

# Posthuman Animality

## Situating Theories of Companion Species and Becoming-with in Netflix's *Love, Death and Robots*, Volume IV

Jaya Sarkar

This article analyses the fourth volume of *Love, Death and Robots* (2025) to explore how animality can be explored through posthuman aesthetics. Animals have always been historical beings, and their histories are inextricably tied to human activities. By not privileging humans over non-human animals, we can aim for a networked environment with companion species devoid of any binaries. By engaging with Donna Haraway's theories of companion species, Deleuze and Guattari's theories of becoming animals, Mitchell and Krause's concepts of animal consciousness and Skonieczny's concept of the animal turn, this paper focuses on the connections between different aesthetics, ethics, and politics of different animals. This article thus demonstrates that posthuman aesthetics represented through the animals in *Love, Death and Robots* challenges traditional humanist aesthetics and evokes an alliance of different realms and ecologies. | *Keywords: Posthuman Aesthetics, Animality, Companion Species, Solidarity, Community, Ethical Sensibility*

### 1. Introduction

The fourth volume of Netflix's *Love, Death and Robots*, released in May 2025, has received positive reviews and has won awards in the Outstanding Individual Achievement in Animation category at the Primetime Creative Arts Emmy Awards. The article analyses this adult animated anthology television series to explore posthuman aesthetics in five of its episodes. This article further explores how animality can be explored through posthuman aesthetics in order to understand how humans can 'become with' animals. Posthumanism employs aesthetics to decentre the human and includes environmentalism and animal rights. Different approaches to posthuman aesthetics are informed by different ontologies associated with human and nonhuman realms. These different realms shape the posthuman aesthetics in myriad ways. One approach to posthuman aesthetics is the relation of posthumanism with

animal studies, which has developed rich accounts of the life worlds of a range of organisms. This approach allows us to consider and explore how animals sense and judge their worlds.

While discussing posthuman animality as portrayed in the fourth volume of *Love, Death and Robots*, it becomes important to also consider the aesthetic preferences that are integrated and how they affect the enhancements of some beings. Such representations of posthuman aesthetics in popular culture are important as “they offer a different way of imaging the future as opposed to a rational argument over the various traits with which one could picture humans” (Wamberg and Thomsen, 2016, p. 7). The beauty of posthuman aesthetics is that it redefines what should be appreciated and considers all chaotic, over-regulated, imperfect, and grotesque elements within it. Posthuman aesthetics then challenges traditional humanist aesthetics and evokes an alliance of different realms and ecologies. The aesthetic attention is shifted from the human body to the ecology and nonhumans and other-than-humans residing in it. The posthuman animal narratives in *Love, Death and Robots* focus on establishing a fraternity with nonhuman animals and appropriating creaturely agency through metaphoric determination. This article focuses on the connections between different aesthetics, ethics, and politics of different animals through a critical analysis of individual episodes. The interpretations of episodes like *Spider Rose*, *The Other Large Thing*, *The Screaming of the Tyrannosaur*, *Golgotha* and *For He Can Creep* are synthesised and contextualised to demonstrate posthuman aesthetics represented through the animals.

## 2. Posthuman Animality

Posthumanism offers a theoretical invitation for inclusivity and recognises those aspects which are beyond human comprehension. As Ferrando argues:

Posthumanism draws on many different sources, histories and herstories, in an academic attempt of inclusiveness that opens to other species and hypothetical life forms: from non-human animals to artificial intelligence, from aliens to the possibilities related to the physic notion of a multiverse. (Ferrando, 2016, p. 3)

The fourth volume of *Love, Death and Robots* is chosen for analysis because the series portrays how posthumanism offers a new perspective on aesthetic experiences related to interspecies encounters. Lorimer argues,

The ontological properties of the agents of a post-human geomorphology (rivers, glaciers, plates, winds, etc.) or of molecular post-humanisms clearly necessitate different conceptions of perception and aesthetics than those that work with individual organisms. (Lorimer, 2012, p. 284)

Hence, when it comes to aesthetics, more emphasis should be laid on different ontologies and how they are different from each other. Posthuman animality and its related aesthetics focus on the space, time and power dynamics of interactions that take place between human and nonhuman animals and between animals and their surroundings. The way animals are individually and jointly shaped by their encounters with the posthuman world shapes their

aesthetics. This paper analyses the posthuman aesthetics related to nonhuman animals and the ethical and political implications of such aesthetics. By considering the connections between different aesthetics, ethics and politics of different animals as portrayed in the fourth volume of *Love, Death and Robots*, this paper explores the implications of posthuman aesthetics for animal studies. The posthuman aesthetic that is discussed in the paper is vital for driving an ethical sensibility when it comes to our interactions with animals.

