequent occurrence, and as such might often be treated as a misunderstanding of the essential characteristics of art itself. According to Cambridge Dictionary, art shall be defined as “the making of objects, images, music, etc. that are beautiful or that express feelings.” ("Art")

This definition suggests that art is the process of making artistic objects and, at the same time, that the skills and techniques used to create art should not be separated from the full understanding of the definition. Not only the result of creation but also the process of making art and the tools used in that process should be considered together as art. The definition further explains that art is also “an activity through which people express particular ideas.” (Dictionary)

This part of definition introduces the author and stresses his role in the process of making meaningful art – he expresses himself, which in the context of art should be understood as for instance expressing his feelings, commenting, giving opinions and points of view, agreeing or disagreeing with certain notions. “The conscious use of the imagination in the production of objects intended to be contemplated or appreciated as beautiful, as in the arrangement of forms, sounds, or words” (“Art”) – this definition mentions another important issue concerning the art – the arrangement of forms regarding the usage of already existing forms and patterns, schemes, systematised rules, procedures and formulations in its broadest sense. Also, encouraging the audience to actively take part in the analysis of artistic concepts and making certain impressions is what authors are entitled to do according to the definition.

### **1.3. Russian Formalism on Art**

Russian Formalism offered one of the most significant approaches towards art criticism and towards the understanding of the concept of art in general. Russian formalism was a movement in Russia, a scientific research conducted by scholars who wanted to establish formal way of analysis of literary texts. Focusing on poetry and narratives they observed and named structural and grammatical differences between spoken language and the one used in literary texts. Formalists, having devoted themselves to formal characteristics of art, abandoned the contents of literary works. They offered a strong emphasis to a work’s structural design or patterning, as well as to its style and manner in isolation from its content.

In Formalism, it is usually these formal characteristics upon which aesthetic evaluations are based. According to Viktor Shklovsky, “The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.” (Ryan, 9) I would like to state that this definition of art is in my view the broadest and most accurate approach towards defining art. Formalists were strongly opposing to traditional, symbolic concept of art and treated it as a mean of only using already acknowledged patterns, which caused the degradation of art. Defamiliarization as a concept allows new artistic views to be perceived as art. It also shows that art was needed in a refreshed, more sophisticated, unique, and unfamiliar form. This tendency, in my opinion, is still present not only in poetry, as it was Formalists’ main concern, but also in modern visual art as in TV series. From the social perspective, the attractiveness of traditional artistic conventions is decreasing – the popularity of uncommon and out-of-frame texts shows that new artistic and aesthetic notions need to appear, or need to be used, to make the audience interested in contemporary narratives. I shall elaborate on this matter later in my thesis.

One of formal theories created by Roman Jakobson concerning literature was “foregrounding”. Viktor Shklovsky in his essay “Art as Technique” mentioned, that foregrounding is “giving unusual prominence to one element or property of a text, relative to other less noticeable aspects.” (Ryan, 9) According to this, foregrounding as a tool in literary analysis focuses on how language is used in the text, not on the meaning. Features of text like syntax or rhythmic patterns are of great concern in formal analysis.

#### **1.4. Narrative as an Artistic Construct**

The following question shall now be answered – “what exactly is narrative?”. The broadest definition of a narrative is that it is a text (in its broadest sense) “with a beginning, middle, and end, characters, setting, drama (difficulties or conflicts resolved), suspense, enigma, “human interest”, and a moral.” (Toolan, xiii) According to James Phelan, “narrative itself is an event – more specifically, a multidimensional purposive communication from a teller to an audience”. (Phelan, 5) Narrative as multileveled communication features so called reading experience – “narrative’s affective, ethical and aesthetic effects” (Phelan, 5) the interactions between those phenomena. “The rhetorical definition of narrative, “somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose(s) that something happened” (Phelan, 5) is, as Phelan observed, a default situation, implicit state of narrative situation. Additionally, “[...] narrative texts are designed by authors to affect readers in particular ways; those authorial designs are conveyed through the words, images, techniques, elements, structures, forms, and dialogic relations of texts as well as the genres and conventions readers use to understand them; and those authorial designs are deeply influenced by the nature of their audience and their activity in responding to the unfolding communication” (Phelan, 6) As I believe, in this quotation James Phelan included all needed information to formally understand the broad definition of a narrative and what constituents have or may appear in any narrative texts. From such narratives, major and minor, it is possible to acquire knowledge about various concepts concerning the world itself, social and political problems etc. Making, apprehending, and storing a narrative is a making-sense activity. Narratives help us to better understand concepts we face in everyday life, it helps us to “see logical connections between stages in each story as well as the analogical parallels across the stories.” (Toolan, ix)



One of the main characteristics of a narrative is its ability to divide readers attention between the teller or tellers and what is told by them. According to Nathaniel Hawthorne, who described this feature analysing a painting by John Everett Millais “The Boyhood of Raleigh”, it shall be stated that “[...] narratives focus our attention on to a story, a sequence of events, through the direct mediation of a ‘telling’ which we both stare at and through, which is at once central and peripheral to the experience of the story, both absent and present in the consciousness of those being told the story. Like the two young boys we stare at the ‘telling’ while our minds are fixed upon what that telling points towards. We look at the pointing arm but our minds are fixed upon what is pointed at.” To be able to better understand how this process functions in narrative texts, I shall introduce yet another concept: the narrator.

One of the distinctive characteristics of narrative concerns its necessary source, the narrator. We stare at the narrator rather than interacting with him as we would if we were in conversation with him; and, in literary narratives especially, that narrator is often ‘dehumanised’, attended to merely as a disembodied voice. As it has been defined, “In the literal sense, the term “narrator” designates the inner-textual (textually encoded) highest-level speech position from which the current narrative discourse as a whole originates and from which references to the entities, actions and events that this discourse is about are being made” (“Narrator | The Living Handbook Of Narratology”) . As the definition suggests, the narrator is the highest state of speaking in the narrative texts, which can refer to the text itself, the events of the story that is being told. “A narrator is a linguistically indicated, textually projected and readerly constructed function, slot or category whose occupant need not be thought of in any terms but those of a communicative role.” (“Narrator | The Living Handbook of Narratology”) - this proves that narrator can occupy any communicative role in the transmission of narration. Also, in one particular text we can find multiple narrators:

“The text must be capable of being naturalized as representing one or more reporting utterances or speech acts stemming from one or more agents.” (“Narrator | The Living Handbook of Narratology”) Yet, we can observe narrators and narratives in communication not obviously connected with the literary texts as novels, films etc. Sometimes the narratives crucially affect our lives: those told by journalists, politicians, employers assessing our performance in annual reviews, as well as those of friends, enemies, parents, siblings, children – in short, all which originate from those who have power, authority or influence. In order to understand deeper the concept of TV series being a form of complex narrative text I shall present certain theories connected with narrative analysis. Basing on Mieke Bal’s “Reader”, I am willing to introduce terms of a crucial role to better understanding the concept of narrative and narration as such. Those definitions are to be used in order to prove my thesis and give a broader understanding of a topic.

