REVAMPING TECHNOLOGY: A POSTHUMANIST

CRITIQUE ON NETFLIX'S *LOVE, DEATH & ROBOTS*

Dissertation submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)
in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY in English Language and Literature
by

Amitha Anna James

Register No. SMP20ENG001

Supervisor

Dr. Priya K. Nair

Assistant Professor

Department of English

St. Teresa's College

Ernakulam

Kerala

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation entitled "Revamping Technology: A Posthumanist Critique on Netflix's *Love, Death & Robots*", is a record of bonafide work done by me under the supervision of Dr. Priya K. Nair, Assistant Professor, Department of English for the degree of M.Phil. in English Language and Literature, and that no part of the dissertation has been presented earlier for the award of any degree, diploma, or any other similar title of recognition.

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Amitha Anna James

Reg. no. SMP20ENG001
M.Phil.

</div>

Ernakulam   St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)

11 August 2022   Ernakulam

CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that this dissertation titled, "Revamping Technology: A Posthumanist Critique on Netflix's *Love, Death & Robots*", submitted to St. Teresa's College (Autonomous), affiliated to Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam, in partial fulfilment of the award of M.Phil. degree in English Language and Literature is a bona fide work carried out by Amitha Anna James under my supervision and guidance.

Dr. Preeti Kumar   Dr. Priya K. Nair

Head of the Department   Department of English

Department of English   St. Teresa's College

St. Teresa's College (Autonomous)   (Autonomous), Ernakulam

Ernakulam

11 August 2022

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Introduction

Posthumanism is a relatively new theoretical epoch within the domain of Humanities and Social Sciences. As the term indicates, the period of Humanism is over. In the entry on 'Posthumanism' in the R*outledge Companion to Literature and Science* (2010), Neil Badmington talks about humanism:

> The human being occupies a natural and eternal place at the very centre of things, where it is distinguished absolutely from machines, animals, and other inhuman entities; where it shares with all other human beings a unique essence; where it is the origin of meaning and the sovereign subject of history; . . . In the humanist account, human beings are exceptional, autonomous, and set above the world that lies at their feet. (Clarke 374)

The entry concludes by explaining the main objective of Posthumanism, that is, "anthropocentrism, with its assured insistence upon human exceptionalism, is no longer an adequate or convincing account of the way of the world" (381). But post anthropocentrism is criticised fearing that it will be an epoch that marks the loss of human superiority. Rosi Braidotti, in the book *The Posthuman*, published in 2013 writes how posthumanism is not anti-human but,

> the historical moment that marks the end of the opposition between Humanism and traces a different discursive framework, looking more towards new alternatives. The starting point for me is the anti-humanist death of Wo/Man which marks the decline of some of the fundamental premises of the Enlightenment, namely the progress of mankind through a self-regulatory and teleological ordained use of reason and of secular scientific rationality allegedly aimed at the perfectibility of 'Man'. The posthumanist perspective rests on the assumption of the historical decline of Humanism but goes further

in exploring alternatives, without sinking into the rhetoric of the crisis of man. It works instead towards elaborating alternative ways of conceptualising the human subject. (37)

Along with creating new identities, it is a distancing from the construct of a 'normal' human, who has particular physiology, anatomy, abilities, form and function. It is blurring the bodily idententies like, gender, race, species and decentring the traditional sovereign autonomous entity. And the reason for this paradigm shift is technology. As Pramod Nayar puts it:

Outside and yet within these literary and popular representations of corporeal–physiological fluidity, ontological liminality and identity-morphing that have firmly placed the man–machine linkage, trans-species bodies and organic-inorganic hybrids within the cultural imaginary, are the rapid advances in technology. (12)

The new discoveries using stem-cell engineering, Artificial Intelligence, biotechnology etc. blur the borders of animal, human, and machine. This identifies the discrimination within the human species, and among other species and things. It rejects the view of the White European male as exceptional, different from other forms of life and dominating over the other.

But human imagination and creativity have helped humans continue to reign in the hierarchy. Every invention, specifically technological advancements made it possible to continue the supremacy. But very ironically the same technological advancements now question or challenge the very idea of the human. Not only because technology is more of an extension of our life and body than a separate entity but we have created beings that are better than ourselves. Apart from this anxiety of being replaced, the real issue is how humans are making negative impacts by using

technology and science. This concern should be used to revisit the current socio-cultural and ecological scenario and not to position technology as a threat. N. Katherine Hayles, in her seminal work, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999), narrates her dream,

> is a version of the posthuman that embraces the possibilities of information technologies without being seduced by fantasies of unlimited power and disembodied immortality, that recognizes and celebrates finitude as a condition of human being, and that understands human life is embedded in a material world of great complexity, one on which we depend for our continues survival. (5)

Technology has immensely affected and dramatically altered our understanding of who or what we are. As Braidotti says, the post anthropocentric turn linked with globalisation and technology has striked the human at the heart and shifted the parameters to define 'human' (58). Even though there is class division and digital divide even now, we are in a technology mediated world. And along with criticising the profit- oriented system associated with technology we have to explore the potential of its to be liberatory and transgressive.

The association with technology is often used for the betterment of the 'human' state, which is surely 'intensification of Humanism' as Cary Wolfe says (xv). But Posthumanism does not believe that technology is to perfect man or it is the solution for everything that man has caused, whether that be ecological catastrophe or social divide. Instead "critical posthumanism is less interested in the great human subject than in the human as (i) a system situated in an environment, and (ii) an instantiation of networks of information (say DNA, but also memories) and material

(say bacteria or viral forms) exchanges between systems and environments" (Nayar 19).

Donna Haraway famously pronounced, "the boundary between science fiction and social reality is an optical illusion" in *A Cyborg Manifesto* (149). Science fiction has greatly contributed to the cultural imagination of these associations with technology. It has produced numerous aliens, robots, monstrous bodies, cyborgs etc. This helps us to see ourselves differently. If earlier posthuman identities who were positioned as antagonists in science fiction were monsters like *Frankenstein*, later they became robots and machines, who were a threat to humanity which placed technology in the antagonist position too. Popular culture was feeding anxiety and misrepresenting the idea of posthumanism as antihuman. But these hypothetical narratives can be analysed using the Posthuman framework to criticise the negative trends associated with technology and to frame new solutions. Narratives serve the purpose of a bridge between the worlds of science and culture.

The Netflix original series titled *Love, Death & Robots* created by Tim Miller and David Fincher was released as three Volumes. The First volume was released on March 15, 2019 with 18 episodes, second on May 14, 2021 with 8 episodes and finally the third volume on May 20, 2022 with 9 more episodes. Most of them are adaptations of famous short stories. Love earth Robots is a pathbreaking anthology which disturbs our pattern of viewership. They are described as an anthology connected only by the ideas of love, death and robots and no thematic connection between each other. Selected episodes from the anthology are analysed using the framework of Posthumanism.

Sonnie's Edge, directed by Dave Wilson and based on a story by Peter F Hamilton, shows a woman left in a bad shape after getting sexually and physically

assaulted. In order to save her, her friends transfer her mind and consciousness to a remote-controlled bio-engineered gladiator beast giving her the 'edge' in the ring during the underground fights.

As the name suggests, *Three Robots,* directed by Victor Maldonado and Alfredo Torres, revolves around three robots who are on a sightseeing tour of a post-apocalyptic city. The robots try to make sense of humans and the things they have left behind while also unfurling the secrets of their own origins.

The Witness, directed by Alberto Mielgo, begins with a woman witnessing a man murdering a woman in a hotel room across her street. The man chases the witness to the crime scene and the two end up in a hotel room where the woman ends up shooting the man dead. She then realises that a man across the street had witnessed the crime and the time loop goes on.

Directed by Franck Balson, *Suits* depicts a farmer community defending themselves from alien swarms but only in the climax it is shown that humans are the colonisers in an alien planet of swarms. The 17-minute-long episode is based on a story authored by Steven Lewis.

When the Yogurt Took Over, once again from the directorial duo of Victor Maldonado and Alfredo Torres, is the story of Yogurt becoming sentient and taking over the world before taking off to another planet leaving behind the humans. The episode tries to draw a picture of humanity's reliance on technologies and how it could turn against humans.

Good Hunting, from Oliver Thomas, tells the story of 20th century China where the mythological creature Huli jing is finding it difficult to shape-shift due to the rapid industrialisation around her. Huli jing approaches her old acquaintance to

ironically take the help of the technology to make her transformation and hunt down the men who were abusing women in her homeland.

Directed by Gabriele Pennacchioli, *Shape-Shifters* features two werewolf friends who are serving in the US Marine Corps in Afghanistan, but face discrimination from other soliders who consider them a few rungs below despite their superpowers. The episode is based on a short story by Marko Kloos titled 'On The Use Of Shape-Shifters In Warfare.'

