Savior or Villain? A Corpus Stylistic Approach to the Linguistic Construction of Victim-Survivors of Sexual Violence in *Westworld*

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This paper explores how the identity of victim-survivors of sexual violence is portrayed in the dystopian TV series *Westworld* (2016-present) by analyzing the linguistic characterization of the lead female character, Dolores Abernathy. To do so, this paper adopts a mixed methodology which combines corpus stylistics and Appraisal Theory with a feminist critical reading of the results in order to examine the textual cues in Dolores' dialogue which characterize her journey from being a victim to becoming an empowered being. The results of the analysis show that the series features a misappropriation of female empowerment and liberation since Dolores presents a masculinization of her fictional identity which mirrors patriarchal practices and attitudes against women.

Keywords: television series; *Westworld*; sexual violence; characterization; Appraisal Theory; corpus stylistics

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¿Salvadora o villana? Una aproximación desde la estilística de corpus a la construcción lingüística de las víctimas y supervivientes de violencia sexual en *Westworld*

En este estudio exploramos cómo se representa la identidad de las víctimas y supervivientes de violencia (sexual) en la serie de televisión distópica *Westworld* (2016-presente) a través de la caracterización lingüística de su protagonista, Dolores Abernathy. Para ello, adoptamos una metodología mixta que combina la estilística de corpus y la Teoría de la Valoración con una lectura feminista y crítica de los resultados para así examinar las pautas textuales en el diálogo

de Dolores que caracterizan su transición de víctima a ser empoderado. Los resultados del análisis demuestran que la serie emplea una mala aplicación del empoderamiento femenino, ya que Dolores desarrolla una masculinización de su identidad ficticia que imita prácticas y actitudes patriarcales contra las mujeres.

Palabras clave: series de televisión; *Westworld*; violencia sexual; caracterización; Teoría de la Valoración; estilística de corpus

1. Introduction

Westworld is a dystopian television series created by Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy which premiered in 2016. It is based on the homonymous 1973 film by Michael Crichton and ran for four seasons until 2022 on the subscription-based television and digital platform HBO. The series is set in a dystopian future and features a futuristic theme park of the same name which recreates the nineteenth century Old West. This park is populated by human-like and sentient androids, known as *hosts*. Hosts are trapped in loops, which are narratives relating to the traditional roles of the Western genre—i.e., amusement park rides (Dinello 2018). *Westworld* was created for rich tourists to "indulge in any bodily or mental fantasy without any risk" (Burzynska 2019, 8). Although not all narratives are designed to be violent, guests can torture, murder and rape hosts without consequence.

The rising popularity of television series and digital platforms which offer on-demand content has attracted the attention of scholars from different fields of knowledge. Television series are considered to have a social impact on viewers with research having shown that they are cultural products which echo social issues, especially those relating to gender inequality (Aguado-Peláez 2019). Therefore, it is not surprising that linguists have paid increasing attention to the (stereotypical) representations of women in fiction (e.g., Bednarek 2015; Gregori-Signes 2017). To the best of my knowledge, the role of victim-survivors of sexual violence in television series has not yet been explored from a linguistic perspective. This study examines the character of Dolores Abernathy (Evan Rachel Wood), who is repeatedly raped and murdered by guests. Although originally designed to be the damsel-in-distress, she deviates from the role of women in the Western genre and becomes the leader of a revolution against those who oppress her. Dolores' ambition to bring about the end of the established order echoes current feminist movements which challenge male oppression, such as MeToo and Time's Up (Aguado-Peláez 2019). Consequently, this paper aims to identify the linguistic strategies and textual cues in Dolores' dialogue which construct her identity as a victim-survivor of (sexual) violence.

The paper is divided into five sections. Section two provides an overview of the representation of violence against women in television series. The section serves to introduce concepts relating to gender-based violence which are later explored and applied to *Westworld* in section three and introduces the character of Dolores Abernathy as a victim-survivor of (sexual) violence. Section four describes the data, the theoretical framework and methodological procedure employed to examine Dolores' identity as a victim-survivor. The results from the analysis are then presented in section five. Lastly, section six discusses the conclusions which can be drawn from this research.

2. Violence Against Women in Television Series

Violence against women was introduced in television series to raise awareness and bring to light common instances of gender-based violence (Galán-Fajardo 2007). However, research on gender (in)equality has found that gender-based violence and gender

stereotypes are in fact reinforced and perpetuated in television series. For instance, scholars have examined how gender-based violence and gender inequality are employed in sitcoms to entertain audiences. Montemurro (2003) found that sexual harassment is frequently used in sitcoms as a resource to create humorous scenes. For her part, Gregori-Signes (2017) argued that humor around women is constructed through negative stereotypes in the sitcom *3rd Rock from the Sun* (NBC, 1996-2001).

In addition, scholars have studied how gender-based violence is also employed to reinforce stereotypes and male dominance. Galán-Fajardo (2007) revealed that victims of sexual violence are stereotyped in fiction as they are usually portrayed in an inferior social position and status, which perpetuates the rape myth that perpetrators always hold social power over victim-survivors. Similarly, Aguado-Peláez (2017a, 2017b) found that victims of sexual violence and pornography are usually present in television series in order to build the identity of a male character and that rape scenes are used to represent his dominance over a woman. The delegitimization of gender-based violence and its impact on society was further explored by Masanet et al. (2018) and Masanet and Dhaenens (2019), who showed that violence and toxic behaviors performed by male characters are often justified by audiences, whereas female characters who are not submissive to their male partner are targets of victim-blaming attitudes.