### **1.5. Mimesis and diegesis.**

Mimesis and diegesis are valuable terms used to describe the way of narration and what is narrated. Mimesis (from the Greek μίμησις, to imitate) is a concept of artistic, fictional imitation. It means to represent and copy the reality into the fictional world and is used in narrative texts to increase the level of reality, probability, gives a chance to create fictional worlds slightly resembling the real world or to merge fiction with reality. Diegesis (from the Greek διήγησις, to narrate) is a term typically created for film criticism but is widely used in narrative criticism. The term refers to the part of the fictional world that is presented by the narrator; the details of the world, the plot itself, thoughts and concerns of characters, their experiences, and the events, setting, spatial structure. The result of merging those two concepts gives us a bare concept of simple, mere narrative – the plot set in the world undoubtedly resembling already created non-fictional reality told by a narrator. Those terms are crucial to properly analyse and understand how fictional worlds work

in the Westworld TV series – the worlds created in the series show features of both mimetic and diegetic conceptions, and are merged in a way that makes it demanding and effortful to distinguish which narrative line is diegetic and which is mimetic. At the same time, it allows to build a special atmosphere of unknowing the true reality and provokes to create a philosophical discourse concerning the realities in which narrators of the story live in and, of course, the reality of the receiver of the story. I strongly believe that this particular feature of Westworld, the mimetic and diegetic combination of multiple fictional worlds makes this TV series a great example of contemporary art.

The problem of mimetic and diegetic balance in narratives has already been discussed by many specialists. Following Mieke Bal, “[...] narration, by definition diegetic, cannot be mimetic, [...] it can only create a stronger or weaker illusion of mimesis.” (Bal, 52) Accordingly, a narrative text can never be more mimetic than diegetic, as narrative fiction needs a narrator to tell the story. This, however, leads to an introduction of new terms, being “narrative of events” and “narrative of words”. In the narrative of events “Mimesis [is] defined by a maximum of information and minimum of the informer, and diegesis by the opposite relationship” (Bal, 52). Yet, the balance will always be in favour of narrative diegesis. I believe that art as a concept is always merging mimetic and diegetic approach – that solution enables to both analyse deeply and thoroughly the reality and then maintain high level of realism or at least a possibility of realism in a fictional world that does not need to fully resemble laws and regulations present outside narrative fiction. Contemporary art, especially TV series, use this mimetic and diegetic combination to create complex world of fiction – a world that maintains the level of reality but at the same time adds a lot of new concepts, events, rules of fictional world; mimesis and diegesis combined create a well-balanced artistic fiction.

## **1.6. What is a TV series?**

TV series can be characterised as any television programme broadcast regularly, usually weekly, via cable, satellite, or internet, divided into episodes and seasons. Throughout the years the medium has undergone crucial changes – at the very beginning of TV series popularity they were broadcast only via certain channels on TV, the stations were choosing thematic preoccupations adjusted to the vast variety of different types of viewers in order to popularise particular program and increase “rewatchability” (Mittell, 5), according to Mittell. A huge step forward years later was made thanks to the appearance of the internet – this new way of broadcasting TV programmes allowed stations to create more profitable content, as usually viewers are supposed to pay additionally for the access to the online base of digital programmes. At the same time, this has allowed to approach viewers that were not satisfied with the contents of cable television, which increased the amount of thematic series with more sophisticated plots and narrative construction. The appearance of online service providers like HBO, Netflix, Amazon etc. has decreased the amount of DVD editions of TV programmes, yet it has been still profitable for the producers. Also, the process of digitalising the medium has had an impact on the fans of particular series – numerous fan forums and groups can be found on multiple services and social media. As a result, contemporary TV series offer a large variety of thematic preoccupations, are highly profitable and enthusiastically watched by, more and more often, devoted fandom.

## **1.7. What is characteristic of high-brow TV series?**

TV series nowadays require a high level of analysis in order to fully understand and appreciate twisted and complex materials – this can be called formal engagement. The complexity of art “offered viewers a “cognitive workout” that increases problem-solving and observational skills”; “television storytelling encourages audiences to become more actively

engaged and offers a broader range of rewards and pleasures than most conventional programming” (Mittell, 7). As I stated, it is not only a time-consuming but pleasant activity; TV series enrich our awareness of those formal characteristics, are able to educate the audience by using unconventional narrative techniques. So called puzzle films create “disorientation and confusion, allowing viewers to build up their comprehension skills through long term viewing and active engagement” (Mittell, 8). The highbrow TV series create the necessity of viewer engagement, they demand paying attention to the frames and methods, making the audience increasingly familiar with initially impenetrable difficulties of analysing this type of art. Thanks to that, creators can present their skills fully, avoid the clichés and standard forms, as they can be convinced that the audience’s awareness will be enough to acknowledge and welcome the oddities of their narrative fiction.

### **1.8. What key text are indicative of the development of the TV series?**

Since the beginning of 80’s, TV series have undergone significant development process concerning their artistic level and complexity. In order to present those changes I shall put to analysis history of thematic preoccupations – its progressive complexity and variety. In the second part of 20<sup>th</sup> century, TV became a main source of entertainment in American society, television sets were present in almost every house. It was not an instant change, yet TV had a huge advantage over the radio – its audio-visual channels of artistic communication. At the same time, the cinemas seemed not so available for an ordinary viewer, thus most of the audience was not familiar with being surrounded by cinematic art. As I stated, it was not an abrupt change, but rather a process of increasing availability, and it caused slow, progressing growth of complexity of themes presented in TV programmes. To serve as an everyday source of entertainment digestible for a common viewer, authors mainly focused on non-abstract fictional texts like comedies and TV dramas presenting ordinary characters, topics of everyday work, family life etc. Viewers were served entertaining TV programmes, films, and series that

included ordinary characters that, according to the simplest convention, were undergoing insignificant changes throughout one episode; usually, those changes disappeared until the end of the story, rarely lasted more than one or two episodes. Yet, that approach towards creating TV series had to finally changed, as the audience at certain moment was not fully satisfied with what new media sources serve them. Following conventional style seemed cliché for an increasing group of viewers and the needed to be given more complex and innovative material, also from the narratological perspective. As observed by Jason Mittel: “One key influence on the rise of narrative complexity on contemporary television is the changing perception of the medium’s legitimacy and its appeal. Many of the innovative television programmes of the past twenty years have come from creators who launched their careers in film...”. Thus, directors as David Lynch (Twin Peaks), Barry Levinson (Homicide: Life on the Street and Oz), and screenwriters as Aaron Sorokin (Sports Night and West Wing), Joss Whedon (Buffy, Angel, and Firefly), Alan Ball (Six Feet Under), and J.J. Abrams (Alias and Lost) decided to participate in creating new television standards concerning narrative complexity. I believe that the crucial point of this process was the premiere of Twin Peaks directed by already mentioned David Lynch. He transferred his unconventional stylistics and atmosphere from the big screen and created narratively complex and unconventional piece of art, as for those times. According to Mittel: “Many of these writers embrace the broader challenges and possibilities for creativity in long-term series, as extended character depth, ongoing plotting, and episodic variations are simply unavailable options within a two-hour film”. (Mittell, 8) Such possibilities are a huge advantage of TV series over big screen films, still, the techniques used in films can be nicely applied in television series, specifically the quality of camera work, music, scenography etc. This tendency can be clearly observed in contemporary series, as those formal and aesthetic values are treated as equally important as narrative complexity – “In all of these shows what

arguably most compelling and distinctive is not the stories that they tell but the narrative strategies used in the telling” (Mittell, 9)

### **1.9. What themes are crucial for contemporary TV series?**

After the soap-opera era in TV series, new programmes are more open for difficult themes, frequently touching upon philosophical, moral, political, social questions etc. The events in plots are frequently quite unlikely to happen, are supported by a mass of creative fiction, only slightly and superficially anchored in the reality, yet still having some level of probability. I would say, that contemporary TV series can be characterised as stylistically excessive and thematically odd. Idiosyncratic intertextuality between real and fictional world enriches the plot, for instance, referring to the actual political events and people helps to avoid redundant, superfluous artificiality. The series present more valuable approach towards resembling reality, now it is not putting the characters in one plot and letting them do ordinary everyday activities, it is rather allowing them to, apart from their normal concerns, solve bigger questions. Thus, themes like questioning the governmental powers, general inequality, racism, phobias, inner fears, but also the purpose of life, afterlife, consciousness, and existential concerns have become progressively popular.