Beyond the Aquila Rift, directed by Leon Berelle, Dominique Boidin, Remi Kozyra, Maxime Luere, takes us on a voyage aboard the Blue Goose, a space ship crewed by Thom, Suzy, and Ray who are going back home to Earth after a regular mission. However, the trio when they wake up from the cryo-sleep realise that they are off course and are told by Greta, Thom's former lover, that they are hundreds of thousands of light years away from Earth. However, it is revealed that Greta is in fact an arachnid creature and the crew is stuck in a limbo -- a simulation so that they do not have to bear with the reality.

The Dump, directed by Javier Recio Gracia, shows a city inspector in his efforts to convince a man named Dave Dvorchek to move out from his house which is located in a dump yard. Dave tells the inspector about Otto, a creature that consumes garbage in the dump, and with whom he has nurtured a friendly relationship despite it attacking his friend. With the inspector not backing down and forcing Dvorchek to move out, Otto comes out of the dump and eats the inspector.

In *Sucker of Souls*, directed by Owen Sullivan, archaeologist Dr. Wehunt has hired a mercenary Flynn on an expedition, but is being chased by an unknown assailant who is later revealed to be Dracula. The duo tries to stay ahead of Dracula's grasp and use a cat to keep him away. Towards the end, after much travails, they

manage to deal with the Dracula by blowing him up with explosives, but are destined only to face more such vampires in their path ahead.

Alternate Histories, directed by Victor Maldonado & Alfredo Torres, tells the story of what could have been. An alternative history research simulation app by the name of Multiversity has been developed and it can be used to find out how the historical timeline could have changed if Adolf Hitler had died at any earlier stage instead of killing himself with a gun in 1945. The episode details how historical events like the moon landing would have looked like when the timeline of Hitler's life is altered as well as also showing post-apocalyptic scenarios.

Fish Night, directed by Damian Nenow, begins with two salesmen in a car that breaks down on a lonley road in the middle of a desert. At the beginning of the story, the old man after getting out of the car tells the young man that "there is no coming back from dead," (02:04-02:06) but that is exactly what happens for the remainder of the episode as ancient sea creatures return from the dead to swim around in what previously seemed like a desolated desert.

Zima Blue, from Robert Valley, tells the story of a renowned artist who is about to reveal to the world his final piece of art. It is revealed that the artist Zima Blue is in fact a machine and was initially created to clean the tiles of a swimming pool. It also happens that Zima Blue's final piece of art is to go back to its original state cleaning the pool plastered by tiles coloured Zima Blue.

Along with *The Witness*, *Blindspot* is just one of the two episodes in Volume 1 that is an original work. Directed by Vitaliy Shushko, it depicts the story of a cyborg crew – featuring Hawk, Kali, Sui, and Rookie – attempting to rob a microchip from a moving vehicle. It is just Rookie that comes out of the mission unscathed, but he finds

out that all four of their brains were copied by the team's coordinator before being sent on the mission.

Automated Customer Service, directed by Meat Dept consisting of Kevin Van Der Meiren, David Nicolas and Laurent Nicolas, this episode tells the story of an elderly woman who runs into issues with her house-cleaning robot. The robot, which looked harmless at first, turns aggressive after malfunctioning and sets out to terminate the woman whose efforts to get to the customer service is fruitless due to its highly-automated nature of operation. The woman is rescued by her neighbour, but it shows at the end them being chased by an army of cleaning robots.

Ice also comes from director Robert Valley who made *Zima Blue* from the first volume. This is the story of two brothers who move to a planet whose population is genetically modified to have superhuman abilities. One of the brothers Sedgewick does not possess any superpowers as he has not been genetically modified and the story shows how the other brother Fletcher helps him earn Sedgewick the respect of others while on an adventure to catch a glimpse of the magnificent Frost Whales that once in a while breaches the surface of the ice-covered planet.

Pop Squad, directed by Jennifer Yuh Nelson, is set in a dystopian future where humans have gained immortality with the use of drugs. However, that has come with the cost of overpopulation which the world is tackling by executing newborn children and prosecuting their parents. The episode takes us through the life of a police officer who is in charge of the Pop Squad and is tasked with this job, but begins to question his field of work.

Directed by Leon Berelle, Dominique Boidin, Remi Kozyra and Maxime Luere, *Snow in the Desert* is the tale of Snow, a man who has gained virtual immortality due to his regenerative abilities. As a result, Snow is also someone in

high demand and bounty hunters are sent to track him down. Snow meets a woman named Hirald who is on a mission to find him and bring him to the Earth Intelligence Agency for research in his own accord. In the end, it is revealed that Hirald herself is also immortal like Snow after she was fused with a cyborg after an accident.

All Through the House, directed by Elliot Dear, is a Christmas special, but with a twist. Siblings Leah and Billy are awakened by sounds from downstairs on Christmas Eve and run down expecting it to be Santa Claus who had come to give them presents. It turns out it was not Santa Claus who was visiting them, but a monster. The monster corners them and then identifies them as good only to regurgitate a present for the two leaving the siblings in a state of terror The episode is based on a short story written by Joachim Heijndermans.

Life Hutch, made by Alex Beaty, tells the events that transpire after a pilot named Terence is forced to crash land on a planet after being hit in a battle against an alien force. Terence takes refuge in the Life Hutch, a shelter nearby, but finds out that the maintenance robot at the shelter had malfunctioned forcing it to attack anything that moves. The episode then details how Terence fights the malfunctioning robot and tricks it to attack itself and save his own life.

In *The Drowned Giant*, directed by Tim Miller, the gigantic dead body of a young man washes on the shores of a small-town piquing interest of the locals and the scientific community. Steven, one of the academics, was initially not interested in the corpse but is fascinated by it once he makes the visit to the beach. The episode shows how Steven is moved by the corpse as it disintegrates each passing day leaving little trace of its existence. The episode is based on a story by J G Ballard published in 1964 in a short story collection called The Terminal Beach.

The three robots return for *Three Robots: Exit Strategies* in the third volume of the series and this time it is directed by Patrick Osborne. And this time too, they are on a trip into the post-apocalyptic world left behind by the human beings. But this time, the episode revolves around the ways in which humanity tried to save itself from the brink of extinction. It is revealed that humans had enough resources to save the environment, but instead hatched grandiose plans which failed ultimately. In a familiar twist in the end, it is revealed that a few might have been lucky to escape the apocalypse, but those were not the humans, but the intelligent cats.

Kill Team Kill, another episode from Jennifer Yuh Nelson, tells the story of a group of soldiers who are sent into a haunting forest in search of another team who seem to have been lost in the woods. There they are attacked by a grizzly bear, that is cybernetically enhanced but gone rogue, and suffer casualties. The story then takes us through the team's attempts to kill the bear which ends in the destruction of the whole team along with their base.

Mason's Rats, directed by Carlos Stevens, is set in a future Scotland where a farmer named Mason is being attacked by rats that use crossbows. A pest control company that uses high-end technology for terminating pests is enlisted to deal with the rats, but the rats adapt to the technology and manage to survive and thrive. Mason upgrades the technology, but the rats continue their fight back. Impressed by the rats' resilience, Mason makes peace with the pests and cancels his check for the pest control company.

Jibaro, directed by Alberto Mielgo and based on Greek mythology, is set in the jungles of Puerto Rico. A siren is attracted to a deaf soldier who seems unaffected by her deathly scream that usually makes people go insane. The two meet, but the soldier steals all the jewels from the siren's body and tosses her body into the water.

Later it is shown that the soldier has his ear fixed while washing his face from the river and this enables the siren to exact revenge on the young soldier.

To analyse how technology, an inevitable part of the time, plays the role of both toxicant and antidote, the dissertation titled, "Revamping Technology: A Posthumanist Critique on Netflix's *Love, Death & Robots*" has taken into account the Netflix original animated anthology series, *Love, Death and Robots* by David Fincher, Tim Miller. As we are walking into a new time, where the boundaries are blurred and new existences are created, recognising the need for a relevant framework to study this, posthuman philosophy is made use to trace the changing meanings of technology when interfaced with environment, body and power.

Chapter one titled 'Live and Let Live: Negotiating the Intersections Between Technology and Ecology' examines the role of technology in the discourse of environmentalism. As we are in a period of emergency regarding climate change and natural disasters it is analysed how the humanist idea of anthropocentrism is not sufficient. Post- anthropocentrism becomes a large narrative in the context of Posthumanism. The chapter looks into the irony of technology being the cause for the ecological disaster and at the same time has the potential to remedy these problems through the episodes like *Three Robots*, *Fish Night*, *Good Hunting*, *Mason's Rats*, *Suits*, *Shape Shifters*, *Three Robots: Exit Strategies*, *Ice*.