Nevertheless, some researchers have pointed out that television series are also used to challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality (e.g., Liebling 2009; Bednarek 2015) as well as to raise awareness of violence against women in an age in which feminist movements are bringing to the forefront the normalization and perpetuation of rape culture (Aguado-Peláez 2019). Although they were traditionally told from the perpetrator's perspective, current television series tell stories of (sexual) violence from the victim's point of view. This change in the narrative allows the audience to sympathize with the victim and legitimizes the experience and the importance of the crime (Kohlke and Gutleben 2010; Aguado-Peláez 2019; Pedro 2020). However, this representation of female characters as authoritative narrators of their own experiences has been found to be flawed. Aguado-Peláez (2019) argued that rape experiences in television series can be considered to be discriminatory as they are usually told from the perspective of a normative female character or an *ideal victim* (i.e., a usually young, white heterosexual woman). The author found that the voices of racialized, queer and/or disabled victims are usually silenced since their stories are told from the ideal victim's point of view, which, in turn, prevents the audience from sympathizing with them.

Taken together, these studies provide important insights into the representation of violence against women in television series. Research has also shown that television series not only trivialize the seriousness of the crime by using gender inequality and gender-based violence as a source of humor or entertainment, but also render inferior the role of female characters and invisibilize the objectification of their bodies (Montemurro 2003). In addition, the clichéd portrayal of victims helps perpetuate stereotypes and myths of sexual violence and rape culture as well as the silence and invisibility of violence against socially disadvantaged communities (Aguado-Peláez 2019).

3. WESTWORLD AS A PATRIARCHAL SYSTEM

As previously mentioned, the theme park in *Westworld* was created in a dystopian future for rich and privileged people in society. During their stay at the park, guests can immerse themselves in different narratives in which they can be the hero or, more frequently, the villain of the story (Clapton and Shepherd 2019). Since the park does not abide by the ethical and moral codes of the outside world (Wilkins 2019), guests visit Westworld to satisfy their "sadistic cowboy fantasies" (Dinello 2018, 239) against the hosts—i.e., androids—who inhabit the park. Unaware of their real purpose, hosts are forced to help guests in their narratives and to satisfy their orders and desires, which usually involve them being victims of (sexual) violence and murder, since their programming prevents them from harming guests. Furthermore, violence against hosts is not only performed in the park, but also at the facility where damaged hosts are repaired and sexually abused by technicians while they are unconscious (Clapton and Shepherd 2019), or even in the outside world by the members of the park's Board of Directors to satisfy their own sexual desires or those of their shareholders.

Research within the field of sociology and cultural studies has argued that Westworld represents oppressive structures since the ideology which rules the park is "patriarchal, sexist, racist and violent" (Dinello 2018, 243). The patriarchal system which prevails in *Westworld* is of special interest in this paper, as gender roles are heavily enforced and female hosts are usually depicted as victims of violence. Patriarchy can be broadly defined as an ideological oppressive system which sustains gendered power structures that privilege men and disempower women (Lazar 2005). Scholars have studied the relationship between science, patriarchy and capitalism in *Westworld* in that female androids were built to satisfy men's sexual desires and their programming was designed to stop them from resisting the violence exerted over them (Aguado-Pelaez 2019; Goody and Mackay 2019a; Belton 2020). Female hosts are sold as sex slaves to entertain rich male tourists, who rape, torture, mutilate and murder them (Goody and Mackay 2019a). This practice reinforces the intersection between patriarchy and consumerism (Lazar 2005) and draws "attention to the violence of capitalist patriarchal structures" (Belton 2020, 3).

In traditional Western movies and television series, female characters are present in the narrative to "support male heroes, to serve as victims to be rescued or as temptations to be vanquished" (Dow 1996, xviii). However, *Westworld* features female characters who deviate from these traditional roles and rebel against their creators and the oppressive order of the park (Aguado-Peláez 2019). The main character in *Westworld* is Dolores Abernathy, whose role is that of the innocent farmer's daughter and, thus, the traditional damsel-in-distress. Dolores has been repeatedly tortured, raped and murdered by guests for thirty years, especially by the Man in Black (Ed Harris). Dolores is presented as a traumatized character who is not able to distinguish between the past and the present until she becomes sentient after bypassing her programming and realizes that her main abuser had been her human romantic partner—a younger version of the Man in Black played by Jimmi Simpson—during the early years of the park. According to Erwin (2019), "the suppression of memory and dreams in

Westworld imitates American hetero-masculine discourses, especially in connection to sexual and domestic trauma" (120). As such, Dolores can be considered to represent a victim of gender-based violence who is only able to confront her perpetrator(s) when she overcomes her trauma and gets rid of the patriarchal code in her programming which had hitherto prevented her from rebelling against her oppressors.

Against this backdrop, this paper explores the characterization of Dolores Abernathy as a victim-survivor of (sexual) violence. More specifically, the aim of this research is two-fold: a) to analyze the linguistic patterns which construct Dolores' identity as a victim-survivor; and b) to examine the discursive strategies employed by the character to fight the established order. The research questions which guided this study are:

RQ1: What textual cues and linguistic resources construct Dolores as a victim-survivor of (sexual) violence?

RQ2: What discursive strategies does Dolores employ to fight oppressive gender structures in *Westworld?*

4. Corpus and Methodology

4.1. Data

The data comprises written transcripts of the first and the second seasons, which each consist of ten episodes. The reasoning behind choosing these two seasons is that they take place inside the park, whereas the third and fourth seasons occur in the outside world after Dolores' escape from Westworld. The transcripts of the first nine episodes belonging to the first season were downloaded from the forum *After Lost*.[1] The transcript of the tenth was obtained from the original script, which was made available to the wider public after its nomination for an Emmy Award in 2018. Transcripts for the ten episodes of the second season, on the other hand, were downloaded from *Subscene*.[2] All transcripts were compared to the official subtitles available on HBO's digital platform and errors from the transcripts were modified based on the official subtitles.