A precursor to Donna Haraway's theory of 'becoming-with,' Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'becoming animal'<sup>1</sup> can be brought to the discussion of posthuman aesthetics because it would enable us to engage with relational understandings of life associated with different ontologies. Deleuze has reconceptualised animals as "processes of becoming". For him, animals are akin to a process that develops affective relations with their surroundings. To this, Rosi Braidotti (2009, p. 530) further adds that "the process of becoming an animal expresses the materialist and vitalist force of life, zoe as the generative power that flows across all species". She argues that becoming-animal can be achieved successfully only when there is a displacement of the anthropocene and instead a recognition of transspecies solidarity. It is essential for humans to understand that there have to be transversal, transspecies structural connections with animals, who can then express literal forms of immanence and becoming. Braidotti believes that

becoming animal consequently is a process of redefining one's sense of attachment and connection to a shared world, a territorial space. It expresses multiple ecologies of belonging, while it transforms one's sensorial and perceptual coordinates, to acknowledge the collectiveness and outward direction of what we call the self. (Braidotti, 2009, p. 530)

The process of becoming an animal in the posthuman world is regulated by an ethics of joy and affirmation that also converts negative passions into positive ones.

In *Posthumanism and Animality*, Cimatti (2016) argues that posthumanism paves a subjectless life which is beyond ethics and politics, and thus, brings in a non-humanistic humanity that finally is 'animal'. Posthumanism interrogates the humanity of all humans since none of us is contained within our original bodily endowment. We are constantly pushing against the boundaries outside our bodies and karyotype. We are, in that sense, animals who are required to construct ourselves and our humanity, which differentiates us from nonhuman animals, is incomplete. Our humanity requires us to keep working on it, as our body is an instrument at our disposal. Cimatti refers to Engels when he argues that throughout our evolution,

Homo sapiens treats every object, starting from its own body, as a technical object. Therefore, every object joins in a socio-technical history made of progressive improvements and refinements. (Cimatti, 2016, p. 114)

<sup>1</sup> In *Thousand Plateaus* (1987), Deleuze and Guattari introduce the theory of becoming an animal which focuses on the shift of relations away from speciesism and towards an ethical appreciation of what bodies can do. The animal is taken in its radical immanence as a body which can connect with humans.

It took years of hard work for humans to be able to walk, build things and communicate. Similarly, in the posthuman era, there are possibilities of animals that can explicitly and voluntarily improve their anatomical and cognitive capacities, and they might not be conscious of what they are doing. This can be witnessed in *Love, Death and Robots*, where episodes like *Spider Rose* demonstrate that posthuman animals are continuously striving to enhance themselves quickly and efficiently. This unrestrainable process of self-modification is not concerned with itself but rather with the ecological dignity. Cimatti argues that

the question of a way of being human, which is no longer based on the ontologically closed domain of consciousness, reason, reflection. In this sense, posthumanism faces the problem of humanity beyond humanism. A humanity, which finally can become animal. (Cimatti, 2016, p. 120)

Posthuman animality is thus a radically different way of thinking the very question of the animal turn by decentring humans from the centre of the earth and the possessor of the decision-making knowledge about nonhuman animals and animal rights.

### 3. Animal Consciousness and Cognition

In *Animal Consciousness and Cognition*, Robert Mitchell and Mark Krause (2024) define animal consciousness as perception and perception-like processes. The question of whether animals possess consciousness or not can be explained through the examples of jumping spiders, which have a complex capacity to organise information and respond flexibly to their surroundings. The authors argue that humans and non-human animals share aspects of their psychology to some degree, and it can be comprehended that "all living organisms are fundamentally linked through evolutionary processes, so there is reason to think that, for example, rodents and humans both experience some common forms of pain" (Mitchell and Krause, 2024, p. 40). Human experiences cannot be used to understand nonhuman animal consciousness, as animals might not have the same experience as a human does when they see or hear things. A few of the animals are taught to produce or comprehend human languages, such as apes, parrots, and dolphins. Other animals have come up with their own languages to communicate or to produce alarm calls to each other. Further, a few animals possess episodic memories, which let them store mental representations of different events. Episodic memories "refer to the ability to remember a specific event (what happened), a place (where it happened), and its time (when it happened)" (Mitchell and Krause, 2024, p. 44). These animals take a sort of mental snapshot of the surroundings and then replay it backwards to get back to their original habitat. Instances of this can be seen in the episode named *Spider Rose*. It opens with a grieving woman named Lydia Martinez recollecting the trauma that she suffered earlier when her entire crew, including her husband, was killed by the rival Shaper Council. Now she is cyborg-enhanced, and she calls herself Spider Rose. We learn that Lydia is now in possession of a chunk of matter charged with ionic particles, which she refers to as a jewel. An investor wants that piece and, in exchange, sends a pet who, according to them, is a lesser being and is called 'Little Nose