Chapter two, 'Beyond the Body: Reimaginations using Technology' discusses how critical Posthumanim deconstructs the mind- body dualism. Body becomes more important and gains new meanings unlike the Humanistic tradition. Body becomes fluid free from the normative forms. Also, posthumanism advocates the blurring of the boundaries of the human body, animal, and machine. The chapter analyses whether this new existence of the body is viable; How body becomes the space of

trauma, commodification, or a marker of othering even in the posthuman scenario in the episodes like, *Sonnie's Edge*, Jibaro, *Good Hunting*, Shape *Shifters*, *Kill Team Kill*, *Snow in the Desert*, *Zima Blue*, *Ice*, *The Drowned Giant*, *Blindspot*, *Pop Squad*, *Bad Travelling*.

Chapter three, 'Contours of Power and Technology' discusses how power appears in new forms in the posthuman narrative. Theoretically, posthumanism is against human exceptionalism and breaks binaries. Technological advances have always been viewed as part of human development. And in this techno-mediated world, power is the new capital. The chapter analyses how locating power has become difficult, as it is not accumulated in the hands of a master but blurred. As technology cannot be separated from us, power cannot be distinguished as a separate entity, it has infiltrated the system.

Chapter 1

Live and Let Live: Negotiating the Intersections between Technology and

Ecology

The Semitic idea of man being the guardian of other creations, the best among

everything else, has been a constant throughout human civilisation. Humans

considered themselves as the pinnacle of everything and that the centre of all the

discourses is human. Along with the term anthropocentrism, we have been using the

word Anthropocene for a while in the discussions related to environmental ethics.

According to the *Oxford Learner's Dictionary*, the word means, "relating to the

current age, viewed as the period during which human activity has had the greatest

influence on climate and the environment" ("Anthropocene"). It is the understanding

of chronology of time not merely in terms of human history but on geocentric

understanding of planetary life. There is a deep-rooted bias towards the non-human

world as a result of the western thought of anthropocentrism. It is high time that we

started thinking away from human.

There has been a drastic impact upon nature by human interventions and

selfishness. According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the

United Nations body for assessing the science related to climate change:

Widespread, pervasive impacts to ecosystems, people, settlements, and

infrastructure have resulted from observed increases in the frequency and

intensity of climate and weather extremes. These observed impacts have been

attributed to human-induced climate change. Unsustainable land-use and land

cover change, unsustainable use of natural resources, deforestation, loss of

biodiversity, pollution, and their interactions, adversely affect the capacities of

ecosystems, societies, communities and individuals to adapt to climate

change... Loss of ecosystems and their services has cascading and long-term

impacts on people globally, especially for Indigenous Peoples and local

communities who are directly dependent on ecosystems, to meet basic needs.

(Pörtner)

Because of human interventions, nonhuman and nonliving things are affected

badly. Thousands of animals and birds are extinct and many more are on the

threatened species list. Climate change does not affect everyone equally, people of the

underdeveloped and developing countries will have to face more difficulties. In 2018,

the World Bank estimated that three regions (Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and

Southeast Asia) will generate 143 million more climate migrants by 2050

("Groundswell").

The beginning of the epoch can be traced back to the agricultural revolution,

when humans started to alter the laws of nature. Until then humans were like all other

beings co-existing with the rhythm of nature. With agriculture humans through

deforestation and disturbing the habitat of other inhabitants started intervening with

the ecosystem. But this was accelerated with the scientific inventions and

technological advances. From then on, profit-aiming capitalism has been exploiting

the resource bases through overproduction, encroachment and interventions of all

sorts. In the article, *The Great Crisis*, Armando Bartra foresees the great crisis of

civilization by calling western civilisation "an order that is spatially globalising,

socially industrial, economically capitalist, culturally hybrid, intellectually rationalist"

(Sousa).

The idea of creating solutions to the problems created by anthropocentrism

using the posthuman theoretical framework is relevant at this point, because, to create

a strategy that will help us to initiate ways to repair the destruction caused not only to ourselves but to the non-humans, objects and other existences is crucial. It should be "rethinking the relations of production, consumption, and coexistence contained in destructive capitalism, but also in the need of going beyond a non-relational way of thinking and approaching "others."" (Wells) Cutting across nature/culture dualism and replacing it with multiplicity, as proposed by posthumanism.

The idea of the human has always been associated with power, exclusion and inclusion. The discourse of Posthumanism sways between two binary oppositions. On one hand it deals with anti-humanism/Post-humanism and on the other the discussion is about post-anthropocentrism/posthuman-ism. The former criticises the humanist ideal of Eurocentric, male heterosexual Man as the representation of all humans and creates new alternative values. The latter criticises the hierarchical order constructed among the species and aids ecological justice by breaking the power structure and giving importance to other beings and environment. It is not just about humans, or living things, but about everything present and absent. Posthumanism is not something that we are going to become, but it is about the need for discussion of what we are capable of becoming. It is thinking about open identities, the changes that the current situation of not only humanity but the whole earth and its living and non-living existences survive. As Braidotti puts it:

> A posthuman theory of the subject emerges, therefore, as an empirical project that aims at experimenting with what contemporary, bio-technologically mediated bodies are capable of doing. These non-profit experiments with contemporary subjectivity actualize the virtual possibilities of an expanded, relational self that functions in a nature–culture continuum and is technologically mediated. (60)

Ecology and environmentalism are major concerns of posthumanism. It is based largely on the interconnectedness between self and other, that is, non human and 'other'. The first step about this is to invalidate human exceptionalism, rejection of self-centred individualism; which thereby makes the whole process not about saving 'us' from destruction but saving everything from the negative impact on the environment and to alter the idea of humans as the enemy of all other matter. This does not devalue humans but make use of the abilities of humans such as, "the capacity to attribute meaning to — or otherwise conceptualise — events; to act altruistically towards unknown others; to imagine the future and create technologies to deliver it; and to use reason to theorise, predict or anticipate future or unseen events" (Fox).

The second step towards thinking about ecology within the Posthuman framework will be to use science and technology to reverse the destruction caused by humans using scientific advancements and capitalism. But this equally condemns the abuses of science and technology and the exploitation of nature. In this chapter I try to analyse how technology is both the cause and the remedy to the problems related with the environment. Placing posthumanism as the vantage point, we will be reading how techno-human-natural bond can be used to negotiate the alarming tone of climate change through the selected episodes of *Love Death Robots*.

In the episode, *Three Robots*, a post- apocalyptic city is shown indicating the total ruin of the earth with its all living and nonliving things, what remains is a few ruins of human civilization. But somehow the robots that are man-made seem to escape this catastrophe and are in the position to judge the human wrongdoing which resulted in the collapse of the ecosystem. Humans tried to survive the ecological catastrophe caused by them using technology, but what remained was the technology,

the robots; which is ironic. Sarcastically the robots ridicule the humans who considered themselves to be the supreme beings. This clearly shows how the association of technology is not used wisely by humans.

The last place they visit in the apocalyptic city is called, 'The piece of Resistance'. Robot 3 says, "the idea behind these was to annihilate as many humans as possible, as quickly as possible" (08:39-08:44). This points to the division between humans. At the point of crisis, the divide between the privileged and 'others' becomes evident and the right to survive is limited to a very few people. This starts the discussion about hierarchical schemata within the human species and how technology is increasing the divide. This liberal humanist notion of the man as distinct from life of 'other' humans and nonhumans is what is deconstructed in the Posthumanist discourse. Because it advocates interconnectedness between the human and the non-human.

"Indeed, it was their own hubris that ended their reign, their belief that they were the pinnacle of creation that caused them to poison the water, kill the land and choke the sky. In the end, no nuclear winter was needed, just the long heedless autumn of their own self-regard" (08:56-09:11), the female robot continues to the extent to which humans destroyed nature and themselves. This shows how anthropocentrism is not going to help humanity in the process of survival.

When the young man couldn't resist the mysterious beauty of nature, he crosses the boundary, in the episode, *Fish Night*. It clearly shows the human curiosity of wanting to understand everything, to unlock the secrets of nature, which is not possible every time, and may end in dismay. "We are not self-contained and self-sufficient, either as a species or as individuals, but live naturally in deep mutual dependence" (Braidotti 77). This realisation is sufficient to understand the

vulnerability of humans in this world and the need for considering all lives equal –
that is negating the species hierarchy which was formed from a masculine desire for
mastery. It is time for us to discover the secrets in order to dominate nature. When
the young man says, "We never should have taken this road" (01:27-01:29), it
suggests the wrong decisions humans continue to make as better cutoffs which ends
us in havoc.

      In the article, "Climate change, environmental justice and the unusual
capacities of posthumans", Nick J Fox and Pam Alldred identify the anthropocentric
and exceptionalist focus on United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development.

> Of its 17 objectives, 13 address aspects of human well-being, such as ending
> poverty, achieving gender equality, access to clean water and affordable
> energy. Only three (on climate action, and conserving marine and terrestrial
> wildlife) focus on the non-human environment, while one concerns both
> human and non-human.