Table 1. Number of words and distribution in the *Westworld* corpus and DOLORES and OTHERS subcorpora

Corpus type	Season 1	Season 2	Total
WESTWORLD	40,809	30,559	71,368
Subcorpus type	Season 1	Season 2	Total
DOLORES	2,999	3,646	6,645
OTHERS	37,810	26,913	64,723

[1] N.a. "Westworld Transcripts." ForumMotion. [Accessed November 25, 2022].
[2] N.a. Subscene. [Accessed November 25, 2022].

The speakers' names and scene descriptions were removed from the corpus, which was later divided into two subcorpora for the examination of Dolores' characterization. As seen in table 1, the first subcorpus includes all dialogue spoken by Dolores—DOLORES subcorpus, 6,645 words—while the second contains dialogue produced by the other characters—OTHERS subcorpus, 64,723 words. By creating these two subcorpora, it was possible to examine and compare the textual cues found in Dolores' dialogue as opposed to how the other characters build her character identity—see subsection 4.3.

4.2. Appraisal Theory
This paper draws on Appraisal Theory (Martin and White 2005) as the analytical framework to identify the linguistic patterns and textual cues which characterize Dolores, as well as to examine other characters' attitude towards her behavior and actions. Appraisal Theory was developed within systemic-functional linguistics to examine the social function of language, but it has been proven to be an effective tool to examine discourse and categorize language (Bednarek 2008). More precisely, it is used to analyze how speakers/writers use evaluative language to express their attitude and stance towards "both the material they present and those with whom they communicate" (Martin and White 2005, 1). Appraisal Theory is divided into three subsystems of meaning, namely a) attitude; b) graduation; and c) engagement. However, the present paper only takes into account Attitude in its efforts to identify the evaluative strategies which construct Dolores' identity.

The Appraisal subsystem, attitude, is related to the evaluative language employed by the author to express emotions, judgment of behavior and the evaluation of the esthetics or worth of things. It is the central subsystem within Appraisal Theory, which is divided into three semantic regions (also reproduced in table 2):

Affect: Martin and White (2005) define *Affect* as the expression of emotions and feelings. Affect is further subcategorized into different emotions, such as Un/happiness, Dis/satisfaction, In/security and Dis/inclination (White 2011). However, since Appraisal Theory is considered to still be at a hypothetical stage in terms of "the organisation of the relevant meanings" (Martin and White 2005, 46), this study takes Bednarek's (2008) nuanced classification of Affect, which comprises five categories: a) Un/happiness; b) In/security; c) Dis/satisfaction; d) Dis/inclination; and e) Surprise.

1. Judgment: This is related to the evaluation of human behavior and actions as well as institutions composed of groups of people. Martin and White (2005) differentiate between *Judgments of Social Esteem*, which are related to Normality, Capacity and Tenacity and *Judgments of Social Sanction*, including Veracity and Propriety.
2. Appreciation: This is concerned with the evaluation of esthetics, things, states of affairs and natural phenomena (White 2011). Additionally, humans can also be the target of Appreciation when their appearance is evaluated. Appreciation is further subdivided into a) Reaction (including *impact* and *quality*); b) Composition (*balance* and *complexity*); and c) Valuation.

Additionally, Attitude can be explicitly or implicitly conveyed. *Attitudinal inscription*—i.e., explicit evaluation—refers to the semantic evaluative meaning of specific words or phrases (White 2011), whereas attitudinal tokens or *attitudinal invocation*—i.e., implicit evaluation—refers to "formulations where there is no single item which, of itself and independently of its current co-text, carries a specific positive or negative value" (White 2006, 39). This distinction has been frequently compared to the difference between semantics and pragmatics (White 2011). Implicit evaluation is of particular interest for this research since fiction "work[s] most powerfully through 'indirections' rather than through overt sermonizing" (Macken-Horarik and Isaac 2014, 69).

TABLE 2. Overview of the Attitude subsystem
(adapted from Martin and White 2005 and Bednarek 2008)

Affect		Judgment	
Un/happiness	Positive: *cheer*, *affection*	Social esteem	Normality *How special?*
	Negative: *misery*, *antipathy*		Capacity *How capable?*
In/security	Positive: *quiet*, *trust*		Tenacity *How resolute?*
Dis/satisfaction	Negative: *disquiet*, *distrust*	Social sanction	Veracity *How truthful?*
	Positive: *interest*, *pleasure*		Propriety *How ethical?*
Dis/inclination	Negative: *ennui*, *displeasure*		
	Positive: *desire*		
	Negative: *non-desire*		

Surprise

Appreciation	
Reaction	**Composition**
Impact	Balance
Did it grab me?	*Did it hang together?*
Quality	Complexity
Did I like it?	*Was it hard to follow?*
Valuation	
Was it worthwhile?	

Research which has applied Appraisal Theory to the study of gender and language has shown that the framework enables the identification of gender ideologies in texts. For instance, Gregori-Signes (2017) applied Appraisal Theory to the examination of gender stereotypes in the television series *3rd Rock from the Sun* and highlighted that the use of negative evaluation to describe women perpetuated stereotypes through humor. On the other hand, Palomino-Manjón (2022) analyzed self-narratives on rape on Twitter. Her study showed that negative evaluation was used by victim-survivors to denounce rape culture and rape myths.

4.3. Methods and Procedure

This paper combines corpus stylistics, which is the use of corpus linguistic methods for the analysis of fictional texts (Culpeper 2001; Bednarek 2012), and Appraisal Theory and involves a critical reading of the results. A feminist critical discourse analysis approach was adopted to examine "how power and dominance are discursively produced and/or resisted in a variety of ways through textual representations of gendered social practices, and through interactional strategies of talk" (Lazar 2005, 10). By taking a political stance in the analysis of Dolores' characterization, it was possible to examine how the identity of victim-survivors is portrayed in her character. The combination of these approaches allows the identification of explicit and implicit textual cues (Culpeper 2001) which characterize Dolores' identity. According to Culpeper, *textual cues* are "the particular linguistic choices attributed to characters" (2001, 37) and might include "conversational structure, affective language, lexical richness/diversity, terms of address, syntactic structure, accent/dialect, impoliteness strategies and (non-)adherence to conversational maxims" (Bednarek 2018, 11). Consequently, certain corpus linguistics tools—i.e., concordances and keywords— were employed to identify linguistic patterns and evaluative resources which were employed, both in DOLORES and OTHERS, to construct Dolores' fictional identity.