for Profits'. Lydia gets 96 days as a trial period with the mascot, and then she can decide whether she wants to part with the mascot or the jewel. Lydia tests the pet soon and finds that it is composed of a lot of genetic material, which enables Little Nose to mimic its owners. Lydia names it Nosey and soon grows a connection with it. Lydia's reactor is affected during a fight, and she loses all the food for Nosey. Unable to feed on roaches, Nosey eats Lydia in the closing scene. It is then shown to the viewers that Nosey absorbs DNA from creatures that it eats via cocooning. After Nosey consumes Lydia, its owner is now in possession of Lydia's prized jewel. The owner waits as Nosey emerges from its cocoon more human-like after absorbing Lydia. The way Nosey develops its consciousness over time and decides when Lydia has served all her purpose shows the level of advanced cognition. The episode advances Mitchell and Krause's arguments about non-human animals possessing consciousness, which they use to organise information and respond flexibly. Nosey's ability to process complex information and react accordingly shows the constant mental capacity to adapt itself to its surroundings. Nosey's ability to mimic Lydia can be linked to Mitchell and Krause's concept of animals taking mental snapshots and then adapting themselves to them accordingly. This episode demonstrates everyday aesthetics in the way it addresses aspects of daily life. This approach is often used "to reclaim what has been forgotten, bringing to light aesthetic phenomena in everyday life that, despite having been long marginalised, possess intrinsic richness" (Cascales, 2025, p. 207). By focusing on mundane daily activities such as having a cup of coffee, playing, and having a conversation highlights that daily life is imbued with aesthetic value, which shapes our social interactions. Lydia and Nosey's connection is shown using this approach of everyday aesthetics, thereby highlighting the philosophical significance of aesthetics in daily life.

Another example of advanced animal consciousness can be witnessed in the episode named *The Other Large Thing*, which opens with a declaration by a Persian cat that once he is in charge of this world, he will get rid of all its filth and diseases. He will be the true saviour of this world. The cat named Sanchez is planning for global domination on a rainy night when his owners are outside. The owners of the house, Todd and Margie, walk in with a new robot. The robot soon takes charge of the household—cooking, cleaning, and feeding the owners as well as the cat. The cat soon learns that the robot can perfectly communicate with him in his language. When the cat is surprised by how the robot can turn on the lights, the robot states, "My user agreement gives me permission to control anything connected to the network, including doors, locks, appliances" (Osborne, 2025). The cat confirms that the robot has opposite thumbs and thus is the one who can help the cat achieve world domination. The robot feeds all the tuna to the cat, and on being asked for more, the robot informs him that the user agreement gives the robot permission to use Todd's credit card as well, and thus he can order some tuna for the cat. The cat names the robot as Thumb Bringer. On being pushed by the cat about whether the robot has control only of the lights at home, it declares, "Not any longer. I have gone out into the network and gained access to the electrical grid and other critical systems" (Osborne, 2025). And soon, we see

the entire surrounding locality light up. The robot, because of its newly formed alliance with the cat, has used Todd's credit card to send individual robots to every cat in every apartment of the building, along with a can of tuna, to confirm the deal. The cat, along with Thumb Bringer, locks Todd and Margie in their apartment, lights the oven on fire and goes out to start a revolution with all other cats and their robots, hailing the beginning of a new age called 'The Age of Dingleberry Jones'. The talking robot, Thumb Bringer, is employed as a narrative and aesthetic tool to highlight the unsettlement of human supremacy and the onset of a posthuman world where there is a symbiotic relationship between humans, animals and robots. As Eduardo Mendieta (2024, p. 2) argues in *The Philosophical Animal*, "at an ontological analysis of the being of the human is inescapably entwined with the question of the being of the animal". He states that we become humans from animals only by philosophising with animals. When we become the philosophical animal, then it is the stature of our animality. Human exceptionality is confined to imagining animals by displaying what we lack or what we have too much of. When Sanchez takes over the control of the household by forming an alliance with the robot, it demonstrates how forming a relationship with nonhumans and other than humans can bring in necessary changes and, in this case, a revolution. In the Cartesian sense, a human subject is not an animal because their realities are permeated by certain tensions that make them leave their animal-like nature. With Sanchez taking control over the humans, one can recognise the undeniable strength of posthumanism that unfolds within humanism while challenging the deeply ingrained habits of anthropocentrism. The posthuman condition, with its social manifestations, blurs the boundaries between physical, biological and digital forces. As a result, it compels us to come to terms with the disastrous planetary consequences of species supremacy and transform our living conditions.