This clearly shows that for some reason human matters are in some ways qualitatively
distinct from other matters.

      At times, humans are intolerant to the very existence of other things and
approach it as a threat. In the episode *Good Hunting,* the mythical creature of Huli
jing is beheaded by the spirit hunter claiming that she bewitched the merchant's son.
Without inspecting the truth about the situation, human superiority assumes who has
erred; the 'other'. "Do not speak to that human. You know how dangerous they are…"
(05:15-05:19) says Huli Jing to her daughter, just before getting killed by the spirit
hunter, which explains how humans harm their fellow beings. "Why are you hunting
us? We did nothing to you," (04:30-04:33) is a relevant question Yan asks. "The point

is not to simply extend our concerns to those who have the capacity to think or act like us, but rather to find ways of addressing and acknowledging those whose ways of being in the world, including their ways of thinking, communicating and feeling are foreign to us" (Weil). Other intelligences in the world should be acknowledged and appreciated.

Humans distance themselves from nature by using technology for selfish needs and call it development. This model of development is built on the ideal of humanism. When the nature-culture bond is disrupted and technological ties are for mere profits and to exploit nature, the signs of how the environment and 'other' beings are affected is explained. In the episode *Good Hunting* before technology arrives the power dispute was between man and nature but later when technology arrives along with its "masters" the power shifts to the more powerful man and the machine. "Magic is draining from the world and with it, we magical creatures grow ever weaker" (06:58-07:03), says Yan. With technology, humans are trying to erase the space for a Huli Jan to exist.

Man had a rhythmic relation with nature, even when he thought himself as the pinnacle of everything. Mythologies are the best example to explain this human-animal relationship. All animals during this time co-existed with nature. In the episode the Chinese myth of Huli Jing is referred to. Until the invention of machines, and technology, what mesmerised man was magic and mystery and its association with nature. The body of huli jan was fluid, as it possessed both beauty and beast within it. With technology man is distancing away and the equilibrium with nature is altered. But Liang approached technology. "Technology in the city was exciting and always changing. As it changed, I changed with it. I found I understood automata even better than I understood trains. These machines were otherworldly... and alive.

They felt akin to magic" (10:08-10:50), says Liang. Understanding the potential of technology and using it accordingly is what we need. Using technology is the remedy to the problems caused by technology. Abandoning technology at this juncture is not possible nor wise.

Neo-capitalism uses technological advancements not for correcting the threat of climate change but for their own profits. In the episode *Mason's Rats*, in a technologically advanced farm, where labour is eased using machines and crops are genetically modified, the rats also evolve to be techno-modified as part of survival. But the egotist man did not realise it was technological interventions that provoked such a transformation. "Evolution, you see. Humanity is warping the environment, forcing the animal kingdom to adapt, et cetera, et cetera" (02:06-02:13), says the salesman of the Trap Technology company, who specialises in modern pest control. This doesn't seem to be a problem for both of them and they decide to annihilate the rat colony using an ultra-modern device. The capitalist world is going to offer products which they claim will solve the problems, but in fact are creating problems. The first failed attempt doesn't stop them from using a new and more advanced killing machine against the rats. Advanced capitalism makes differences for the sole purpose of commodification for hyper individualistic consumption. But the cruelty which was performed by the machine was so much that the mason himself shot it down. Which resulted in a symbiotic relation between the farmer and the rats. The farmer says, "I salute your courage sir" (07:47-07:48), which indicates the absence of hierarchy between the animal-human relationship which mirrors the posthumanist principle. "Multispecies ethics provides experimental possibilities of being open to and making room for differences, becoming with, becoming otherwise, becoming undone and redone together" (Murris 11).

It is a fact that the advent of machines improved human capabilities, but along with it came the fear of being inferior when compared to the more efficient and accurate machine brain. Charles Darwin's association of man with the beast was the last thing the human ego wanted; breaking the myth of majestic creation of man by the great divinity and tracing the common ancestry to monkeys.

The current time of anthropocene emphasises the technologically mediated power acquired by humans and its potential deadly consequences for the rest of the world and ourselves. According to Rosi Braidotti (59), a salient feature of contemporary global economy is its techno-scientific structure. Both these ideas are contradictory but true. But there is a shared social anxiety prevailing now, which is accelerated by the depiction of the apocalypse and dominating robots in popular culture. This often acts as "a negative tendency to represent transformations of relations between humans and technological apparatus or machine in the mode of gothic horror" (64) than provide alert to act on the drastic climate change.

For man whatever that is not associated with the self is the 'other' denoted using an umbrella term; animal. This signifier denotes no individuality or importance to these millions of other living things. In episodes, *Suits*, *Good Hunting*, *Shape Shifters* we can see how non-human creatures are marked as 'other'. And in the rest of the episodes, we see no animals, which also shows how even the narratives are anthropocentric. But in *Mason's Rats'* narrative ends showing the mason who decides to co-exist with the rats. As Braidotti puts it,

> The posthuman in the sense of post-anthropocentrism displaces the dialectical scheme of opposition, replacing well established dualisms with the recognition of deep zoe-egalitarianism between humans and animals. The vitality of their bond is based on sharing this planet, territory or environment on terms that are

no longer so clearly hierarchical, nor self-evident. This vital interconnection posits a qualitative shift of the relationship away from species-ism and towards an ethical appreciation of what bodies (human, animal, others) can do. (71)

The othering of non-human existences and hence proving the autonomy of humans is heavily criticised in the episode, *Suits*. The attacking swarms called DeeBees, are presented as the alien figure but only towards the end, it is shown that in fact humans are colonisers who have set up domed colonies across the planet. "Don't like having *our* property line exposed like that" says Beth (01:25-01:27). Humans tend to have the urge to possess everything possible and make it his own which mirrors the figure of the coloniser. As has been stated earlier, these anthropocentric survival strategies are going to fail as the focus is only on the survival/escape of selected humans neglecting the earth and its existences without which survival is impossible.

The modes of narratives and techniques used to talk about eco-technological interface should also be analysed. "Ecohorror is a genre that deals with our fears and anxieties about the environment. It grows out of and includes narratives that have been referred to, variously, as natural horror, creature features, and 'nature strikes back' narratives, in which the central narrative is frequently one of some elements of the natural world attacking humanity" (Braidotti 115). These narratives show the anxieties of humans about the natural world and its existence beyond human control.

In different episodes, results of current environmental policies are shown as the total destruction of everything, a sight of the apocalyptic imagination. Both in the episodes, *Three Robots* and *Three Robots: Exit Strategies,* the scenes show the damage on a catastrophic scale, the debris of human civilization. Something shown is

more effective than saying it in words. The horror of seeing the earth and humanity come to an end is frightening and anxious. Throughout the narrative it is explained how the humans caused the environmental disaster and how they thought they could escape it without consequences. It criticises the false hope humans had to survive constructing utopian models like, "survivalist camps" and hunting animals to extinction, waging war against their own kind, overfishing and saturating the food chain with microplastics. "So, the whole of humanity tried to make it through the end of civilization with guns and spikes?" (03: 08-03:14), asks XBOT 4000 in amusement. It is proven throughout the episodes that, neither violence nor power can help us from the disaster but a shift of focus from humans to the environment might. Every class of humans tried to save themselves by isolating themselves from their fellow beings and "Humanity had all the tools to heal their wounded planet and save themselves but instead they chose greed and self gratification over a healthy biosphere and future of their children" (08:08-08:17) says 11-45-G. The narratives of nature-strikes-back "includes analyses of texts in which horrific texts and tropes are used to promote ecological awareness, represent ecological crises, or blur human/non- human distinctions more broadly" (Braidotti 116).

The planet earth has been an object of study for many fields, from physics to meteorology, from cartography to satellite-based information. Man has always invented new methods to ease this understanding and continue to explore the answers unknown to man. But, mid-way, man has decided to be a multiplanetary species. Even if man's curiosity is justified, shouldn't anthropocentric vanity be questioned? The explorations of man has caused irreversible damage to the planet earth and the existences in it. Colonising another planet as a remedy to climate change is a techno-utopian solution. Even if man can build an abode altering the temperature and creating

glass domes, will that be the right solution than protecting the shared inheritance, earth? It is both a moral and practical question.

Setting up an earth-like environment on another planet is doubtful and even if we suppose humans could achieve that, not all humans can actually acheive this. The occupation of an alien planet can be observed as a recurring theme for a while in fiction and in reality, recently, which aims only for human survival. In the mission of becoming a multiplanetary species with the help of technology. In the *Suits* we see how dome shaped habitats are built in another planet where they set up their living by altering the lives of other inhabitants. An entire population has been genetically modified and moved to a colonised planet in *Ice*. These narratives move around as an alternative to saving earth. The famous astrophysicist, Martin Rees says, "it is a delusion to think we can solve Earth's problems by relocating to Mars. I completely disagree with Musk and with my late colleague Stephen Hawking on that, because dealing with climate change on Earth is a doddle compared with terraforming Mars" (Tucker).