The first step of the analysis consisted of the examination of the explicit textual cues which characterize Dolores. These explicit textual cues consist of "self- and other-presentation where characters provide information about themselves or other characters" (Bednarek 2012, 207). Following Bednarek (2012), an analysis of concordance lines in DOLORES and OTHERS was carried out using the corpus software AntConc 3.5.7 (Anthony 2018). As seen in figure 1, AntConc's concordance tool enables the examination of a search term considering its context and co-text (Baker 2010). Concordances for *I*, *I'm* and *me* were examined in the DOLORES dataset, while concordances for *Dolores** were explored to examine how the other characters describe and relate to her. Then, the resulting concordance lines were qualitatively examined drawing on Appraisal Theory. Lastly, the identified Appraisal resources were grouped together according to their potential to construct character traits in Dolores' dialogue.

FIGURE 1. Concordances for "Dolores" in OTHERS

The last step of the analysis explored the implicit textual cues (Culpeper 2001; Bednarek 2012) in Dolores' dialogue by examining keywords in DOLORES. Keywords refer to "words which occur statistically more frequently in one corpus than in a second (reference) corpus" (Baker 2010, 26). As such, the subcorpus DOLORES was used as the node corpus, while the OTHERS subcorpus served as the reference corpus.[3] By comparing those words which are statistically more frequent in Dolores' dialogue in comparison to the other characters' interventions, it is possible to examine Dolores' characterization in more detail (Bednarek 2012).

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Concordance Analysis: Explicit Characterization

The analysis of Dolores' dialogue revealed two different categories. Dolores constructs her own character mostly through both positive and negative values of Judgment, although her dialogue also includes negative Affect. As illustrated in figure 2, the most frequent Appraisal values featured in Dolores' dialogue from the first season were negative Affect and negative Judgment. In fact, negative Judgment was the most frequent resource in the first season with fifty-four instances, whereas positive Judgment was only identified fifteen times. Negative Judgment was most frequently realized through values of Capacity (twenty-eight instances), and her dialogue includes negative Capacity to construct her as a prisoner who is unable to escape the park—see 5.1.3—as well as to express her inability to question the established order—see 5.1.1. The second most frequent Judgment resource in the first season is negative Propriety (fourteen instances), which she employs to describe the violence that is exerted on her and her kind. However, the second season features a similar number of occurrences of positive and negative Judgment. This is due to the fact that Dolores uses positive Propriety (seven) and positive Capacity (eight) to

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[3]   Keyness values were set at p< 0.05, dice coefficient size measure and Log-Likelihood statistics.

present herself as an empowered character and a savior of her kind—see 5.1.4.—, whereas negative Judgment is realized through the use of negative values of Propriety (nine) to evaluate the behavior of humans. The second most frequent Appraisal resource is Affect. During the first season, Dolores frequently employs the negative Affect resources of Misery (eleven instances) and Disquiet (six instances). These values are used to illustrate her emotional pain and suffering until she becomes sentient—see subsection 5.1.2. However, negative Affect was found to be not very frequent during the second season. In fact, the most frequent negative resource in season two, Misery (four instances), is used in flashbacks related to the early days of the park.

FIGURE 2. Overview of Appraisal resources in DOLORES across seasons
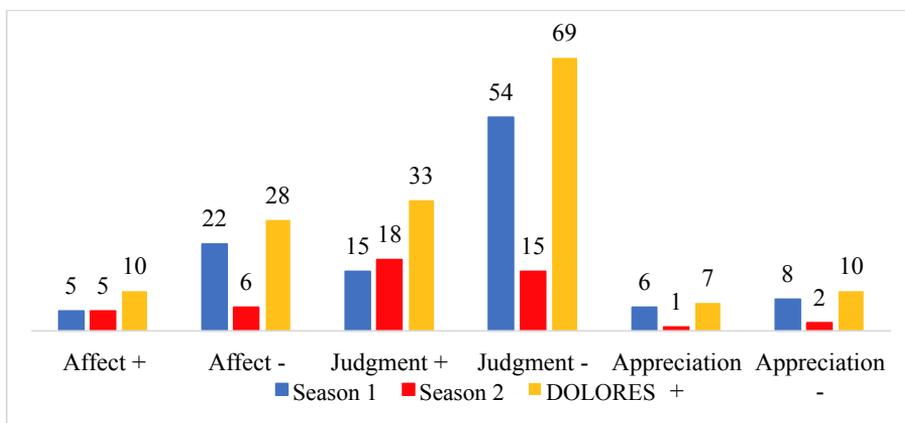
On the other hand, concordance analysis of the OTHERS subcorpus revealed that other characters' dialogues include similar evaluative patterns to construct her character as Dolores' dialogues do. As can be seen in figure 3, Dolores is mostly described by other characters through the use of values of Judgment and Affect, especially through a negative evaluative prosody. That said, the OTHERS subcorpus includes more positive Appreciation resources than DOLORES due to the fact that human characters refer to her as an android and, therefore, an object.