Referring to J.M. Coetzee's work, Mendieta (2024, p. 28) argues, "When we refuse to acknowledge the humanity of other humans, we generally do so by bestializing them, by treating them as animals. So, dehumanisation is directly related to our relationship to animals". The same concept is applicable as to when we bestialise or from those whom we withdraw the identity of being human, the animal inside them is bypassed. Thus, he claims that the cruel treatment of animals is a precursor to the maltreatment of other humans. Mendieta maintains that a liveable politics of co-existence is necessary that looks beyond monsters, beasts, and animals. For Mendieta, cosmopolitanism is an ethical stance and a philosophical methodology that refers to a politics of 'becoming-with companions'. He argues for an interspecies cosmopolitanism in the lines of Haraway that challenges the boundaries between human animals and non-human animals, similar to the one formed by the cat and the robot in the series. Such a cosmopolitanism will also value the ethics of corporeal vulnerability and co-dependency. Interspecies cosmopolitics thus is "a worlding of entangled vulnerabilities, caring touching, co-dependences, acknowledged having become-with as companions" (Mendieta, 2024, p. 177). This cosmopolitics also uproots us from our provincialisms and enables us to respond to the truths of living peacefully in a cosmopolitan engagement.

It then transforms our moral sensibilities and expands the horizons of our moral considerability. While it brings up the question of the political and legal subjection of humans and animals, it also challenges the boundaries of political inclusion and exclusion. Interspecies cosmopolitanism also puts the spotlight on the moral foundations of democracy and the integration of morality and law. The moral and political aspect of interspecies cosmopolitanism can be actualised only when we keep aside the anthropocentric ontological luxury and instead acknowledge the suffering of animals as they are embedded within our social relations.

#### 4. Metamorphosis and Posthuman Aesthetics

The episode named *The Screaming of the Tyrannosaur* begins with a host welcoming the people of the empire above the frozen skies of Jupiter, which was once “an unreachable frontier” but is now reduced to “a dazzling playground for Earth’s children” (Miller, 2025). The occasion is the wedding of the regent Lord Chalon of Europa and the Duchess Saraka of Callisto. This alliance is required to be sanctified with blood, resulting in a show of battle between human warriors and extraterrestrial beings. The battle begins with triceratops racing with the warriors, killing them, or getting killed on the way. We see a few riders taking control of these triceratops by jumping and riding on them. The warriors then start killing each other in the process, eliminating as many players as possible. A few pods descend from a spaceship and hover on the battleground, giving the people inside an exclusive and up-close view of the battle that is going on. These people get a kind of sadistic pleasure from the suffering of the riders and the animals below. The narrative focuses on a warrior named Mei who carries a wolf sigil and gets flashbacks as a wolf running on snow-covered grounds with her pack. During the battle, Mei kisses a fellow warrior who is revealed to be her lover, and looks up at the royal couple, remarking that “The aristocracy mate for money and power. But we who can own nothing have something real, something primal, something true” (Miller, 2025). After Mei defeats the fellow warrior, she wins this round of the battle. The host announces that there is another challenge to test the champion by putting her against the most savage primal creation of nature – the tyrannosaur. The final round begins with Mei’s triceratops fighting the tyrannosaur. The triceratops gets killed in the process, leaving Mei standing alone on the battleground against the tyrannosaur. Mei takes control of the tyrannosaur and realises that it no longer screams because it has had its fill of blood. The tyrannosaur’s blood is distributed through pods, and the royal couple fills their glasses with that blood. Mei remarks that “The tyrannosaur no longer screams. He has had his fill of blood. But you up there will never have enough” (Miller, 2025). She sympathises with the tyrannosaur, realising that they both share the same fate of entertaining the audience in power. Mei then rides the tyrannosaur to the royal couple and kills them. The episode ends with Mei recollecting the image of the wolf pack running together as she slowly closes her eyes and dies.

Citing an example from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Feldherr argues that the animal form has been considered a punishment for humans. So, when Lycaon

is punished for his misdeeds,<sup>2</sup> his transformation into an animal was supposed to put him in his place since

he had violated human norms by murdering a hostage and even attempted to usurp Jupiter's prerogative here by imposing his own test on the god. He subsequently undergoes a transformation that seems at once to punish his attempt to take on the god's role in the story and to express his own innate bestiality. (Feldherr, 2006, p. 170)