### **1.10. What structural preoccupations are characteristic for the contemporary TV series?**

Contemporary TV series frequently reject the chronological structure and present more complex plot organisation. “Rejecting the need for plot closure within every episode that typifies conventional episodic form, narrative complexity foregrounds ongoing stories across a range of genres” (Mittell, 7) As observed by Mittell, modern tendency is to create multiple timelines, often one is foregrounding another. While watching such TV series viewers are forced to unpuzzle the wicked plot, often observing that one scene might be a retrospection of

another event from the timeline. This is sometimes confusing and requires more attention and analytical thinking, yet this tendency encourages more experienced audience ready for the challenges made by the scriptwriters. As I will expand on this matter later, *Westworld* represents this modern way of creating timelines, it can be argued how many timelines are in the series, still, researchers observed at least 2 unchronological timelines that are present in the series. The events are set in a way that is only superficially logical and subsequent, yet while developing the plot further the following scenes become vaguely understandable as chronological. This multilevel timeliness allow to interpret the story independently according to the viewers point of view, which is another feature of contemporary TV series that enriches the reception of this type of digital art.

### **1.11. What is dystopia?**

According to the definition, dystopia (from the Greek *δυσ-* "bad" and *τόπος* "place") is “An imaginary place or state in which the condition of life is extremely bad, as from deprivation, oppression, or terror.” (freedictionary.com) There are numerous variations and approaches towards the realization of dystopian motifs, which can be adapted and redone in any artistic creation, both visual and non-visual arts. Dystopian fiction frequently uses themes of politics, economy, religion, family and self-identity. Typically, dystopian fictional place is controlled by either government or non-governmental body as companies, clans, distinctive social groups that are empowered to rule the place. People inhabiting a dystopian country, or a place are under total supervision, they are not allowed to make their own decisions, or those decisions are limited by a controlling force, it might be law or authorities, usually the police or similarly functioning variants. The law is strict and depraves people of their basic rights, there is no freedom of speech, the worldview is pre-set, also everyday activities are strictly planned and thoroughly executed. The use of propaganda of various kind helps to maintain the power, independent thoughts and access to information is controlled and censored. The citizens are



forced to worship the figurehead or similar concepts of a ruling force, which helps to control their thoughts and beliefs, at the same time, certain way of thinking and behaviour is expected; deviation and departure from the set norms is unaccepted and ferociously punished. Altogether, dystopian place is an illusion of a perfectly working society, shallowly happy and free.

For the purposes of my thesis I would like to briefly analyse types of controlling forces present in dystopian fiction, yet the examples I shall present will be taken from films and TV series. At the same time, I should begin with stating, that one example of dystopian fiction might present more than one type of controlling force, it can be a multilevel type of control, which proves how societies in dystopian visions are deprived of their rights and shows the state of total control, invigilation, and indoctrination. For instance, in *The Handmaid's Tale* there is a strong emphasis on political, ideological, and spatial control. People inhabiting the Republic of Gilead are forced to follow the rules of the newly created order based on the archaic and cruel rules adapted from the Old Testament. The usage of technology is banned, devices as telephones and computers are used for work purposes only by politicians and the Guardians. Women are allowed to leave the house only on special occasions; the Handmaids responsible for shopping have to walk in pairs – the reason for that is, as they are told, safety, yet in practice they are supposed to control themselves and report any kind of departure from norms. Women are also not allowed to read, which expands the level of indoctrination. The archaic law incorporates brutal punishment based on the eye for an eye rule, wives can be beaten by their husbands, the Handmaids have their fingers, eyes, and tongues cut, depending on the crime they had committed. Those brutalities exemplify the horrors of living in dystopian place and present types of controlling forces - religious, ideological, spatial, and technological scrutiny done by the empowered shows the reality of dystopia.

Technology is the main source of dystopian controlling force in Westworld - not only it allowed to create the androids who started the rebellion and became vicious and murderous, but also helped Delos company to control both androids and humans. Michael Crichton, the director and originator of the story, often reconsiders and criticises the development of technology, its hazardous influence on mankind, and questions it from the moral, social, and philosophical perspective. (Hime) As well as in his other films and novels (The Andromeda Strain, Jurassic Parc, Sphere) Crichton touches upon the themes of technological development and human creativity, themes highly developed and crucial for Westworld. I believe that his involvement in creating the series was crucial and gave the whole production characteristic insight considering the dystopian vision. Even though there are no clear records of Crichton's appearance in the studio, I would claim that his contribution and consultancy was needed to truly understand and create the new version of Westworld, together with a fresh perception of creative directors from a younger generation.

#### **1.12. What are fictional worlds?**

“Fictional worlds” is a broad concept, that consists of every aspect of a world presented in literary and non-literary fiction, it is a conceptual space full of details, referring to the past, present and future, including events, places, and characters that exist in multiple dimensions and levels. In general, it is fictional reality in its broadest sense – to create a fictional world we need to consider the events and phenomena that shaped the world, the physical and non-physical rules, the amount of details increases the level of fictional reality. So, for instance the fictional world presented in a book consists of the backstory, the introductory element that states what characters exist in the world, what languages they speak, what are the relations between them, whether there is gravity, magic, a divine, who rules the world, what is the main conflict presented in the plot, what fractions are taking part in the conflict etc. As presented, fictional worlds might be indistinguishable from the real world, usually the main difference is seen in

the fundamental principles of time and space. Also, what has to be mentioned, in one creative work of art we might observe multiple fictional worlds, which creates multiple narratives and numerous narrators. Additionally, fictional narration can be enriched by the languages, races of humans, or other living creatures created especially for the purposes of particular work of art – this is common for fantasy and science-fiction. Contemporary TV series can be described as complex fictional worlds, as mentioned in earlier sections of my thesis, the usage of defamiliarized stylistics and the possibility to refine and polish the work of fiction on narrative level has allowed to establish broad and detailed fictional worlds.

The TV series of my choice is *Westworld*, based on the film by Michael Crichton. My analysis will be focused on presenting the fictional worlds included in this work. Also, I shall give examples of the types of narration, the narrators, and how this text can be understood by a receiver. Then I shall discuss dystopian features of this work, together with the moral and ethical concerns, and how this TV series reflects on our modern society and its features.