Chapter 2

Beyond the Body: Reimaginations using Technology

The idea of 'human' is something that constantly changes with time and space. Rosi Braidotti says that "Not all of us can say, with any degree of certainty, that we have always been human, or that we are only that. Some of us are not even considered fully human now, let alone at previous moments of Western social, political and scientific history" (1). Attempts to prove human distinctiveness are always strong. But rethinking the concept of 'purity' of humans is what science demands now. The definitions attributed to humans and non-humans are now merging. Vitruvian man otherwise known as 'the universal man' is no longer the yardstick for explaining who or what human is, in the posthuman era. The association with animal and technology of the human body is leading to the discovery of the many possibilities of human 'becomings' or beings.

"Binaries do the subtle work of separating and inferiorizing the second term by producing ways of knowing the world that appear normal and unquestionable. The 'mind' assumes greater importance in terms of capacities that are valued as expressions of agentic humanness – powers of reason and cognition" (Murris 10). The Cartesian philosophy of mind-body dualism has always given importance to the mind and rationality over the corporeal body. And distinction among sapiens based on one's body was based on this white, masculine human western philosophy unsullied by non- animal, non-white, non- male bodies.

As a development of postmodern thought, posthumanism can think of new existences of the body, that are beyond human with the help of technology and by breaking binary oppositions. "Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly

ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves are frighteningly inert" (Haraway153).

The human-machine boundary is blurred. Both, robots in the shape of humans and humans transcending its biological capabilities, are seen. The biological body of humans is paving way for the posthuman, a prosthetic extension to the organic body. But the posthuman body is not that destructs the human body but an extension of it. Posthuman philosophy secures space for 'other' bodies to exist and new bodies to form. "Why should our bodies end at the skin, or include at best other beings encapsulated by skin?" (Harraway 178). It is the next evolutionary step for the species, only technology mediated and not natural.

The white male heterosexual body has always positioned the rest in the opposite column of 'other' while underpinning hierarchical truth claims. The 'other' bodies are considered weak and an object of exploitation. The body of the other is the space of unwanted experiences, discomfort and discrimination. Minds like Haraway believed the posthuman world to be a 'dehierarchized' network. Even so, there is concern about the changes happening to the body technology. Along with appreciating technology it is important to identify the negative impact as well.

The Body has been altered all along with the scientific advancements, be it through medicines and vaccines or eyeglasses and pacemakers. This journey aims to make the human body more abled or perhaps the most abled. This is the imaginaire of overcoming restrictions of the biological body, but it sometimes becomes the process to attain 'perfection' and immortality as it is considered as the 'purpose' of life according to the Enlightenment discourse. Human body is considered faulty and

incomplete in this case. The desire for 'perfection' and achieving the highest levels of evolution often ends in creating new standards of perfection. When the Posthuman body is considered to break the racial, sexual, gendered body, the absence of differeces is in a way an erasure of representation of different bodies, and production of homogenity. Surgical aesthetics is an example for this. Also, the posthuman era, if not scrutinised, can carry forward the already existing problems like objectification of the body. That is, how the body is considered as a material good for profit and pleasure. Thus when Posthumanism is in the process of breaking the mind/ body dualism, it is also important to problematize the homogenisation and objectification of the body with technology.

As Harraway says, gender is a verb and not a noun (180). Gendered narratives can still exist as science and technology is heavily patriarchal. "Even if sex will have no biological or physiological relevance for robots, in the future gender will be reaffirmed in its hermeneutical role, and precisely: for machines, in their process of identity formation; for humans, to better interact with the machines" (Ferrando 9). In the episode *Sonnie's Edge,* the antagonist Dicko requests Sonnie to lose the next battle and offers a huge amount of money. He is startled to see the beast. He says, "Yes. He's magnificent!" (02:19). But Ivrine corrects him, "Yes. She is" (02:22) and he apologises, "Oh. Of course, my apologies, 'she'" (02:26-02:29). This is a clear example of how a powerful and strong body is always associated with masculinity. The female body, considered as the weak body, is exploited for pleasure and to display power. Also, the body is considered a material good which is commodified. "You don't fucking listen, do you? It may be about money for you, but for us, it's personal" (03:12-03:16), Ivrine replies furiously. Patriarchy continues to conquer women's bodies using money, strength, and seduction.

Body is a space where traumas are marked. Sonnie is a victim of sexual assault and her body continues to carry that memory. The autonomy of a body is denied when it is physically attacked and harmed. She uses this bio-engineered gladiator beast as her body to fight against the violence. She goes beyond her wounded female body and uses Khanivore as a dissent. But against our expectations, the battle between Turborapter and Khanivore is showing how the male-female divide is always established by sexual abuse. Though Khanivore wins the battle after, she is raped by Turboraptor. And even after becoming a beast, Sonnie has a scared existence — always in fear of a threat to life, "Every time I step into that ring, I'm fighting for my life. That fear is my edge," (15:07-15:14) she says. Some bodies are always privileged and some exploited.

> It is on and through the body, feminists argue, that systems of privilege and oppression are not only reproduced but are also lived in the most visceral sense of the word. Seen in these terms, the body can no longer simply be relegated to the 'private' and intimate sphere, for instead it becomes deeply implicated in questions of global economic and social justice. (Smith 4)

The myths narrated using posthuman narratives in the episodes can be seen as appropriate retellings of the old myths. These addresses the issues in the popular narratives, and also create spaces for dissent. In the episode, *Jibaro*, the siren myth is deconstructed. "The Sirens were nymphs encountered by Odysseus often depicted with birdlike bodies, who sang such enticing songs that seafarers were lured to their death. A siren has come to mean a seductive woman. Siren song refers to bewitching or alluring temptation that also may be treacherous (Morford et al.)". The seductive woman is a recurring image in the narratives. Womanhood has been critiqued for addressing their sexual needs. Though the episode comments on toxic relationships,

we can clearly see how this addresses the objectification and exploitation of women's bodies. The siren'*s* body is made of precious jewels which imply how the body is materialised. Siren is intrigued by this man but later realised he was no different, he desired for her jewels. At the end she kills him and throws him in the deep water to rest with the debris of the other men she had killed. The narrative gives the siren the space for resistance by not letting men exploit her body. This redraws the figure of seducing woman and portrays a woman who defends herself.

Similar is the myth of Huli Jing, the chinese fox spirits depicted in the episode, *Good Hunting*. It is a mythological creature who has shapeshifting power; they can change into beautiful women, but are often depicted as seductive and malevolent (Zhelyazkov). In the episode, the female entity is constantly being attacked by men. The mother Huli Jing was accused of alluring the men when in fact the men were the ones who desired for her. Even in the modern world, feminity is reduced to mere objectification and pleasure, where men decide to make transformations on the female body according to their needs. "All I have is my beauty. Now, I live by the very thing you accused my mother of: I bewitch men for money" (09:10- 09:17) says Yan in *Good Hunting*. Sometimes in a world where power is in the hands of men, the only purpose of women is to satisfy men's pleasure. The coloniser with technology is powerful. The women who are powerless should find new ways to survive. Women's bodies are objectified. Resistance against this is essential. Another point to be noted along with this is how technology and the body are used for dissent. Like Sonnie, Yan has also used technology to alter her body and fight it. "The old magic may have been gone from the world, but I could make a new magic from their machines. A magic we could use against them," (13:14-13:26) says Yan. If the spirit hunter, the father as the masculine figure, was trained to tame nature and the mystic forces of femininity, the

son found his power in understanding the automata, which for him "felt akin to magic" (10:44), used for the liberation of femininity. Liang masters technology and helps Yan fight back the men, her predators. Technology is used to undo the problems, and thereby deconstruct the power relations and dissent.

> Cyborg writing must not be about the Fall, the imagination of a once-upon-a-time wholeness before language, before writing, before Man. Cyborg writing is about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as 'other'. (Haraway 176)

Not only the female body but all bodies are of commodity value. It is used as a material object for pleasure, profit, or politics. With the help of technology, the human body is altered to do things like fighting in war. In the episode *Shape Shifters*, the werewolves are part of the armed force to fight off their enemies. Even when they are more powerful than the rest of them, they are valued less. The only purpose of their life is to fight the war with their body. Their body gets no more value than a machine or an armour. Similar is the case when a grizzly bear is genetically modified with mechanical augmentation in *Kill Team Kill*. The body of the animal is considered less important and for fighting a war the body is being modified not for the bear but for the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Sergeant tells how the 'thing' started acting 'unpatriotic' during the night patrol. Even the animal body is materialised and objectified. All bodies are expected to be loyal to the state. The film ends with a blast, and the bomb was kept inside the eye of the grizzly bear. The extent to which man decides to use technology for violence in the name of national peace is ironic. Bodies are degraded to meet mere utilitarian purposes.