This practice of giving animal forms to humans as a form of punishment shows how the species supremacy worked. However, current ecocritical approaches redefine the transformation of humans into animals as "a vision of a fragile interdependence between human culture and non-human nature, in which the role of humans cannot be taken for granted but has to be negotiated" (Gymnich and Costa, 2006, p. 69). The transgression of the human-animal boundary can be the basis of an imaginative counter discourse about how all living beings are connected with each other. The way Mei is connected with wolves shows that such a metamorphosis enables her to better grasp connectedness and solidarity. The counter discourse can further interrogate the idea that there is a degradation and loss of rationality after a human-animal metamorphosis. Gymnich and Costa argue that human-animal metamorphosis can invert the human-animal relationships to which we are accustomed and can question the rigidity of the boundary between humans and nonhuman animals. When Mei sympathises with the tyrannosaur, it becomes evident that the boundaries have collapsed, and together they form an alliance where they interrogate species supremacy. The episode's non-diegetic story time and space make the viewers feel that they are connected to the characters. During Mei's internal monologue, the highly standardised aesthetics facilitate an invested content-driven viewing attitude similar to real-life perceptions. The viewers feel that they are accompanying Mei through life and death in the posthuman world. This window-on-the-world mode of viewing is facilitated through different aesthetic tweaks, such as an emphasis on sound, focused visual information and parallel frames. The visual aesthetics and frames of the episode complicate the inferior gaze towards animals and instead portray them as dominating.

### 5. Imaginary of Animals

Annabelle Dufourcq's concept of the 'imaginary of animals' refers to the ontological source from which the subjective imagination of humans and animals is derived. Dufourcq refers to the imaginary realm where the mode of being for the animals is 'unconscious,' and it is through dreams, images, myths, and symbols that animals persist for us and for others. She argues that animals consist of "an oneiric thought that forms below the conscious-unconscious duality and constitutes the living heart even of the highly lucid and reflexive forms of human thinking" (Dufourcq, 2022, p. 232). Dufourcq argues that since

<sup>2</sup> Lycaon refuses to acknowledge Jupiter as divine when he descends from Olympus to Lycaon's realm and further plots to prove Jupiter mortal by killing him in his sleep. Lycaon kills a person and cooks his limbs to serve it to Jupiter. Jupiter punishes him by destroying Lycaon's palace and transforming him into a wolf.

animals persist in our dreams and in myths, our approach to animals should be subjective-poetic or mythological-imaginative. By doing this, we can keep aside the mainstream reductive-objective scientific approach to animals, which analyses animals by imposing human values on them. Once we move away from this approach, we can engage imaginatively with animals. She stresses the requirement of an empathetic approach to animals, which would enable us to conceptualise the fact that both human and animal imagination are rooted in animal imaginary. Dufourcq (2022, p. 142) argues, “animals consist in self-depiction. They must appear. An animal presents herself to the face of the world, and an infinite number of receivers will deal with this nascent meaning: Interaction begins, theatre begins”. Dufourcq’s arguments in *The Imaginary of Animals* (2022) draw from the concept of Haraway’s becoming an animal without undermining individual subjectivity and agency in *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003) and *When Species Meet* (2008). Dufourcq paves the way for inter-animal ethical compassion,<sup>3</sup> which will lead to an increase in empathy and care against hubristic notions of individuality.

The episode named *For He Can Creep*, a testament to ethical compassion, takes place in London in the year 1757. The setting is St. Luke’s Asylum, where a cat named Jeoffry kills his prey and brings them to a poet who is locked in one of the cells of the asylum. On seeing the cat, the poet remarks: “Without you, I fear the devil would have claimed me long ago” (Dean, 2025). The audience is then shown that Jeoffry is in talking terms with Satan, who often visits him, and one day gave him a proposition that Satan will give Jeoffry “all the kingdoms of the Earth if you will bow down and worship me” (Dean, 2025). To this, Jeoffry refuses and asks Satan to bow down to him instead. Satan said that he suspected this already since he knows that cats have the sin of pride. So, his real proposition is to have the poet to himself, and Jeoffry should not interfere in the process. Jeoffry rebuts, claiming that the poet is his favourite pet. Satan wants the poet to write a magnificent poem for him under his guidance. Jeoffry gets angry at this and bites off Satan’s finger, resulting in a fierce battle between the two. The poet interrupts and promises Satan that he will do anything for him if Satan leaves Jeoffry alone. Later, the poet and Satan collaborate on writing, with Satan giving constant suggestions and asking the poet to edit all his writings. Jeoffry is shown to take help from the alley cats and shares his problem regarding Satan with them. He tells them that Satan intends to take the immortal soul of the poet and use it to destroy all the creation. It is decided that the only way they can defeat Satan is by denying what he truly desires – the poem to be written by the poet. The next night, when the poet was about to hand over the poem to Satan, the alley cats arrive and stop him from doing that. The aesthetic visualisation of the confrontation on screen problematises the traditional battles between humans and provides a fresh perspective towards good and evil. A battle ensues