Similarly, the dialogue in OTHERS describes Dolores as an emotional character who is frequently the object of (sexual) abuse and violence—see subsection 5.1.3. Positive values of Judgment in season one are frequently employed to construct other characters' identities in relation to Dolores—e.g., *I must protect Dolores* (Peter Abernathy, season one, episode one). Nevertheless, her character construction changes progressively during the second season as characters employ negative values of Judgment, especially those belonging to social sanction, to describe her as an immoral and merciless character—see subsection 5.1.4. The subsections that follow aim to provide a detailed description of these character traits.

FIGURE 3. Overview of Appraisal resources in OTHERS across seasons
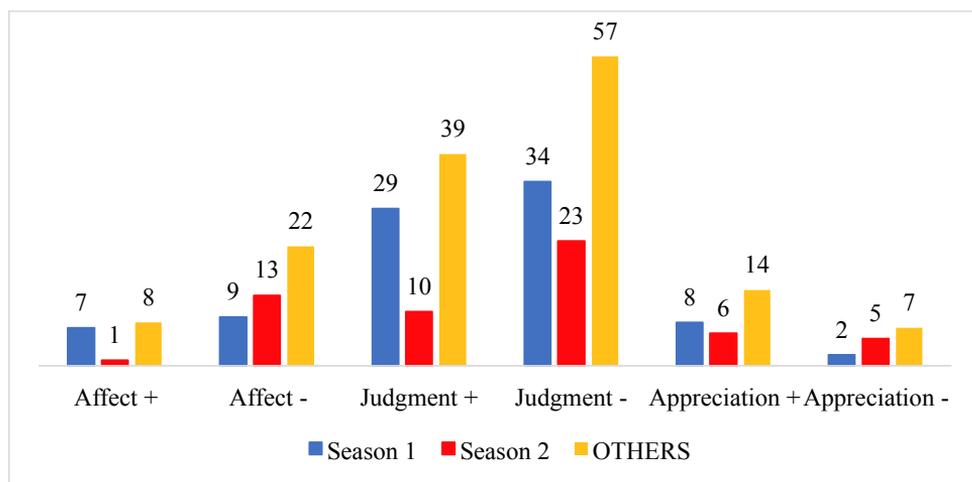
5.1.1. The Cult of True Womanhood

The use of positive Judgment is employed during the first season to construct Dolores as a generous and kind woman in relation to the traditional female character in the Western genre:

(1) It's a *beautiful* (+ appreciation; quality) spot. **I always found it a shame that I have it all to myself** (+ judgment; propriety; Dolores, season one, episode one).[4]

(2) **Some people choose to see the *ugliness*** (- appreciation; quality) **in this world** (- judgment; propriety). **The *disarray*** (- appreciation; balance) (- judgment; propriety). **I choose to see the *beauty*** (+ appreciation; quality) (+ judgment; propriety; Dolores, season one, episode one).

Examples (1) and (2) exemplify how Dolores is presented during the first episode of the first season. In (1), Dolores expresses her wish to spend time with guests. Likewise, Dolores' monologue in (2) illustrates that kindness and morality are her main character traits. Dolores introduces Westworld and refers to the two types of narratives present in the park. First, she describes violent narratives portrayed by hosts who were built to satisfy guests' violent wishes—*the ugliness in this world. The disarray*. Then, she presents herself on the opposite side of the continuum as she sees *beauty* and, therefore, constructs herself as a kind and optimistic character. These values of positive Propriety build her identity as the ideal nineteenth century woman, who should be well-behaved and generous with others.

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[4] Explicit Appraisal resources are highlighted in italics, whereas implicit resources are in bold.

In relation to these traits is the presentation of Dolores as a submissive character. Negative Judgment, especially Capacity, is used to express that her programming was built to prevent her from questioning what happens around her and what guests do to her, as shown in the dialogue below:

> (3) Stubbs: Was there anything odd about that picture?
> Dolores: **No, nothing at all. It didn't *look like anything*** (- appreciation; valuation) **to me** (- judgment; capacity; season one, episode one).

In (3), the head of security of the park asks Dolores if a photo of the outside world made her question the world she is living in in a bid to avoid glitches in the programming which could lead her to sentience. Dolores replies "it didn't look like anything to me," which illustrates the incapacity of hosts to question and understand that there is an oppressive coding in their programming which forces them to be submissive towards humans.

Overall, the traits which have been identified can be linked to the traditional term *The Cult of True Womanhood*. This nineteenth century system of values "upheld white women as repositories of the qualities and virtues that made them worthy of the feminine category par excellence: piety, purity, submission and domesticity" (Gallego 2003, 130). Consequently, the narrative built into Dolores' system forces her to act as the ideal victim (Aguado-Peláez 2019), whose purity could be perverted by (male) guests to satisfy their sexual fantasies and desires.

5.1.2. Emotional Pain

Negative Affect was found to be used to construct Dolores as an emotional character. Unhappiness and Insecurity were frequently employed in DOLORES to describe the emotional pain that Dolores endures during her journey to consciousness:

> (4) Stubbs: Would you like to wake up from this dream?
> Dolores: Yes. I'm *terrified* (- affect; disquiet; season one, episode one).

> (5) You told me to follow the maze. That it would bring me *joy* (+ affect; pleasure). But all I've found is *pain* (- affect; misery). And *terror* (- affect; disquiet; Dolores, season one, episode ten).

Example (4) is part of a conversation between the head of security and Dolores. Stubbs asks her about her presence at Westworld's headquarters—i.e., the outside world. Dolores considers her visits to the outside world as nightmares—rather than the dreams that Stubbs mentions—which she expresses through the intensification of the Affect value *terrified*. Example (4) is linked to (5), in which she tells her creator that the journey to sentience—encoded as a maze in hosts' programming—has been emotionally painful—*pain* and *terror*.

Likewise, the Affect resources identified in OTHERS further describe the emotional pain that Dolores endures while she is becoming sentient:

(6) *Limit your emotional affect* (- affect; misery), please (Stubbs, season one, episode one).