The biological body very often fails to meet the cultural parameters. Such bodies are under constant pressure to attain 'normality' or perfection. But generally all bodies are now able to overcome these hurdles with the help of technology. Human body has more longevity with medicines and vaccines, even new organs can be transplanted. Thus the possibility for 'disabled' bodies, which were denied its space in the cultural scenario, to exist is more. The new creation stands beyond the nature-culture binary or the cultural constructs. Thus, through the process of becoming more-than-human while disturbing the normative assumptions and questioning and changing the frameworks of cultural constructs, inclusion and multiplicity are achieved.

 Then the question of ability is dealt with, as the new body is capable of breaking the stereotypes and vulnerabilities and act/perform new embodied capacities. But when closely analysed one may doubt whether alterations are trying to attain the 'normal'. Isn't this creating new standards and thus new disabilities? Dubious representations are often part of the profit- making agenda and should be closely scrutinised. Braidotti reminds us that, "This posthuman political landscape is not necessarily more egalitarian or less racist and heterosexist in its commitment to uphold, for instance, conservative gender roles and family values, albeit of the inter galactic and alien kind" (97).

Humanism has clearly defined hierarchies and placed the human at the top. So is the definition about ability and disability. Disability is often seen as "a flaw or lack in the individual, deviating from what is considered normal" (Murris 2). Acts of inclusion are normally silenced by normative views. The world is created in one-size-fits-all environments based on the 'abled-bodies'. Even the Robots are made in the 'perfect' moulds of man and woman creating or continuing the old standards let that

be the humanoid, Sophie, or Hirald, the cyborg in *Snow in the Desert*. In *Zima Blue,* we see the atomization of labour and the unending process to achieve 'perfection'. Humans always feel that lack. With technological advancements the desire to become more able is what man pursues now. This is going to increase the distinction evenmore as access to these technologically assisted abilities in the body is limited for a few. As Stuart Murray explains, "structures are going to exclude most people with disabilities: they have restricted 'purchasing power' due to the exclusionary practices of capitalist systems; and the situated workings of biocapitalism will always find the difference of disability bodies largely abhorrent" (41). Fletcher, the 'unmodded' teen in *Ice*, is isolated and bullied as he does not meet the standards of normalcy, until he proves his 'ability'. When someone is not meeting the standards of 'normality' there will always be cultural and social forces to push them to the margins and label them as outcast, denying their existence.

The monstrous body in narratives most often represents the antagonist, a threat to humans. This clearly creates an aesthetic duality of beauty and ugly while othering such bodies. This is the reason why the people were not able to see the glory of the giant body in *The Drowned Giant*. If the first feeling was fear, the next step was to conquer. The body was exploited in all possible ways. Except the narrator, everybody else saw it as an object when in reality the body just resembles 'us' except the size.

Whatever does not fit to the standard is quickly labelled as 'other. The two werewolf friends in *Shape Shifters*, Decker and Sobieski, are considered 'other' by their fellow comrades. Even though they serve the equal position in the force they are considered inferior, and called 'unnatural'. Even their bodies can do what a human body cannot, the association with animals is something ridiculed. To be 'different from' remains to mean to be 'less than'. This indicates how even in the posthuman

imagination the male, heterosexual, body is privileged. As Humanism created the concept of ideal man, a homogenic standard might be created in the posthuman era defining the abled and the disabled. This might not fulfil the Haraway dream of a dehierarchized world.

Embracing the posthuman version of the unlimited power and disembodied immortality and thereby achieving finitude as a condition of human being can be traced in the real and fictional narratives. Hirald approaches Snow, to discover the secrets of his regenerative cells and immortality for the 'Earth Centre Intelligence'. Like Sonnie has transferred her consciousness into Khanivore, the consciousness of the robots in *Blindspot* are transferred into a computer. That is, even if the 'body' of the robot is destroyed, the memory survives. The possibility of human consciousness can be transferred to a computer and it can be attached to another body is going to be practiced very soon. It will prove the concept of post-biological existence by Hans Moravek; that mind and body can be separated and mind can be 'stored' virtually. This begins the conversions about new definitions of what body is, and ethical issues regarding the application of new technologies is of altering the 'natural' order and hanging onto the essentialist idea of being human.

The idea of immortality brings along with it the question about procreation. If man can erase death will birth also be erased? A community decides not to procreate and attain youthfulness and immortality with the help of an elixir, 'rejoo' in *Pop Squad*. The people who decide to have children are executed by the government. The situation is creating the adult/ child binary and favouring one kind. Children are seen as less than 'human'. The society has no marriages, no families, and children are killed fearing overpopulation. Here the autonomy of the body is denied.

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We can see that the narratives of segregation or suppression continue to happen through languages too. In the episodes like *Three Robots*, *Sonnie's Edge*, *Blindspot*s, and *Bad Travelling,* we see characters using sexist language. Even when the robot claims that gender does not apply to them as they don't have genitalia, the language clearly continues to carry forward the cultural constructs.

> Sexual difference was built into language and representation and subjects are made through their participation in language. Thus the humanist idea that subjects produce language is subverted here when poststructuralists and feminists show identities and subjectivities emerging in language, and not preceding it. Even the experiential understanding of the body is mediated by language and discourse. There are no fixed or stable identities – identities have to be constantly performed within language and representations. (Nayar 30)

The need for creating new words and terms to include new bodies is evident at this point. With new changes and attachments and transformations, the body changes its definition. It attains a state of fluidity. It is no longer a single unity with purity. It is an assemblage of humans, organisms, animals and machines. "In the posthuman, there

are no essential differences or absolute demarcations between bodily existence and computer simulation, cybernetic mechanism and biological organism, robot teleology and human goals… [it]is an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction" (Hayles 3). The possibilities of the cyborg are immense. This will deconstruct what human is. Biological body is not essential for sustaining life, and with that new experiences are going to happen. New identities will be formed replacing the dualistic man/woman, black/white, Oriental/ Occidental, heterosexual/homosexual ones. Thus the body acquires new meaning by deconstructing the ones the society made. But as we have analysed, bodies are still categorised and labelled 'abled' and 'disabled'.

When we look into the narrative of this anthology, the film-making technique of animation has created a more flexible storytelling method. The director of *Jibaro*, Alberto Mielgo said in an interview that "In 3D, we have the advantage that we don't need to have a body underneath. We don't need to have a man kind of complaining or an actor saying like, 'Oh my God, this doesn't move well'" ("Love, Death + Robots" 02:57-03:08). This is, new narrative method going beyond human body interfacing with technology and to achieve more, articulate more.

Chapter 3

Contours of Power and Technology

Posthumanism is a critique of human exceptionalism and hence goes hand in hand with post- anthropocentrism. Along with is the question of who qualifies as the 'human' according to the western philosophical standards. Thus only a fragment among humans have agency and privileges. Power acts as the key axis for this segregation or othering. Thus women, LGBTQIA+, non- euro- Americans, indigenious groups, differently abled bodies along with the rest of the living and non-living existences are considered less powerful and less rational. A 'man' is never defined as "not woman", but a 'woman' is always 'not man', animal 'not human' homosexual, 'not heterosexual', black 'not white' and etc. "Humanism upholds inequality and distributes power asymmetrically." (Crellin 121)

Posthumanism understands humans as assemblages with animals and ideas, that which cannot be isolated as a single autonomous entity. Braidotti describes posthuman as a "relational embodies, embedded, affective and accountable entity" ("A Theoretical Framework"). Considering everything as equal is not taking away the accountability of humans actions but overturn the power relations that patriarchy, racism, sexism, colonialism, etc. has created. But she also warns us to be aware of new patterns power relations:

> I want to stress that the awareness of a new (negatively indexed)
> reconstruction of something we call 'humanity' must not be allowed to flatten
> out or dismiss all the power differentials that are still enacted and
> operationalized through the axes of sexualization/racialization/naturalization,
> just as they are being reshuffled by the spinning machine of advanced, bio-

genetic capitalism. Critical theory needs to think simultaneously the blurring

of categorical differences and their reassertion as new forms of bio-political,

bio-mediated political economy, with familiar patterns of exclusion and

domination. (87-88)

Power should not be understood as simply one subject exercising power on an object. Power is described not as an object to be possessed, but as a network that runs through people without a single origin. It is a flow, and is in a process. "Power exists differently in various parts of assemblages; it becomes concentrated in some relations and is part of what allows these relations to stabilise and endure. In other parts of assemblages, it is less intense" (Crellin 125). It is coded in various relations. There is no axis point to which we can trace back power. Thus to break this chain with continuous critique we need new narratives as we create the new phase of Posthumanism. But breaches along this process might continue the narratives of suppression and oppression. New power relations should be analysed; the transformations that happen to the ones that were previously based on race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, age, and able-bodiedness.