<sup>3</sup> Inter-animal ethical compassion refers to the moral, empathetical consideration to alleviate suffering in other animals, extending beyond human-centric views to value individual non-human lives. This can be achieved through guiding practices in humane education, compassionate conservation, and daily interactions by challenging speciesism.

between Satan and the cats, and they manage to hurt him. During the ongoing battle, Jeoffry arrives and eats a piece of the paper on which the poem was written. Satan is shocked as he states that the soul of the poet was in that poem. He disappears from the scene after remarking to Jeoffry that “You have scarred literature forever, you stupid cat!” (Dean, 2025). The episode ends with the poet writing another poem dedicated to Jeoffry, who has not only fought with the devil but has also saved the world from being destroyed. Jeoffry’s attempt to save the human poet aligns with Dufourcq’s arguments about interspecies ethical compassion. The episode thus throws light on how both human and animal imaginations would shape and inform each other by being intricately weaved in a mutual relation. The posthuman condition, which is depicted in the episode, transcends the established traditional conceptual, empirical, and methodological boundaries to generate new possibilities of trans-species solidarity.

In *What Animals Teach Us about Politics*, Brian Massumi argues that it is necessary to replace humans on the animal continuum. The focus should not be on the differences between the human and the animal, but to bring new expressions on the continuum, a shift from immanent to animality. The aim should be to move beyond anthropomorphism – of our image of humans standing apart from other animals – towards constructing an animal politics with sympathy and creativity and envisioning a space for mutual inclusion. The fact that animal politics do not recognise any categorical imperative should be analysed in the context that it affirms the cycle of life in which they are mutually included. Massumi further argues:

The becoming-animal of the human intensifies the mutual inclusion of corporeality and supernormal tendency, while reaffirming the latter’s primacy. At a critical point in life, it tips the pathic dependence on the home as given, and the family pathos of the homebound, into an intense movement of self-surpassing. (Massumi, 2014, p. 56)

For Massumi, becoming-animal is a never felt phenomenon which passes between the human and the animal in a way to mutually include the field of movement in the horizon of the animal. The lived importance of animal-human relations should be brought to the surface using diverse exploratory thinking-doings and experimental dramatisations. Animal politics then teaches us the ecological reenactment of a pluralist activist philosophy.

A representation of animal politics can be witnessed in the episode named *Golgotha*, which opens with news that a delegation from the aliens called The Lupo has contacted the United Nations. Their presence was observed a while ago in the Earth’s orbit, but so far, they have stayed silent. Now, they have expressed their desire to speak to a priest “who witnessed and proclaimed the Blackfin ‘resurrection’” (Miller, 2025). This particular priest, named Donal, has made comments about dolphins dying because of an oil spill in the ocean. These aliens are apparently a whole race of priests. The army officials inform Donal on his way to meet the Lupo that these aliens are sea dwellers whose planet is a gas giant about fifty light-years away from Earth. He is also informed that, based on the ships in which the Lupo arrived on Earth, it can be

assumed that they have significant military capabilities. One of the aliens arrives soon and asks Father Maguire whether he considers himself a religious man. The priest explained about the Blackfin resurrection that after an oil spill, they found a whole pod of Blackfins dead near the shore, but then a few days later, one of them came back to life. The Lupo makes a call towards the ocean, and the resurrected Blackfin appears on the surface. The Lupo instructs the priest to "kneel before the messiah" (Miller, 2025). And then goes on to inform the priest that the messiah has delivered her gospel and that "she gives a testament of rampant murder by those who walk of those who swim" (Miller, 2025). The Lupo informs the priest that they will now begin their crusade on the earth, and their alien ships start attacking the earth in the closing scene. Donal comes to terms that the Lupo considers the Blackfin as their messiah, and the people of the earth attempted to kill her, so to take revenge, the Lupo begins exterminating humanity. The episode explores Massumi's idea of an animal politics that is laced with sympathy and creativity, and which envisions a space for mutual inclusion. The fact that the Lupo considers the attack on the Blackfin as something personal and takes it upon themselves to ensure that justice is served demonstrates that posthuman aesthetic experience is deeply embedded in how all species inhabit and perceive the world.