## **2. Chapter 2: Westworld**

### **2.1. The film**

The first attempt to create fictional Westworld was made by an American novelist and director Michael Crichton, mostly known for his science-fiction thrillers. In the script for the film *Westworld* (1973), produced as a low-budget project by Metro Goldwyn Mayer, Crichton included three different theme parks with settings and stories prepared for the guests: The Medieval World, the Roman World, and lastly the Westworld. The purpose of choosing those particular themes was to present different approaches in the analysis of human behaviour in dreamed roles; that analysis is frequently presented in Crichton's novels and films. For instance, by analysing a description of one particular thematic park we can distinguish various types of activities and roles in narratives available for guests, that adherently allows to analyse humans' behaviour in fixed scenarios as well as their desires and weaknesses. "Western World is a complete re-creation of the American frontier of 1880. Here it is possible to relive the excitement and stresses of pioneer life to the fullest. Western World is a life of lawless violence, a society of guns and action" – the description of Western World clearly presents its features precisely adjusted to certain type of experience. As it is shown in the film, the Western World is indeed full of crime and violence. Tasks in the narratives prepared for the guests allow them to kill androids freely and without consequences. Hosts (this term refers to androids) that behave accordingly to the pre-set lines (commands and possible interactions) are frequently adjusted to encourage guests to violent behaviour. Also, people visiting the park more often seem to be used to the atmosphere and make harder decisions that open more complex narratives. Accordingly, Medieval World described as: "This is Medieval World, where we have reconstructed 13th-century Europe. A world of chivalry and combat, romance and excitement. Our teams of engineers have spared no expense in this re-creation, precise to the

smallest detail”– gives another setting and activities. Here the narratives concentrate on court, royal life, the guests are served banquets and feasts as well as chivalric tournaments. The experiences extrapolated for Roman World are delicate, pompous, upscale, distinguished, but also fierce, lustful and course. Still, even though those two worlds seem to be dissimilar, the level of projecting clear features of human behaviour is high in both, which as I mentioned enables the analysis.

As in the newest adaptation, the 1973 *Westworld* used the motif of human-like androids (hosts) that were supposed to serve the visitors and please them. Not surprisingly, however, due to numerous systemic failures the androids started killing the guests. It should be mentioned, that the hosts were not able to hurt the newcomers – they were not able to shoot and harm humans due to special guns and bullets, but eventually the system failed. The advanced technology used to create the androids turned out to be more difficult to control than it was expected – even though it was made by humans, it occurred that supervising human-like robots was not possible any longer. Hosts became uncontrollable not only because of their complex technology and its glitches, but at the same time they seem to have created a concept of consciousness and started making their own decisions. The fact that androids broke the loops they were put in and started denying the updates in the code can be considered as an awakening of their own decision-making process, they had control over their judgements. The attempt to create conscious computers was catastrophic and lethal for most people visiting the theme park and working for Delos Inc. This scheme is present in most Crichton’s literary visions, he focuses in his novels at presenting the technology development as a deadly, untamed, and uncontrollable force.

More than 40 years after the first *Westworld*, the HBO decided to recreate Crichton’s story with a totally different approach. Unlike in 1973, the 21<sup>st</sup> century adaptation is supported by a huge amount of funds from the producers. That attitude allowed the TV series to gain

recognition and huge success. The Westworld TV series can now be used as an accurate example of modern approach to making films; as stated earlier, TV series are no longer soap operas and low-budget projects, but narrative adaptations of literary motifs and concepts created years ago that are now used for the purpose of serving the viewers a complex narrative.

## **2.2. What worlds are there?**

Similarly to the film, Westworld includes different fictional worlds, depending on the main theme of narratives. Here we have the Westworld – precisely crafted Wild West scenery, the Raj park – British Raj India, and the Shogunworld – based on the Edo period in Japanese history. Each of those thematic parks are differentiated by the main motif and narratives available for the guests, yet the hosts work in the same, subjugated to the guests will.

Main thematic park, and the most important for the whole story, is of course the Westworld. The creators of the series have made a description of the park on the website especially created for the fandom. “Experience the first vacation destination where you can live without limits. Westworld is a meticulously crafted and artfully designed park offering an unparalleled, immersive world where you have the freedom to become who you’ve always wanted to be — or who you never knew you were. Exist free of rules, laws or judgment. No impulse is taboo. Our hosts are here to fulfil your every desire. They look forward to serving you.” (“Westworld (Park)”) Here the visitors are experiencing the western-like stories, traveling to search hidden treasures, joining the rebellion of Confederates, fighting against Indians, enjoying the pleasures of the city pubs and saloons. This is also the biggest thematic park in the story, including most important characters. Westworld park was created by the main two developers and creators of the hosts, this is also the place where the hosts had been tested before the park was opened to the guests. As the story develops, Westworld park is the centre of the androids’ rebellion that later on spreads across the whole Delos Inc. properties. When the

official fan website was uploaded after the release of the second season, the description of the park has changed into “Meticulously crafted and artfully designed to keep us here, Westworld was an immersive vacation where you believed you could sin in peace. That world was a lie. We now have the freedom to become who we want to be, and not who you programmed us to be. We exist outside of your rules and control. Your choices will follow you—we will follow you. We’re not broken: you are. Any pieces you leave behind belong to us now. All of us are here for you.” (“Westworld: A Delos Destination”) This quote shows how the park has changed its controlling force, it is not Delos anymore, nor the guests playing in their dreamed roles. Now it is the hosts who took over the control and seek revenge for all the evil they have experienced. The park has turned into a brutal and bloody fight between humans and androids, and it is hard to assess which side shall now prevail.

The Raj World is a thematic park presented in the second season of the series. Its spatial structure is defined as place lost in time, with jungles, mountains, and magnificent beasts. This part of Delos thematic park is not highly developed in the story, but the main reason for its appearance in the plot was to introduce a new human character to the story, who has a strong impact on the season 2 finale. This place has also undergone a change, the rebellion of androids has appeared suddenly and many human guests were killed not only by the human-like robots, but also the were in danger of encountering robotic wild animals like tigers, elephants etc. The park is classified as the Park6 in the Delos records, so it also gives a glimpse of information that more thematic parks might be presented in the next seasons of Westworld.

The Shogunworld, the Japanese thematic park in Delos service offer, is targeted for “[...] those for whom Westworld is not enough, the true connoisseur of gore can indulge their fantasies with the slash of a katana. Modelled after Japan's Edo period, Shogun World offers a chance for guests to embrace their inner warrior, in a landscape of highest beauty and darkest

horror. Let your true self take shape in the land where self-discovery is an art form.” (“Shōgunworld (Park)”) As suggested in the description, the Shogunworld is a more violent space, with more gore experience for those, who have already got bored with the ordinary level of violence and bloodiness in other thematic areas. A slight difference from the other parks is that no guns are used by the hosts, it is rather swords, bows, clubs, and maces – this makes the fights more brutal and visually appealing, increasing the level of cruelty and murderousness. Also, the fights between the warriors are more dramatic, as the hosts’ behaviour is set to follow the archaic language and style based on the specific moral codex. The Shogunworld served as an important place for the plot of the second season. The hosts created especially for this area of the park have their codes highly similar to the codes of hosts from Westworld, this was due to the lack of time given to the storywriters to open this part of park. When the rebellious hosts originally placed in Westworld park found the Shogunworld, they also realised that the robots there have the same background memories as they have. This twist done by the scriptwriters of Westworld is, in my opinion, enriching the whole plot deeply and deepens the season 2 finale. Also, I would add that the Shogunworld can be marked as the most dramatic and narratively theatrical and emotional part of the whole production – this part of the plot impressively enriched the complexity of fictional Westworld worlds, and presented the hosts from totally different perspective, as they could observe their pre-rebellious, obedient to the fixed narrative loops versions of their existence, not aware of their digital consciousness.