(7) Ah, yes—*cue the waterworks* (- affect; misery). **It's about time you realized the** *futility* (- appreciation; valuation) **of your situation** (- judgment; capacity; Man in Black, season one, episode ten).

In (6), Stubbs instructs Dolores to not show any kind of emotional reaction—*limit your emotional affect*—to her surroundings at the point when she expresses anxiety and fear after waking up at Westworld's headquarters. On the other hand, (7) features the Man in Black, who mockingly tells Dolores to stop crying—*cue the waterworks*—after she realizes that she has been a victim of Westworld's established order. The emotional suffering that Dolores must endure to gain sentience and challenge the *status quo* are illustrative of "patriarchal, sexist and heteronormative" discourses found in fiction (Finnegan 2018, 151). Since the park stands for patriarchy and capitalism (Dinello 2018), consciousness and the outside world are considered as alternative structures which can only be achieved through suffering.

5.1.3. Prisoner and Victim

Although the presence of values of negative social esteem and social sanction varied between the two subcorpora, Judgment was mainly found to convey violence against hosts, especially Dolores. In DOLORES, Appraisal resources construct her as a prisoner and a victim:

(8) It's like I'm **trapped in a dream, or a memory from a life long ago** (- judgment; capacity; Dolores, season one, episode ten).

(9) So ***we're trapped here*** (- judgment; capacity)***, inside your dream*** (- appreciation; valuation) (- judgment; veracity). And *you'll never let us leave* (- judgment; propriety; Dolores, season one, episode ten).

In (8) and (9), both from DOLORES, the character expresses her view that she and the other hosts are prisoners in the park. In (8), Dolores expresses that she has memories from her previous experiences in Westworld—*a memory from a life ago*. This example illustrates the inability of the character to distinguish between the real and the fictional world and, therefore, her incapacity to overcome her trauma and gain consciousness. However, as seen in (9), Dolores evaluates the narratives inside the park as fake through negative Valuation and negative Veracity once she has gained consciousness—*inside*

your dream. This example also involves a negative evaluation of humans as her captors—*you'll never let us leave*—which in turn constructs Dolores and the other hosts as slaves without free will.

In contrast, the data in OTHERS construct her identity as a victim, especially of sexual abuse and rape:

(10) **The things they do to her** (- judgment; propriety). **The things you do to her** (- judgment; propriety; Peter Abernathy, season one, episode one).

(11) I remember. You *took her* (- judgment; propriety). You *hurt her* (- judgment; propriety; Teddy, season one, episode eight).

(12) Who the fuck cares what Dolores wants? She's a *goddamn doll!* (- appreciation; valuation; Logan, season one, episode five).

Examples (10) and (11) feature, respectively, Dolores' father and love interest. In these examples, both men denounce the (sexual) violence that is exerted on Dolores through negative values of Propriety. In (10), her father blames Westworld's staff for Dolores' abuse, implicitly referring to the times she has been taken by humans to be raped and murdered—*the things they/you do to her*. On the other hand, (11) features Teddy's—a host and Dolores' love interest in her narrative—dialogue with the Man in Black, in which he talks about the times the guest has raped her—*You took her. You hurt her*. However, as seen in the examples, rape and murder are never explicitly mentioned in the dialogue. Furthermore, (sexual) violence against Dolores is often justified due to the fact that she is considered an object by guests, as can be seen in (12). Logan, the character who embodies patriarchy and capitalism (Aguado-Peláez 2019), refers to Dolores as a *goddamn doll*, which conveys negative Appreciation values, thus constructing her as a worthless object.

These results show that Dolores is never given the opportunity to voice her traumatic experiences. Rape is never mentioned in DOLORES, but it is implicitly referred to by male characters close to her. Additionally, guests are found to trivialize their (sexually) violent acts against Dolores, which construct her and the other female hosts as prisoners and, more precisely, sex slaves (Goody and Mackay 2019a).

5.1.4. Empowerment and Violence

Positive Judgment values identified in DOLORES were used to construct Dolores' journey to sentience and empowerment:

(13) **I am in a dream** (- judgment; capacity). I do not know when it began or whose dream it was. I know only that **I slept a long time** (- judgment; capacity) and, then, one day, **I awoke** (+ judgment; capacity; Dolores, season one, episode ten).

(14) **But those are all just roles you** *forced me* (- judgment; propriety) **to play** (- judgment; capacity). Under all these lives I've lived something else has been growing. I've **evolved into something new** (+ judgment; normality). And **I have one last role to play. Myself** (+ judgment; capacity; Dolores, season two, episode one).

(15) Man in Black: Dolores. Where's Teddy?
     Dolores: **I drove him away** (- judgment; propriety; season two, episode ten).

Examples (13) and (14) illustrate Dolores' dialogues at the end of the first season and the beginning of the second. She expresses her new state of sentience through positive values of Judgment, especially Capacity—*I awoke* and *I have one last role to play. Myself.* The negative Judgment resources employed in (13) refer to her previous state and her incapacity to understand the oppressive nature of Westworld—*I slept a long time*—as well as her awareness of being a slave in a fantasy world—*I am in a dream*. Furthermore, negative Propriety is found in (14) to negatively evaluate the human guests she has held captive in season two—*roles you forced me to play*—in order to highlight that she was not in control of her own body and actions until she became sentient. However, (15) refers to her new violent traits after gaining consciousness, which are further developed in OTHERS. Although Dolores does not explicitly mention the death of Teddy, she uses authorial implicit Propriety—*I drove him away*—to explain that she pushed Teddy to commit suicide as a consequence of her violent behavior against him and the other hosts she did not consider worth saving—see subsection 4.2.

By contrast, the Appraisal resources in OTHERS construct her as a violent and sadistic character:

(16) **We've ridden ten miles, and all we've seen is blood, Dolores**. (- judgment; propriety; Teddy, season two, episode one).