In a posthuman world we expect the power to shift to technology. Throughout history it is seen that power was always associated with capital. Let that be the bourgeoisie ownership of land, masters posseing slave bodies, or raw materials collected from the colonised countries. Later during the industrial revolution machines were the capital. The new information society has technology or data or information as its capital. But power is not a thing in itself, it can only be understood in its relations. Locating power means to identify it indirectly, through the effects of the relationships. Identifying such relationships in the posthuman narrative is critical.

In a techno-mediated society, access to technology is crucial. The one with technology is the one with power. In the episode *Three Robots: Exit strategies*, it is explained how different divisions of the people tried different survival strategies. Though all methods are criticised as anthropocentric, the class division is very evident. The poor people had no access to advanced technologies. Though the people with authority tried survival strategies using governmental power, they couldn't survive either. The ones who had access to the top most technology were the small number of tech millionaires. Thus in a posthuman world where we expect no distinctions, class division might still be visible. The importance given to different bodies is different and the right to survive is limited to those who have not enough technological access. Even governmental authority is not enough when it comes to survival in the current world.

The humanist assumption of male as the supreme is not one structural injustice we can easily erase off.

> The difference of the two genders is structured around power relations in which whatever is different from the masculine is treated as inferior and different. By positing the feminine as the negative Other of the masculine, gender power relations ensured that the feminine would always be the marginal gender, the lesser one of the two. This binary of superior-masculine versus inferior-feminine naturalised the difference and erased its constructed nature. (Nayar 30)

We have already seen how the episode *Sonnie's Edge* and the *Good Hunting* clearly portrays the gender divide. How genders are stereotyped as strong/weak, how the feminie body is always attacked and how the men who have money and access to technology are becoming more powerful and continue to suppress women. Most of

the time women are given only material value. Commodification of the body is denying the power over ourselves. But Sonnie uses technology to fight back the sexual exploitation and attempts of negotaitions of men using, money, strength and exploitation. Thus the access to the technology is essential for resistance as that is the most powerful tool.

In *Suits*, the swarm, DeeBees are shown as aliens, until the end. Which clearly shows how humans position all non-human beings as aliens. Even when colonising another planet, human exceptionalism makes the man think that their lives are more important, or they need to suppress other beings rather than co-existing. The British colonists in *Good Hunting* bring in development, but only to exploit the natives. The governor altering Yan into a sex toy is ridiculing the colonised. The white man always sees the colonised as inferior.

Technologies and scientific developments are an asset to Nation's progress and display value. But in a totalitarian regime technology acts differently.

> In the absence of financial incentives, and in the face of systemic barriers to individual initiative, these governments often resorted to propaganda in Marxist societies through so-called socialist competitions to get workers and scientists to perform better. They did so, in part, through their control of communications technologies—through radio, film, television, and the press— through which they established unassailable state goals, denigrated enemies, and criticised slackers, while building already infallible leaders into immortals. They organised their factories, their leaders claimed, better, more efficiently, and more scientifically than could be accomplished in other nations.

The nations are using science and technology to fight its enemies; fellow human beings. In *Shape Shifters*, US arm forces use werewolves to fight Afghanistan. In *Kill Team Kill* a grizzly bear is genetically engineered by the CIA. John Berger states: 'Animals are always observed … They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them' (Nayar 131). Body becomes connected to a network of databases, where information about it is used to make profits. Autocracy of one's body is denied just like the grizzly bear became an experiment. From World War First, countries have started using advanced machinery to attack foes, inhumanely. But the way the technology is used to destroy the infrastructure of a country and lives of millions is archaic rather than advanced.

When the Yogurt Took Over, is sarcastically criticising how man fails to manage the authority he has. When Yoghourt says they have offered the same to China, the government decides to give the yoghourt to 'govern' Ohio. To fight against and to be the most powerful is the aim rather than the wellbeing of people. At the end we see a "happy, healthy and wealthy" humanity. The narrator shares the angst, "what happens if it goes and leaves us behind, forever?" (04:57-05:00), which clearly states the disbelief in the ability of the leaders.

Another fear related to the posthuman figure is that it is considered as anti-human. We are not ready to accept the idea of change, or the association with animals and technology. Holding to the essentialist notion of human being is already deconstructed by both philosophy and science. We are not a single entity anymore but an assemblage. "To be posthuman is to become alien in many different ways at the same time. Thus, against the accused action that the posthuman is unethical because it

fosters alienation, posthuman theorists have insisted on the possibility of posthuman ethics based on ideas of collective ecologies" (MacCormack 2012 : 139).

Humans have always considered themselves superior and have rationalised the claim with their physical and mental abilities that are not possible by any other beings. But machines have now become a threat. "Basically machines were not self-moving, self-designing, autonomous. They could not achieve man's dream, only mock it. They were not man, an author to himself, but only a caricature of that masculinist reproductive dream. To think they were otherwise was paranoid. Now we are not so sure" (Haraway 153). Technology and science have helped humans attain things that the mortal body could not achieve. Humans are now on the journey to attain machine like cognitive power and an immortal body. By this endeavour humanity is fulfilling the dream seen at the garden of Eden; being god-like, omniscient and omnipotent. This is human exceptionalism getting even stronger and more selfish. Being immortal is the vision anthropocentrism aims at.

Mortality is the one thing that humans feared, we think we are capable of handling everything else, like climate change, and animal extinction. As already discussed in the chapter 2, with the help of technology, we are trying to be more abled bodies, and thereby attaining immortality. *Pop Squad* clearly shows the consequences of such a situation. When through the method of 'rejoo' they decide to gain immortality and eternal youthfulness, it becomes the denial of the bodily right of people ridiculed as 'breeders'. It is a fine example of how the government imposes power on a citizen's body. Police force, the 'law enforcing wing' make sure that there are no breeders in the nation, who are a threat to their immortality. For their love for immortal life, there should be population control and basic rights of the body of others are denied. They become people with no rights, and mere puppets who are supposed

to follow the law. Also law enforcement meant for the betterment of the citizens, put human life under threat and anguish.

> If it is the sovereign who, insofar as he decides on the state of exception, has the power to decide which life may be killed without commission of homicide, in the age of bio-politics this power becomes emancipated from the state of exception and transformed into the power to decide the point at which life ceases to be politically relevant. When life becomes the supreme political value, not only is the problem of life's non-value thereby posed, it is as if the ultimate ground of sovereign power were at stake in this decision. In modern bio-politics, a sovereign is he who decides on the value or non-value of life as-such. (Agamben 142)

A child's life is regarded as irrelevant, we see no old age people too in the story either. This can be an observation extended to the whole anthology, as no futuristic imagination includes children or old people except the retired community assisted by robots in *Automated Customer Service*. The question Leah asks her brother Billy in *All Through the House*, "What would have happened if we weren't good?" (04:35-04:45) is relevant in the discussion. The autonomous authority decides, if we are good or bad, or has the right to live or not etc. "In the eyes of authority - and maybe rightly so - nothing looks more like a terrorist than the ordinary man" (Agamben 23).

Perception is considered reality, and reality is subjective. Thom and his team ended up in a different destination. Greta, who has the full knowledge about the situation, is hiding the truth from Thom. This holding back of information makes her powerful, as she decides his reality from their own, what is good and bad for him. But later he realises even Greta is a part of simulation being fed to his mind and not real.

Thus what he thought of his reality is not real but distorted and simulated. This shows the potential of power and the highest biopolitical intervention. A person's basic comprehension of truth is altered.

The representations of monsters resignify the distinction of human. The monster or the unhuman is thus kept away in the margins. They usually perform the beastial or inhumane characters which emphasise the previous point. Portraying them as a threat makes the human the saviour and thereby the powerful entity. Whatever is not acceptable by the capitalist and cultural notions of man is monstrous. Robots, aliens, machines, etc. Othering is an act of exercising power.

The mechanical 'others' are an expression of creating fear and desire for technology that artists create. In the episode, *Automated Customer Service*, the retirement community is assisted by robotic helpers and is becoming aggressive. Later Jeanette is attacked by an army of Vaccubots. The fear about the machines overpowering humanity is evident and the fact is that humans will be highly dependent on machines, for almost everything. These narratives often recur in science fiction. The fact that humans will lose their superiority creates panic. Similar is the attack by the robot in *Life Hutch*. In the possible future, machines are what we imagine as our enemies. This is the same fear that we felt about Frankenstein. And it seems it is always important to restore the hierarchy. That is why the narrative makes sure that it is always the man who wins. But Harraway says, "the machine is not an it to be animated, worshipped, and dominated. The machine is us, our processes, an aspect of our embodiment. We can be responsible for machines; they do not dominate or threaten us. We are responsible for boundaries; we are they." (Haraway 181)

The anthology has made it possible to have space for non-human entities that outperform humans. The three robots who 'outlived' humans in *Three Robots* and

Three Robots: Exit Strategies, the yogurt which proves to be the better leader in *When the Yogurt Took Over*, the alien swarms of DeeBees who attack the settlement in *Suits*, the mutated dog Otto who eats a person alive in *The Dump*. The more efficient werewolf soldiers in *Shape- Shifters*. The cyborgs in *Blindspot* who are indestructible because their memory is backed up. The perfected machine *Zima Blue*. There are imaginations of monstrous entities who are more powerful than humans who are able to destroy them. *The Sucker of Souls* shows the undefeatable Dracula and *Fish Night* the huge Megalodon eats the Young man alive. Both these narratives hint that there are more powerful existences that humans cannot tame.