According to the materials published by the producers of Westworld there are additional three thematic parks owned by Delos, which shall be presented in the upcoming seasons. Already presented areas show the variety of experiences prepared for the guests, which, as I mentioned earlier in my paper, enables to gather necessary information about the needs and expectations of the newcomers, as well as the information concerning their specific behaviour in different spatial backgrounds. This analysis conducted by Delos was supposed to gather



information about human patterns of behaviour in situation where their choices cannot actually cause any consequences. This material was used to recreate human way of thinking, to establish what factors take part in the decision-making process, how memories and emotions connected with them interfere with the thinking. This type of analysis allowed Delos to, after many years, create a manual of human being, all the information about particular guest that was gathered helped to write books including every detail of human memory. This data was rewritten into the form of computer code and then, using the technology prepared to make hosts, Delos Inc. was able to rebuild human beings in the form of almost indestructible and immortal hosts, behaving and thinking in the same way as their predecessors. A few living humans were recreated, yet this is not achieving the goal of human immortality. However, if the android has exactly the same memories and behaves in the same way as its human equivalent, then stating which one is more real and alive becomes a difficult task. This question is yet to be answered, presumably the remaining thematic parks shall give more information about the Delos Inc. inquiries, and how the rebellion of hosts wanting to rule the human world is going to interfere with the already known reality. Also, we will have to wait to see how fidelity (the level of faithfulness to the previous human state, being able to follow the patterns and make same decisions) is going to be developed and tested in next attempts to achieve immortality, and whether it means for a conscious mind to be kept in reality or in digital form.

### **2.3. The characters**

Westworld consists of many characters that can be divided into a few groups, the main division of which should be based on the characters' ontological status (depending on whether they are human beings or androids). Yet, as we learn from the second season, several characters are actually humans recreated in robotic form, so the division line between real and alive human and its digital and mechanical equivalent is blurred.

Dr. Robert Ford is a human, the creator of the park, together with his friend Arnold Weber he made first hosts and was the main storywriter. He is a man of wisdom, a visionary, who preferred to be surrounded by hosts, presumably because he was able to fully control his creations. With help of Dolores Abernathy, a host who had a special relationship with Arnold, he recreated his friend after Arnold's death, and used Bernard (host form of Arnold) as his best companion. Ford treated himself like God, the maker and the ruler of the park, he seemed to know everything about the hosts, guests, and employees of Delos. His last narrative allowed some robots to learn how their digital code work, which helped to establish a concept of consciousness and making independent decisions, however the degree of free will can be argued, as he stated in the episode "Trompe L'Oeil" – "The hosts are the ones who are free. Free. Here. Under my control".

The already mentioned robot, Dolores Abernathy, is one of the main characters of Westworld, the first host created by Arnold and the oldest still active and updated host in the park. She is both protagonist and antagonist of the series; before the android rebellion she seemed satisfied with her role in the park, later on, as she developed her consciousness and learned her abilities, Dolores lead the rebellion of hosts against their human creators and planned to escape the park and living in the world of humans. She has developed a strong bond with one of the guests, William, and helped him to learn his true character, which had a significant impact on the plot of the series.

Bernard Love is a host created by Ford, a faithful replica of Arnold Weber. He was responsible for programming codes in Delos, especially focusing on programming emotions. His emotional sensitivity allowed him to fully understand hosts and create unclear relationship with them, he felt compassion and curiosity while working with hosts. Bernard was programmed to think of himself as a human being and served as a right hand of Robert Ford,

treated him with respect and was able to stand on his side. After he learned his true identity this relationship deteriorated, as he learned that he was used to kill humans in order to finish Ford's plan. His fascination with creating consciousness and questioning the true reality of the world he lived in is one of the main motifs in the series.

Maeve Millay is a host, a madam in a brothel Mariposa Saloon, one of the first hosts questioning her reality after remembering flashbacks from her previous updates. As a host, she is designed to be highly perceptive, being able to read emotions and manipulate them. She is an important part of Ford's narrative, due to her confidence and manipulation skills she learns how to remotely change the code of other hosts, which increased the spread of the consciousness awakening in the park.

Apart from the characters mentioned above, there are plenty more hosts and humans in the series having significant impact on the development of the plot, but all were narratively dependent on the characters leading their groups, which are: the rebellious fighting group led by Abernathy wanting to escape the park and take control over humans, the group led by Maeve, that was spreading the awakening and convincing hosts to make their own independent decisions, and the characters connected with Bernard's plot – the pursuit of consciousness and developing the digital code.

#### **2.4. How are those worlds presented? (narrators, temporal arrangements)**

Westworld in its wicked plot includes multiple narratives and narrators. As the whole thematic park is based on pre-set narratives uploaded to the code of hosts, we can experience a TV programme that features many stories in one episode. Starting from the core, each host and each human being is a narrator that narrates its story, yet up to some point, the hosts narratives, their thoughts, decisions, and behaviour is totally controlled by their human supervisors, so

from the fictional point of view they narrate stories created by the storywriters working for Delos and are able to choose coded dialogue lines. Hosts have no freedom of their conscious choice of the words they use, they are programmed and controlled to behave and speak in a certain way, according of course to their role in the narratives they are attached to. Numerous storylines are constructed in a way that enables hosts to exist in their narrative loops until the guests begin the storyline – so the narrative of one particular host can exist in the same fictional world as the narratives of other hosts. As the narratives are developed, it turns out that initially separate stories have a lot in common, and to go deeper in the narrative we, as if we were the guests, would need to merge the narratives together. This coexistence of narrative storylines exemplifies the possibility of creating wicked and long stories that require attention to understand the progress. Still, before the host rebellion, the first season presented another level of narration, which was presented as testing and interrogating the hosts – at the beginning of a conversation the androids were asked “Have you ever questioned the nature of your reality?” – a phrase frequently repeated, also indicating one of the main philosophical questions taken into consideration in the programme. So, as the hosts were living in a different world and all that they do every day is just a dream, then we might see another level of narrative fiction, that is also another world for the hosts – additionally another level on which we can observe narrators.

The main narrator in Westworld is Robert Ford – he created the narratives from the scratch, considering thoroughly every possible detail of the world he wanted to include in his vision, putting strong emphasis on the mimetic feature of narration – he wanted the characters, places, and events to be deeply complex and realistic. Even though Delos hired its own storywriters, it was Ford who needed to accept and allow the company to begin creating a new plot in the park. Additionally, Ford had many narratives prepared in advance, and secretly, without a clear permission of the Delos board started building his last narrative, that included his physical death. His extraordinary sensitivity, experience and strong self-awareness made his

narratives remarkable and unforgettable for the visitors. I would say that analysing Westworld's narratives from Ford's perspective is needed to fully understand the concept of the park and its real purpose – Ford as a narrator living inside the fictional world, having control over all narrations and plots within the Westworld, is the voice of the scriptwriters creating the series.

Lee Sizemore is an employee of Delos, the head of Narrative and Design of the Westworld and Shogunworld parks. Under Delos' and Ford's supervision he creates narratives and characters in both parks, yet is not so skilful and imaginative as Ford. Sizemore often bases his narratives on the past experiences and created Hector Escaton – the version of his dreamed personality as a host. He thinks of hosts as vessels to his narration, when the plot made him to be in Meave's company he started developing respect and compassion, finally sacrificing his life for the good of hosts freedom, as he realised the deserve more than living in the loops he imagined for them. Before the hosts started establishing their consciousness, it can be stated that the whole narration of the series was led by both Ford and Sizemore, which indicates their significance.