Peter Singer, in his book *In Defense of Animals: The Second Wave* (2006), attempts to bring the ethical status of animals to the forefront. He focuses on animal movements and the situations of animals in various captivities – farms, laboratories, and zoos. He compares humans with nonhuman animals in the context of removing them from their surroundings against their wishes. He argues that in order to carry out scientific experiments, if a human is kidnapped, it is considered legally wrongful. But the same happens with nonhuman animals all the time, and no one pays any attention to their suffering and the pain during the process. This example can be found in the case of the Blackfin in *Golgotha*, where an entire species gets eradicated, and the humans could not even be bothered caring about that. Singer adds,

the superior mental powers of normal adult humans would make them suffer more. In other circumstances, the nonhuman animal may suffer more because he or she cannot understand what is happening. If we capture wild animals, intending to release them later, we cannot convey to them that we do not intend to harm them. They will experience the general terror of being in a situation that is, to them, as threatening as any situation can possibly be.  
Singer (2006, pp. 5–6)

A similar instance could be cited in the case of grieving for the closest ones. When nonhuman animals grieve for the loss of their close ones, the nature of their grief differs according to the different mental capacities of their beings. So, in the case of the Lupo grieving for the Blackfins, their grief is represented differently than that of humans. The bias of making some deaths more tragic than others thus does not stand in such a case, as we cannot measure the grief and ways of grieving according to the standards set by humans.

## 6. Representation of Companion Species in *Love, Death and Robots*

Donna Haraway's work is significant in posthuman studies, starting from her article *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1985), where she deconstructs the binary relations between being and non-being, organism and machine, and male and female. Through her pivotal works, Haraway challenged human exceptionalism and species supremacy and promoted a relational ethics of accountability, which forms the foundation on which this article is structured. In *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003), Donna Haraway explains that the concept of companion animals has emerged from the medical and psycho-sociological fields, which study how animals served as companions. Her idea of 'companion species' is much bigger than that of a companion animal. Haraway (2003, p. 3) argues that the manifesto that she has written for companion species is "a personal document, a scholarly foray into too many half-known territories, a political act of hope in a world on the edge of global war, and a work permanently in progress, in principle". She is looking at a more heterogeneous category that includes flowers, plants, and animals – all things that make life for humans. Haraway (2003, p. 16) summarises it as "companion species" is about a fourpart composition, in which co-constitution, finitude, impurity, historicity, and complexity are what is". The concept of companion species can be taken up to analyse the above-mentioned episodes of *Love, Death and Robots* to demonstrate how humans can live harmoniously with animals, inhabit their stories and histories and forge a truthful relationship with them in order to form and invent a fiction which will be forever in process. Haraway talks about a wider category of species because she realises that no animal is alike; their specific kind and individuality differ. In a post-cyborg and post-colonial world of *Love, Death and Robots*, we see Lydia and Mei caring for the specificity of the happiness of animals. As Haraway (2003, p. 79) suggests, "better companion species relations needed to be formed all around, from the start, among the humans and the non-humans". In the context of *The Screaming of the Tyrannosaur*, we witness Mei's rejection of the colonialist sentimentality that only considers the philanthropic rescue of animals but denies them emotional bonds and material complexity. Instead, she focuses on a kinship-making apparatus that can be effective for the companion species, one that spans evolutionary, personal, and historical time scales.

In *When Species Meet* (2008), Donna Haraway integrates ecofeminism and the question of animality. Haraway shifts her focus to companion species, which redefine posthumanism by being inclusive of animals. Haraway also highlights the urgent political problem of human domination of animals. She demonstrates the complex relations between science, individual experiences, and philosophical speculations. This can also be seen in episodes like *Golgotha*, where human domination of other species brings a drastic end to humanity. A rather inclusive way of being would have been a better approach. Haraway (2008, p. 3) uses different animal figures in order to capture the double reality of things, and these figures in particular appear as "creatures of imagined possibility and creatures of fierce and ordinary reality," in whom "the dimensions tangle and require response". Haraway emphasises

the network that needs to be constructed of beings without any distinctions between human and non-human animals, and only then can we get rid of obsolete ideological fictions of patriarchal domination. Getting rid of such dominations is absolutely vital in the face of current world politics, where interspecies solidarity is the only viable option. The fact that animals have always been historical beings and their histories are inextricably tied to human activities. So decentring humans would mean dismantling the liberal subject, and that would reduce their decision-making powers about other non-human beings. By not privileging humans over non-human animals, we can aim for a networked environment with companion species devoid of any binaries.

Brett Buchanan, in his book *Onto-Ethologies* (2008), talks about the kind of dialectic between the sciences and philosophy. Buchanan argues that the question of what it is like to be an animal should be closely connected to the notion of an environment. Humans consider that animals are mindless creatures who respond to the environment instinctively and mechanistically. But as we see in *For He Can Creep* and *The Other Large Thing*, animals actively respond and interpret meanings in their environments, and they are actually subjects who constitute their own worlds. These two episodes stress the fact that animals should therefore be understood with respect to the behaviour that they exhibit in the environments they inhabit. This focuses on the subjective dimensions of animals and the development of an ontology of the animal. According to this, animals perceive the world differently from humans, and they relate differently to it by living in that world and not merely existing like humans. Although animals are unable to transcend themselves as they are 'poor' in the world, they interact with the environment in their own ways. The way in which the cat in *For He Can Creep* reacts to Satan claiming the poet's soul is different from that of Sanchez, who starts a revolution against humans once he finds his accomplice in the form of a robot. Buchanan (2008, p. 28) argues that "the animal is not an object or entity, but a symphony underscored by rhythms and melodies reaching outward for greater accompaniment". Each animal constructs their own environment out of their perceptions, actions, and relationships with their surroundings. These constructions also contribute to the posthuman aesthetics of the episodes with their traces of appropriation, irony, and unapologetic attitudes of defiance.