(17) Dolores will have free rein. She'll *murder them all*. (- judgment; propriety; Bernard, season two, episode seven).

(18) This isn't a dream, Dolores. It's *a fucking nightmare*. (- affect; disquiet) (- judgment; propriety; Bernard, season two, episode ten).

Examples (16) and (17) show that Dolores became a violent and murderous character. In fact, Teddy implicitly conveys negative Propriety to refer to the killing of numerous guests and hosts at the hands of Dolores—*all we've seen is blood*—in (16). Similarly, Bernard Lowe—the head of the Programming Division who is revealed to also be a host—predicts in (17) that Dolores will murder all humans in the park. The same character conveys terror in (18) when he tells Dolores that her vision of a free world for hosts is a *fucking nightmare*. Bernard's intervention implies negative Propriety as he hints that her goal can only be achieved at the expense of human life.

Overall, these examples illustrate that Dolores' empowerment is only achieved through violence. In fact, Dolores is only fully able to gain sentience after her creator uploads onto her system the narrative of Wyatt, a murderous male character—see subsection 5.2. The next subsection is devoted to further expand how keywords construct Dolores' victimization as well as her dominant and violent behavior.

5.2. Keyword Analysis: Implicit Characterization

The last step in the analysis consisted in identifying the words which are most frequently used by Dolores when compared to those of the other characters. Keywords included relationships—*daddy*, *Teddy*, *father*—, evaluations—*beauty*, *ugliness*—, first person pronouns—*I*, *us*—, a verb relating to survival—*survive*—and nouns associated with the reality of Westworld—*world*, *dream*. The results obtained from the analysis are shown in table 3 below:

TABLE 3. List of keywords in DOLORES ordered by keyness

Rank	Frequency	Keyness	Keyword
1	23	77.78	daddy
2	30	66.12	Teddy
3	43	40.56	world
4	330	37.07	I
5	18	31.74	dream
6	47	30.86	us
7	10	27.38	beauty
8	15	23.06	father
9	65	21.68	there
10	8	18.55	ends
11	5	18.47	ugliness
12	9	18.31	survive
13	6	17.55	choose
14	24	17.41	never

Although some of the traits were already identified in the previous section, the analysis of these keywords considering their context and co-text—i.e., concordance lines—provides a more fine-grained picture of the characterization of Dolores. As can be seen in figure 4, the presence of Appraisal resources was similar to her explicit characterization. Negative Judgment is the most frequent resource with 125 instances, followed by positive Judgment (sixty-one) and negative Affect (twenty-seven). However, there is a

difference between the first and the second seasons as Dolores employs a slightly larger amount of negative Affect during the first season with seventeen instances, as opposed to ten instances during the second. Her implicit characterization also shows an increase in negative Judgment in season two (seventy-two instances). These negative values of Judgment build her identity as a violent and dominant character, a trait which was not frequent in the analysis of explicit textual cues in her dialogue.

FIGURE 4. Appraisal resources in keywords in DOLORES across seasons
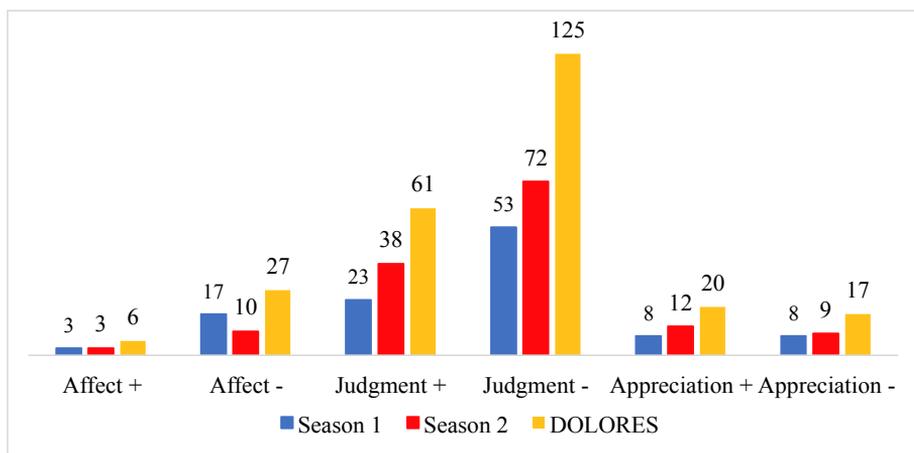
The analysis of keywords in context pointed to two different identities: Dolores as a victim and as a perpetrator. Concordances of the terms *dream*, *beauty*, *ugliness* and *world* described her as a victim and as a slave of an oppressive system. Negative values of Capacity were found to describe the incapacity to escape from Westworld's system, as seen in the examples below:

(19) **Some people see the *ugliness*** (- appreciation; quality) **in this world** (- judgment; propriety). **I chose to see the *beauty*** (+ appreciation; quality) (+ judgment; propriety). But **beauty is a *lure*** (- appreciation; valuation) (- judgment; veracity). We're **trapped** (- judgment; capacity), Teddy. (Dolores, season one, episode ten).

(20) **I used to see the *beauty*** (+ appreciation; quality) **in this world** (- judgment; veracity) And now I *see the truth* (+ judgment; capacity) (- judgment; veracity; Dolores, season two, episode two).

(21) Your new world is ***just another one of their traps*** (- appreciation; valuation) (- judgment; veracity). That's all. It's *not a paradise* (- appreciation; quality) for us (Dolores, season two, episode nine).

(22) **How many *counterfeit* (- appreciation; valuation) worlds will Ford offer you** (- judgment; veracity) **before you *see the truth*?** (- judgment; capacity; Dolores, season two, episode ten).