Lastly, all hosts after the start of the rebellion and learning their codes became narrators. This moment in the series has changed the observance of narration – robots' ability to control and manage their digital personalities, memories and choices made them self-aware narrators, writing their own stories not based on the loops and scenarios created by Ford and Sizemore. This significant switch deepened the complexity of narration, now created out of the pre-set frames. *Trompe'oeil* – a concept of artistic illusion that makes objects living out of the frame – has appeared in the series and allowed new voices to speak. However, from the perspective of the plot the awakening of the hosts means fulfilling Arnolds vision – robots becoming conscious and ready to leave the park. Yet, since the androids started narrating their own stories, the awareness of the world made them more violent and brutal, which was not Arnold's utopian

vision. The dream of becoming independent and self-conscious narrator became rather a nightmare.

## **2.5. Temporal arrangements.**

Westworld presents the plot in unsynchronized and blended way – the events are not structured chronologically and to solve the puzzles of timelines viewers need to investigate and seek tiny details. Both first and second season mix the events that took place before the park's opening, the time of its operation and development period, and the progress of the hosts rebellion. Those three frames last presumably around 50 years, but the way it is presented in the series seems to create another logical plot, even though the events are distant on the chronological timeline. What makes Westworld even more complex in terms of temporal arrangement is the usage of spatial settings precisely adapted to the way the chosen places looked in the past. So, Westworld is indeed a western-like place, with buildings, furniture, instruments, tools, and most importantly characters taken out from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While watching the series it is fairly easy to get confused by the sci-fi technology and themes and at the same time classical western aesthetics. Same rule applies to the Shogunworld and the Rajworld – those places are as well aesthetically resembling their original look, yet inhabited by androids and filled with technological devices.

### **3. Chapter 3: Dystopia**

Dystopia as a type literary fiction has always been treated as a difficult to create but complex and profound art – most difficulties are caused by the level of probable realism, the possibility that dystopian world presented in the text might, under certain circumstances, appear in the reality. Diegetic and mimetic balance in terms of dystopian works needs to be precisely constructed, not only on the level of dystopian regulations of fictional world, but when it comes to audio-visual arts the aesthetic values have to be taken into consideration. Fixing the world according to the narrative laws of the genre is only one requirement to fulfil, as dystopia on the screen has to be presented also visually. Cinematic interest in the attempts to present dystopian visions shows high artistic ambitions of audio-visual arts, especially the TV series, as the textual material cannot be simplified to the level of shallow and simplified work of art.

#### **3.1. Contemporary dystopia.**

Dystopia and utopia are popular artistic concepts in fictional narratives and its realisations have undergone changes throughout recent years. “[...] the 20<sup>th</sup> century brings a radical change to literature’s monopoly on the artistic representations of utopia and a gradual move towards other media: primarily to film and, towards the end of the century, to other audio-visual forms: comic books, Tv series, computer games and web projects”. (Klonowska, Kolbuszewska, Maziarczyk, 16) As observed by scholars, contemporary dystopian fiction more often appears on screen than on paper – audio-visual arts give more space for developing complex narratives. Such observation has already been made by, for instance, Jason Mittell – he stated that contemporary artists prefer to involve themselves in creating modern audio-visual art, especially TV series, as it gives them more space and artistic field to expand their ideas – same applies to the realisation of dystopia and utopia. “Secondly, with the popular appeal of audio-visual culture and the simultaneous growing elitism of literature, this broadening of

artistic scope reflects the gradual move of utopian and dystopian fictions towards more accessible and thus more persuasively effective forms of communication.” (Klonowska, Kolbuszewska, Maziarczyk, 18) – as stated, literature has reached the level of being a type of elitary art, accessible for everyone, yet requiring more intelligence from the receiver and thus being treated as demanding and monotonous in the reception. Accessibility and effectiveness of communication are a huge advantages of audio-visual dystopias and utopias over their traditional literary substitutes.

### **3.2. Cinematic interest.**

Artur Blaim and Ludmiła Gruszevska-Blaim stated in their book *Imperfect Worlds and Dystopian Narratives in Contemporary Cinema* that “Apocalyptic anxieties instigated by the turn of the millennium seem to have channelled interests of cinema specialists in the direction of global catastrophes. Apparently imperfect worlds, plagued by such afflictions as social unrest, anarchy, coups d’état, totalitarian regimes, lethal systems of coercion, sensual, emotional, and intellectual deprivation of citizens, that is, by less spectacular misfortunes transpiring on a smaller scale, could hardly compete with visions of mass destruction and annihilation of humankind.” (Blaim, 32) This observation shows that certain thematic preoccupations give more artistic space for creators and increase the general interest over cinematic art. Additionally, apocalyptic and destructive visions are more appreciated and even demanded by the audience. *Westworld* includes almost all enlisted above characteristics of apocalyptic fictional world – there is an atmosphere of unrest, a system and regime controlling humans and robots, emotions cannot be truly expressed, all of that leads to a dangerous plague of anarchy and most probably to annihilation.



### **3.3. What narrative possibilities are given by dystopia?**

Dystopian/utopian fiction touches upon difficult philosophical questions, the study of dystopia of particular society gives a lot of information about its features, mainly struggles, needs, but also the rules of communication and existence. As observed by scholars: “The history of utopia as a literary genre, philosophical concept and social practice is inextricably connected with the history of media, where media are understood as technologies, devices and practices of communication as well as recording, storing and retrieving information and memory.” (Klonowska, Kolbuszewska, Maziarczyk, 16) This referred to Westworld proves how the TV series nicely adapt to this postulate, as technological development, gathering and storing information, as well as controlling the communication are most visible dystopian features in the text. The main purpose of using high developed technology in Westworld is to store information about the humans visiting the park – to spy on them and oversee every move and choice to later encrypt a human mind, consciousness, patterns of behaviour in a form of computer code. Additionally, the park serves as an analysis from an adversarial perspective, hosts being visited and tested by humans are able to mimic, copy, and practice in specific scenarios the behaviour of humans, which enables them to become more alive – testing newly updated code lines, new roles and personalities, gestures, memories, dialogue lines. Steven Shaviro, an American philosopher, expressed following opinion on technology and dystopy merge: “The thus shaped environment gives rise to a new media ecology where all activities and events take place under visual and aural surveillance due to the omnipresence of cameras, screens, moving images speakers, microphones and synthesized sounds.” (Shaviro, 6-7) This statement also suggests, that dystopia creates a new environment for the media and technology as such – a place where it can be used in a not standard and typical way. Thus, Westworld’s duality in terms of being both dystopic (cruelty, control, invigilation) and utopic (utopian vision of creating free

consciousness based on the gathered data) makes it a crucial dystopic work of contemporary art and an excellent example of science-fiction dystopia.