The contemporary appeal was heightened by the narrative of *The Witness*. The animated characters and the maze-like narrative of the episode resembled a video game. The unending pattern which continues to carry forward the murder and chasing implies how the characters have no control over the narrative. Is it really us who decides the narratives that we are involved in or is it mere delusion? This can be read in relation with the streaming platform, Netflix in which the anthology was released. The content they provide us is by studying our viewing pattern and using algorithms to suggest similar contents. At the same time when we are watching the content the netflix is watching us and controlling our conscience. It is more of an indirect exertion of power than marketing strategy. Thus along with the fact that it gives many artists a platform for creation with more freedom, we also analyse both the medium and the content it produces.

Language is something that continues this power narrative to flow in society. Even when men are able to imagine the future in a varied way, we are not able to imagine the language to be not sexist or something that continues to carry forward the

narratives of power relations. A time when communication happens without the medium of language might come, we are not sure.

The discourse of power has been identifying new relations of dominance and suppression for a while. In this chapter we evaluated how power relations of humanist philosophy continue to creep into the new age too and also how new narratives create new power relations. One must note that the philosophy of posthumanism itself is against autonomy. It is recognizing 'other' as a subject with agency and acknowledging identity-related complexities. The approach seeks to deliver justice to existences that were considered 'other' and change the humanist idea of human exceptionalism. But this does not mean to take away the responsibility of humans to save the earth along with other beings. "With great power comes great responsibility" is a popular adage we can use here. Power is often used to exploit and marginalise 'others'; that is when it is criticised. One being capable of doing many things doesn't mean other lives are insignificant. The most important thing about being human is the humanitarian way of approaching things. Being posthuman doesn't mean letting go of these values and morals, though the current ones might change with time. Working together with machines as part of the evolution is what we should continue to do.

Conclusion

Stories play a crucial role in every culture. It is through these narratives we understand the past, decipher the present and imagine the future. With time, new patterns evolve and expand. Like narratives mirror the society, it can also create new imaginations which people might imitate. The hardest times of Covid have passed- and as we have entered the Post-covid era, we are witnessing drastic changes in our lives. And most important among that is how we are closer to the screens of our laptops and mobiles. Netflix has become one of the most popular platforms in which viewers indulge themselves with limitless content. The content has the power to shape how millions of subscribers view the world. Understanding this potential, selected episodes from the popular anthology, *Love Death and Robots*, a Netflix original under the science fiction genre, are studied.

Science fiction often becomes the medium to construct imagined worlds to comment on futurist reality which will be heavily influenced by technology. Though Prometheus was punished by gods, he serves a special position in the mythology of mankind for bringing fire, the light of progress for humans. But this is not always the case, especially when it comes to science fiction. The narratives related to science and technology always become life- altering or life-threatening imaginations which end in the vision of its dystopian future. But it can be considered as the literature of change which links technology and humans. As Lars Schmeink defines, "One mode of literature that is most poignantly capable of expressing this impact and providing warning, as well as the hope to overcome misuse of such technology" (6). Though these can be called 'what if' narratives, analysing these speculative stories help identify the problems and potential associated with the man- machine interface in the posthuman framework.

Ihab Hassan in "The Postmodern Turn" (1987) said that, "I see a pattern that many others have also seen: a vast, revisionary will in the Western world, unsettling/resettling codes, canons, procedures, beliefs – intimating a post-humanism? (63) As he envisioned, we can say now we are in a posthumanist time, or we are becoming posthumans. The posthuman philosophy, greatly influenced by post-colonialism and feminism, is an anti-humanist approach to redefine the concept of human. In a time when technology challenges both mental and physical abilities of humans, the very thing that positioned man in the top of the hierarchy, it is a necessity to understand the posthuman idea rather than falling into an existential crisis.

The discrimination under the facade of 'human' is also scrutinised in Posthumanism. It accepts all ways of being irrespective of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, or bodily ability. The posthuman denies the exceptionalism claimed by the human and the non- human existence is the new site of knowledge. Posthumanism deconstructs the idea of humans and revision of hierarchy. The humanist ideal not only created divisions among human species, but among other existences also. The relationship with nature and one's surroundings is oversimplified and nullifies the dependency of humans on it. This leads to exploiting the resources and considering other existences as inferior and other. And what is 'other' is inadequate, irrational, and something to be abused or tamed.

This study used the term "posthuman" by embracing the post-anthropocentric and post-dualistic approach of (Philosophical, Cultural and Critical) Posthumanism. It is the new way of negotiating being human.

> Becoming-posthuman consequently is a process of redefining one's sense of attachment and connection to a shared world, a territorial space: urban, social, psychic, ecological, planetary as it may be. It expresses multiple ecologies of

belonging, while it enacts the transformation of one's sensorial and perceptual co-ordinates, in order to acknowledge the collective nature and outward-bound direction of what we still call the self. This is in fact a moveable assemblage within a common life-space that the subject never masters nor possesses but merely inhabits, crosses, always in a community, a pack, a group or a cluster. For posthuman theory, the subject is a transversal entity, fully immersed in and immanent to a network of non-human (animal, vegetable, viral) relations. The zoe-centred embodied subject is shot through with relational linkages of the contaminating/viral kind which inter-connect it to a variety of others, starting from the environmental or eco-others and include the technological apparatus. (Braidotti 193)

The idea of post-human is sometimes considered as anti-human by critics. The fear of technology gaining control over humanity is the first reason for this criticism. And another is the misconception that if we became posthuman, humans have no responsibility to act against the current situation of global warming and climate change. Katherine Hayles clarifies this:

The posthuman does not really mean the end of humanity. It signals instead the end of a certain conception of the human [. . .]. What is lethal is not the posthuman as such but the grafting of the posthuman onto a liberal humanist view of the self [. . .] Located within the dialectic of pattern/randomness and grounded in embodied actuality rather than disembodied information, the posthuman offers resources for rethinking the articulation of humans with intelligent machines. (288)

But, when Humans thought we could not be defeated as we have come a long way with the help of science and technology, we are again struck with the fears of

widespread pandemic, a war, and drastic climate change which might lead to famine and other serious issues. Post -anthropocentric approach is relevant more than ever. Policies to save us from the catastrophe is essential for survival and the 'us' includes everyone and everything. The post-anthropocentrism of our science and our globalised and technologically mediated times makes it urgent to work towards 'a new techno-scientific democracy' (Haraway 95).

The dissertation has tried to understand the different dimensions of the impact of technology on the environment. We are in the anthropocene epoch and the impact on nature and other fellow beings by human activity is immense. Climate change and the related catastrophe is not a joke. The main reason for this is the anthropocentric view of humans which allows them to consider anything and everything as inferior and deny their right of existence. Posthumanism proposes species cosmopolitanism, which rejects binaries, be it gender, life form or compositional elements. It is a continuum which allows every matter to coexist and be the part of a new hybridity. This project could be completed with the help of technology because we are no longer in a position to distance technology as the only reason for the destruction that has happened. As technology is an integral part of our lives, negotiating with it is the only remedy. The study identifies how we might need the help of the very same cause to resist back as there is nothing as powerful as technology.

Another aspect that this study has concentrated on is the space of the body. The posthuman body has rejected the universal man as well as the mind- body dualism advocated by the humanist tradition. The boundaries are blurred and we can no longer tell the difference between, natural, artificial, man, animal and machine. But contradicting the philosophy we unravelled how the body continues to be a marker of othering, how the interface with technology is used to create new standards,

homogenetic bodies and to boost human superiority over other less privileged people and animals. But technology is used to resist the discrmination. Again we see the dual face of technology.

Chapter three explains how we should have better strategies to locate power as it has become an impossible task. Though posthuman philosophy envisioned a dehierarchized world, we see how patriarchy or othering of existences has creeped in these narratives too. The posthuman interface with technology has become the new capital exploited by capitalism and totalitarian government.

Katherine Hayles suggests in her book *How We Became Posthuman* (1999) that the term posthuman both incites terror and excites pleasure. Through the dissertation we have seen the same. The anxieties of uncertainties and change along with excitements of reaching new meanings. This is a new situation that we are in as a result of our imagination. How to come to terms with this period of drastic transformations while helping ourselves to endure and resist, is the question to ask ourselves. "A cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (Haraway 155).

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