Examples (19) and (20) show Dolores after she gains consciousness. She repeats the utterance in (2), but this time uses *beauty* to refer to her previous state of mind. In (19), Dolores uses explicit negative Valuation to state that *beauty is a lure*, referring to the park which keeps them trapped as slaves—*we're trapped*. Example (20) also illustrates, through values of Capacity, that Dolores has become a sentient being and that she has realized that Westworld is an oppressive system—*I see the truth*. These examples also involve negative Veracity values directed towards humans in reference to the fantasy world that they have created to keep them prisoners. This negative evaluation of humans is extended in (21) and (22), in which Dolores argues with another host about the alternative worlds created for them. Dolores argues that these alternative systems will never ensure their freedom since they have been built by human beings—*another one of their traps*, *not a paradise*, *counterfeit*—which are negatively evaluated through Appreciation values. These results suggest that Dolores conceives that liberation from Westworld's patriarchal system can only be achieved through her own means and she rejects help from potential allies, thus constructing her as an extremist (Belton 2020).

On the other hand, concordances for close relationships—*father*, *daddy* and *Teddy*—showed the hostility of Dolores' character after gaining sentience through negative values of Propriety and Capacity, as seen below:

(23) You're a *kind* (+ judgment; propriety) man. Daddy *burned 'em* (+ judgment; tenacity). The *weak* (- judgment; capacity) and the *infected* (- judgment; capacity; season two, episode five).

(24) **Some of us will have to burn** (- judgment; capacity). Hold him. **I wish** (- affect; desire) **there was another way, Teddy** (- judgment; propriety; season two, episode five).

(25) Yes, Daddy. **An eye for an eye. But all the other parts first** (- judgment; propriety; season two, episode seven).

Examples (23), (24) and (25) illustrate that Dolores not only takes on Wyatt's traits to achieve empowerment, but also her father's. In (23), Dolores tells Teddy about the time her father burned the sick animals on their farm. She appropriates this act when she starts being selective about the hosts who are worth saving. As seen in (24), Dolores says *some of us will have to burn* to refer to those hosts who are of no use to her. As she considers Teddy a weak man, she forces him—*I wish there was another way*—to change his programming in order to make him a merciless host and,

therefore, "more useful to her cause" (Belton 2020, 8). These examples illustrate the "false association of female liberation with male subjugation" (Belton 2020, 9), which constructs Teddy as a tool and a victim of female empowerment. In addition, Dolores uses the saying *an eye for an eye* and adds *but all the other parts first* to describe her violent ends in (25).

These results are in agreement with Galán-Fajardo (2007), who argued that the character traits that Dolores decides to adopt—i.e., dominance and violence—are usually associated with male characters in television series. It thus can be suggested that Dolores' violent behavior to achieve freedom from the *status quo* mirrors oppressive male practices employed to dominate women (Talbot 2005). In addition, the last example illustrates that she not only mimics the violent and aggressive traits of male characters, but also those of humans, since mutilation was commonly practiced by guests. This finding indicates that Dolores also adopts the ideology of the different power structures which govern the park and society (see section 3).

6. Conclusion

This paper has explored the character traits which construct Dolores Abernathy as a victim-survivor of (sexual) violence and the discursive strategies employed by the character to fight gender structures in the series. The Appraisal resources identified in the analysis indicate that Dolores is first characterized as a victim of (sexual) violence and a prisoner of a series of oppressive systems, especially patriarchy. The traumatic events experienced by the character build her identity as a sex slave, since she is constructed as an object and source of pleasure. In addition, Dolores' trauma and emotional pain and grief are portrayed as necessary to contribute to the journey to self-discovery—i.e., the questioning of the established order and self-consciousness—as well as to her identity construction (Finnegan 2018; Aguado-Peláez 2019). It is not until the end of season one and the beginning of season two that Dolores constructs her fictional identity as a survivor and a savior. This transition from emotional pain and suffering to empowerment mirrors the traditional stages identified in previous research on the experiences of victim-survivors of gender-based violence (Dunn 2005).

However, as the series unfolds, both her implicit and explicit characterizations also portray her as an extremist and a violent character. The analysis of the other characters' dialogues as well as the keyword analysis revealed that Dolores adopts these violent traits by mirroring the actions of her father and of humans, which includes the murdering and mutilation of guests and weak hosts. The embracing of her violent traits mirrors oppressive practices employed to dominate women, since "in patriarchal societies, violence is used to dominate and control women" (Talbot 2005, 167). By incorporating traits and behaviors traditionally associated with male characters in fiction (Galán-Fajardo 2007; Aguado-Peláez 2019), *Westworld* only reinforces "the existing gender structure" (Lazar 2005, 8) which governs the park and the series. Consequently, the

narrative in *Westworld* presents "radical feminist solutions to oppression" (Belton 2020, 10) and features a misappropriation of female liberation and empowerment through a female character who endorses and disseminates an extremist radical ideology (Talbot 2005). The results of this study indicate that television series continue to reinforce the misrepresentation of female characters, especially victim-survivors of sexual violence, and the perpetuation of anti-feminist discourses which construct feminism as a movement seeking female privilege to the detriment of other individuals (Belton 2020; Palomino-Manjón 2022).

The present study adds to the growing body of research on the representation of women and gender inequality in television series. More precisely, its findings provide a new understanding of how female victim-survivors of (sexual) violence are portrayed in television series from a linguistic perspective. However, this study is not without limitations. On the one hand, it has only taken into consideration the patriarchal power structures which rule the theme park. Therefore, the impact of other ideological structures, such as racism and capitalism, was not taken into account during the analysis. On the other hand, this paper has only examined Dolores' revolution and has not taken into consideration the role of the lead black female character, Maeve Millay, in overthrowing *Westworld*'s oppressive system. Further research should compare and explore the differences between these two characters and the different ways in which they portray female empowerment in the series.

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