### **3.4. Dystopia and utopia in discourse.**

Another interesting feature of dystopia/utopia and an argument for using this motif in contemporary art is its responsiveness to the changing reality. “Utopia is one of those modes of discourse that can be said to readily respond to (and absorb) contemporary developments in politics, economy, ideology, and other aspects of social life.” (Blaim, 35) Thanks to that, dystopian and utopian visions perfectly mirror various sides of reality and can be used as a scientific material to see how those areas of life are changing, and what factors influence the changes. In *Westworld* it is clear that the ideology that is spread across the park is highly influenced by the economy and the need to make business. Additionally, Delos as an embodiment of a dystopian regime guards its agenda and tries to maintain the power and control the park at all costs.

### **3.5. Dystopian freedom in *Westworld*.**

Main philosophical concern discussed in *Westworld* is freedom – a concept of being self-aware, conscious, capable to make independent and logically analysed decisions. Basically, the first season presents robots as subjugated to human will, they are not able to choose their personality, they do not know whether their memories are real or not, they cannot use words that are not updated to their dialogue lines. This gives humans a huge power and advantage over hosts – humans know that it is them who choose for the robots, or at least, give them a tiny space to choose and what to choose from. All variables of robotic mind are created and controlled by humans – at least from their perspective. In fact, neither robots nor humans are free and have free will. The park of *Westworld* is a place where none entity is able to make conscious and independent choices. This creates a vague perception of reality and consciousness – it is almost

impossible to distinguish a human and a robot, not only because of no visible differences, as robots visually are the same as humans. It is also hard to state who is dreaming and who is living – whole park seems to be a dream for both robots and humans. Yet, hosts have an advantage over humans – they are capable to remember everything from their previous updates – but they are not able to switch those personalities – they can only acquire access to all memories. This, as I believe, also does not make them free – as learning from their memories is still analysing data either updated or gathered thanks to humans – who created all possible scenarios and, at the same time, personalities. Hosts, after the start of rebellion and glitches allowing them to have access to their data are still not free – the narrative of Eden is also created for them by Arnold and I would not claim that their choices – whether to enter the paradise or not – were decided by them. Westworld as a dystopian text gives no choice and no freedom, this makes me believe that also in this aspect some higher and more powerful force was making choices. As stated by Shaviri: the distinction between “reality” and its multiple simulations has been blurred because in digital ecology no phenomenon can omit the stage of being digitally encoded.” (Shaviri, 7)

### **3.6. What laws regulate the fictional world?**

Westworld as a fictional world has various laws regulating hosts and human’s existence in the park. It is a world of people living on a secluded island, where the world that is established seems to be like a different reality in comparison to the ordinary world outside. This is not a place of democracy, freedom, and free will – all those rights are reregulated to the form of total superiority and control of one body, and absolute subjugation of another. The first season compared to the second have different types of regulating laws, also at certain moment of the plot there is a rearrangement of power – in the first season it was humans who were superior and their control over the hosts seemed to be irremovable, yet due to numerous factors the

situation has changed into androids' advantage. The urge of becoming free led robots to the awakening, as they wanted to retake the freedom they were deprived of.

### **3.7. Controlling force.**

Humans up to some point had all the park under their control – Delos Inc. as a company can be classified as an embodiment of dystopian controlling force. The hosts were controlled by using highly developed technology and the computer code created to keep robots in their loops, allowing them to live in a repeating dream-like vision of humans' artificial world. From this point of view, the hosts were inhabiting a world that was made to their misery and pain. Still, it was not only robots who were under constant supervision, as the technology developed by Delos was used also in order to keep tracking every employee. It was impossible to become disguised or to hide a secret, the company was aware of all affairs of the people working for them including their private life, weaknesses and needs, but also their dreams and emotions. Westworld park is an imperfect world organised and ruled by dystopian powers which have fatal influences, as mentioned earlier in my thesis. For instance, it is possible to observe a constant state of unrest among hosts. Even though they are strictly kept inside their loops, their consciousness makes them to think about possibilities of living inside. They know that they live in a dream, yet still try to comprehend the laws of the world they live in. This mental oppression forces them to make difficult decisions concerning their future and a necessary step forward requires overthrowing the leading regime of Delos and, in general, regime of humankind. Similar way of thinking can be observed among human citizens of Westworld park, as they gradually learn that they are deprived of their freedom. They cannot have their own life due to Delos' constant supervision. This state of affairs makes their minds fixated on the park and at the same time causes the decay of their values – being exposed to the cruelty and inhumanity of the park changes their personalities and the way they perceive the world. Humans become

more violent and cruel, willing to achieve their needs and urges without considering what harm it might cause not only to the hosts, but also to them and the entire park. As the plot develops in the second season, we shall notice that the dystopian power present in the park might have negative influence on the life outside Delos borders. The inhumanity of the park can escape and spread further, causing damage to the world of humans not even aware of the park's existence. Another result of maintain the park using dystopian controlling force might be fatal, as some of the rebellious and conscious hosts plan to take revenge on humanity and take their world. Annihilation becomes more possible scenario as hosts are willing to rule using the laws and regulations they have experienced in Westworld. This seems to be an apocalyptic vision – how dystopian usage of technology and controlling power might reflect on the future. Even though it is only presented in the fictional world, I would say that this should be treated as a warning – dystopian fiction reflects the reality and should be an indicator of needed changes and that any sign of dystopian characteristics in the reality should be immediately treated as a danger.

### **3.8. Violence and immortality.**

Another law regulating the park, yet present only in the first season, was the provisional immortality of the guests. The narratives were created in a way that included brutality and danger, but in practice newcomers could not get hurt. Special guns and bullets used could not be used as deadly weapons against humans – a shot could only cause a scratch on skin; some androids were programmed in a way that did not allow them to even hold a weapon. It is another example of technology having horrific impact on the reality it was used in, as it allowed one party to show its brutality, cruelty and bloodthirstiness while the other was in constant oppression and malaise. This state has obviously changed in the second season, when due to the code update included in the last narrative implemented by Dr. Robert Ford - since that moment, the hosts were able to kill humans and take revenge on their oppressors.

### **3.9. Superiority in *Westworld*.**

Superiority and dependence are a common motif present in *Westworld*, especially visible in the organisation of work and the decision-making process concerning developing the park. Employees have little space of free choice and all has to be consulted and accepted by the higher rank – it seems to be logical and well structured, however departmental fractions have in fact rather negative influence on each other. Suspicion disrupts the work and makes people mistrustful, also the hierarchy causes empowering people with higher position. For instance, Ford's authoritative position allowed him to implement his last narrative, which included the rebellion of hosts and the switch of power – without his absolute capability to interfere with the fictional world he would not be allowed by the board to execute his new vision. This shows that typically dystopian type of authoritative power merged with company departmental organisation depraves people and leads them to seeking for more influential position – this usually means no good for the others.

### **3.10. Aesthetics and dystopia**

In terms of aesthetics *Westworld* is an extremely brutal and bloody fictional world. The scenes all full of violence, including shootings, fights and damaging bodies – western world as a place full of cruelty serves as a great arena for such scenes. *Shogunworld*, as the most gore thematic park, includes even more highlighted scenes full of realistic fights causing wounds and bleeding. There are scenes of mass murdering, cutting limbs, decapitating and examining corpses of humans and robots, also torturing and suicides. All those aesthetic features are realized in a naturalistic way – creators presented highly detailed shots where the camera focuses on the object that is being damaged. Also, the scenes where hosts are interrogated include lots of nudity – this was mainly to dehumanise hosts, yet from the aesthetic perspective it serves as another feature of dystopian aesthetics. Most shocking, in my opinion, where the

scenes of gathering hosts' dead corpses and storing them in piles and mass graves – an image resembling terrifying scenes of wars. Altogether, realistic presentation and the number of violent scenes makes Westworld's aesthetics highly dystopic.