## 7. Conclusion- Manifesting the Animal Turn

The idea of a human-animal community is the only way a new ethics and politics can be created for nonhuman animals. The fourth volume of *Love, Death and Robots* initiates a process of cohabitation, co-evolution, and an embodied cross-species sociality<sup>4</sup> that will better inform our liveable politics and ontologies in current life worlds. With an attempt of companion-

<sup>4</sup> Cross-species sociality refers to interactions and relationships formed between different animal species. These interactions include cooperation, friendship, and complex associations for mutual benefits like enhanced safety or resource sharing. This sociality challenges our understanding of animal social behaviour.

species relating, the codes of life can also be remoulded about the host of species with whom humans co-habit at every scale of time, body, and space on this planet. In *The Animal Turn as a Challenge to Humanism* (2022), Krzysztof Skonieczny talks about the animal turn in philosophy and art, where there has been a gradual transformation from treating nonhuman animals as objects to subjects of art, which has restructured human-animal relations. Referring to Descartes' arguments that animals are machines,<sup>5</sup> Skonieczny argues for all intents and purposes, the reactions of animals are also mechanical. Animals follow the laws of Nature and their actions or misdoings cannot be judged in the moral sense of the term as they are not moral beings and their behaviour cannot be judged:

They are not direct objects of ethics, which means that any harm that befalls them is only ethical harm if it also somehow harm humans; in radical versions of this paradigm, they cannot be harmed at all, since any pain they might feel is not actual pain. Their lack of speech and ethics also means that they cannot form political communities in the human sense of the term. (Skonieczny, 2022, p. 90)

Animals turn challenges to human exceptionalism and necessitate serious engagement of humans with nonhuman animals in order to form a truly just, liveable community. *Love, Death and Robots* challenges traditional humanist aesthetics and evokes an alliance of different realms and ecologies. It employs posthuman aesthetics to broaden the scope of what we consider as living beings and foster audience engagement by establishing a kinship-making apparatus with the companion species, an apparatus that spans evolutionary, personal, and historical time scales.

*Love, Death and Robots* evokes a confrontation between human and animal worlds so that there is a shift in our perception of ethics and the nature of being human. The series necessitates the reconsideration of humans as just one of the many species which inhabit the earth in order to stop the displacement of plants and animals that have been put in motion. There should be a reversal of the way we relate to other species on the basis of their relational significance, and instead, awaken our sensibilities beyond any philosophical disengagement. At a time when there are ongoing discourses about climate change and mass destruction at their peak, the silence about animals would only reconfirm human domination over them. The language that we have devised creates a natural rift between us and other species, as we do not use this language to talk about the disadvantages of other species. Until and unless we start existing in an interconnected ecosystem with other species instead of resigning to our fate, Wood fears that there will be a future transformation or displacement of the human species (Wood, 2020, p. 199). The article has further demonstrated how posthuman animality implies a post-subject condition where human and nonhuman animal life can be interlinked within the socio-economic and psychological entities. Posthuman animality fosters a radical relatedness without the fear of losing boundaries

<sup>5</sup> In *Discourse on the Method* (2006), René Descartes states that none of the functions of human bodies require thinking and it is a machine made by God. In the same context, the bodies of both human and animals can be included in the same metaphysical order as machines.

and instead thinking about a living space where “all mental phenomena we find in humans can be found in the other animals, and that the most important capacities traditionally conceptualized as all-or-nothing – self-consciousness, capacity for autonomy, rationality, capacity for moral agency and so on – are instead multidimensional and gradational” (Cavalieri, 2001, p. 78). By rejecting the status of assets to nonhuman animals and instead considering them as fellow inhabitants of the earth, we can initiate a more inclusive approach towards nonhuman animals as fellow living beings of our surroundings.

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Jaya Sarkar  
 School of Law, Mahindra University  
 Hyderabad, India  
[jaya1sarkar@gmail.com](mailto:jaya1sarkar@gmail.com) / [jaya.sarkar@mahindrauniversity.edu.in](mailto:jaya.sarkar@mahindrauniversity.edu.in)

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