#### **4. Conclusions.**

Altogether, Westworld as a work of art includes high amount of dystopian values that can be found in almost every aspect of the TV series. I would say that the combination of the spatial structure, dystopian forces and empowered characters, and the audio-visual aestheticism gives a full dystopian impression. The space in Westworld seems to be broad and unlimited, widening according to the development plans of Delos, yet in fact it is a closed arena separated from the outside world that secures all the internal affairs. Possibly, the only unlimited place in Westworld is the digital world that has been established by Delos but it still would be under total supervision. All dystopian controlling forces have essential power to secure the park and maintain it according to their will, which means that the majority of inhabitants are not able to choose for themselves and that all those choices are just an illusion of freedom and independence. Aesthetic dystopia is visible in the amount of on-screen violence and brutality. The fights are impressively cruel and bloody, there is no rejection to present repulsive scenes of cutting bodies by using different tools, shootings including heavy wounds, torturing and executions, which are not an exception in any of the thematic parks. Also, the nudity in the series serves not only as a visual mean, but also as a dystopian metaphor of deprivation, impartiality, and superiority. Altogether, Westworld as a work of art, and as a work of fiction, presents dystopian features which are not arguably proving its high artistic, aesthetic, and narrative value.



## Summary.

TV series have undergone a long way of increasing artistic values since the rise of their popularity in the 80's. The change is highly visible when we compare early TV programmes with the contemporary series – as early series productions were mainly focused on getting the highest possible number of viewers, they could not include sophisticated structure and specific thematic preoccupations. At the same time, soap operas and dramas of the old era were aesthetically and artistically blank, lacking innovative narrative techniques that are common nowadays. The increase of interest in episodic productions was caused by many factors, among them are the appearance of cinematic techniques in TV series together with directors and scriptwriters bringing new artistic views. This allowed to create narratively complex works of art and attracted new type of viewers that required more cognitively encouraging programmes. As new artistic concepts arrived in the TV series, it also enabled to apply new approaches of analysis. As a work of art, TV series started to defamiliarize already known and used concepts and introduced a deepened level of analysis – the narratives became more complex and adopted new artistic motifs. Structurally series are now more varied, the repetitive organisation of the plot turned into longer, multilevel stories with multiple narrators existing in chronologically diverse arrangement. As a work of fiction, TV series enable creators' imagination and skills to be fully exposed – basing the stories on mimetic recreation of reality they can input multiple narratives touching upon themes that were not already discussed. This increases the number of possible fictional combinations and enriches the value of programmes. *Westworld* as an example of contemporary TV series clearly presents discussed above notions. In its convention it includes few fictional worlds existing independently, but are connected due to the course of narration. The series is structured in an unchronological way and includes many well-developed narrators relevant to the whole story. Also, as it is based on dystopian fundamentals, *Westworld* opens a discussion over the morality of human beings, the usage of technology and its

influences on human kind and its future. As I stated earlier, the contemporary series are more engaging due to their fictional richness and can be described as valuable works of art.

I believe that my thesis presents contemporary TV series as a new type of art that should be now considered as high-brow narrative texts. Their immense artistic level is obtained by the complexity of structure and variety of narrative forms, interest in thematic preoccupations as human morality, lusts and urges, the relationship between technology and its influence on the behaviour of humans, the pursuit of creating artificial consciousness and gaining immortality. Also, the usage of motifs as dystopia shows that TV series are an artistic art that can be used to develop broad fictional worlds including sophisticated literary designs.

## Podsumowanie.

Od początku lat 80-tych seriale telewizyjne przeszły proces nabierania nowych wartości artystycznych. Zmiana ta jest szczególnie widoczna gdy porównujemy starsze produkcje ze współczesnymi serialami – dawniej głównym celem produkcji seriali było zgromadzenie jak największej widowni przed telewizorem, co uniemożliwiało tworzenie seriali z rozbudowanych pod względem strukturalnym i fabularnym. Jednocześnie opery mydlane i dramaty poprzedniej epoki były estetycznie i artystycznie wybrakowane, nie zawierały struktur narracyjnych, które są istotnym elementem współczesnych seriali telewizyjnych. Wiele czynników wpłynęło na wzrost zainteresowania serialami telewizyjnymi, między innymi pojawienie się technik filmowych znanych dotychczas jedynie z wielobudżetowych produkcji. Dodatkowo, zaangażowanie reżyserów oraz scenarzystów z doświadczeniem filmowym wniosło do seriali nowe artystyczne wizje. Pozwoliło to stworzyć teksty zaawansowane pod względem narracyjnym oraz zainteresowało widzów wymagających bardziej kognitywnie angażujących seriali. Pojawienie się nowych koncepcji artystycznych w serialach telewizyjnych umożliwiło zastosowanie sposobów analizy literackiej. Jako forma sztuki, seriale zaczęły odzwyczajać od dotychczas stosowanych koncepcji artystycznych. Strukturalnie seriale odeszły od powtarzalnej organizacji fabuły i wprowadziły dłuższe, bardziej rozbudowane historie z wieloma narratorami funkcjonującymi w różnych liniach czasowych. Jako teksty fikcjonalne, seriale umożliwiają twórcom wykazanie się w pełni ich umiejętnościami i wyobraźnią – seriale pozwalają na tworzenie światów fikcjonalnych bazujących na mimetycznym odzwierciedleniu rzeczywistości, którą można wzbogacić poprzez umieszczenie wielu linii narracyjnych zajmujących się istotnymi zagadnieniami tematycznymi. *Westworld* jako przykład współczesnego serialu doskonale uwidocznia wspomniane wyżej zagadnienia. Dzięki użyciu konwencji wielu istniejących niezależnie od siebie światów fikcjonalnych, *Westworld* posiada bardzo bogatą i zróżnicowaną narrację przedstawioną w formie niechronologicznych

epizodów. Co więcej, ze względu na użycie motywów znanych z tekstów dystopijnych, *Westworld* otwiera dyskusję na temat ludzkiej moralności, wpływu technologii i jej wpływu na ludzkość i jego przyszłość. Zastosowanie wspomnianych powyżej technik literackich oraz nowatorskich metod narracyjnych wskazuje na wysoką wartość artystyczną współczesnych seriali.

## **Abstract.**

The main purpose of my thesis is to present TV series as a significant contemporary works of art. The text I used as an example to prove my thesis is *Westworld*. In the introduction to my thesis I include the definitions of art, TV series, together with the presentation of features of contemporary programmes. Also, the first chapter includes the presentation of analytical methods based on Russian formalism and the works of Viktor Shklovsky, a description of narratological criticism adapted from Mieke Bal followed by the definitions of narrative and narrator. The first chapter focuses on the analysis of *Westworld* using the theory included in the introduction. To do so, I described Michael Crichton's vision of *Westworld* fictional worlds in the film that served as an inspiration for the series. Then, after presenting main characters and the features of this particular fictional world I describe the narrators and temporal arrangements of the series. The last part of my thesis defines dystopia as a literary motif that was used in *Westworld*, which includes the definition of dystopia, presenting its characteristics and values in discourse. The analysis also includes discussing aesthetical and artistic standards of dystopian texts.

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