

Humanism Values in Thomas William Roberthson's Plays D'caste

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ABSTRACT

Thomas William Robertson's 1867 masterpiece, *Caste*, serves as a profound theatrical exploration of the human condition, prioritizing personal dignity, autonomy, and emotional bonds over rigid societal expectations. This comedy-drama dissects the friction between innate human desires and oppressive class hierarchies, demonstrating the inevitable collision between individual ideals and systemic authority. By portraying the turbulent journey of George D'Alroy and Esther Eccles, Robertson encapsulates core humanist tenets: love, empathy, and mutual understanding within a polarized society. This study aims to investigate the portrayal and operationalization of humanist values within the play's characters and dialogues to understand how human dignity can challenge systemic social barriers. This qualitative descriptive study applies Hardiman's framework to analyze how dignity, liberty, and solidarity are operationalized through the characters' dialogues and interpersonal dynamics. The empirical analysis identifies six manifestations of humanist values: sacrifice (25%), caring for others (20%), cooperation (15%), appreciate opinions (15%), solidarity (15%), and helping (10%). Sacrifice emerges as the paramount driving force, vividly illustrated by George's defiance of aristocratic norms and Esther's resilient preservation of honor against poverty. Ultimately, *Caste* proves that empathy and open dialogue can triumph over institutionalized prejudice, making it an enduring testament to the timeless relevance of humanist philosophy

INTRODUCTION

Literature is one of the most important forms of human expression because it reflects human experiences, emotions, and social life through language and imagination. According to W. H. Hudson (2023), literature is "a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced, and what they have thought and felt about those aspects of life." Similarly, X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia (2022) explain that literature broadens human understanding and deepens compassion through the experiences presented in literary works. In addition, M. H. Abrams (2021) states that literature represents human life through artistic expression and imagination, while Terry Eagleton (2020) views literature as a creative form closely related to social values and ideology. Rene Wellek and Austin Warren (2021) also define literature as a creative activity that reflects human culture and thought. From the Indonesian perspective, Sapardi Djoko Damono (2020) explains that literature is a social institution that uses language as its medium, while Burhan Nurgiyantoro (2021) states that literature portrays human values and moral life through fictional representation. Likewise, Jakob Sumardjo (2022) argues that literature is an artistic expression of humanity that contains cultural and moral meanings. Among literary genres, drama becomes one of the most effective forms because it presents human conflict, emotion, and social interaction directly through dialogue and performance.

Drama is fundamentally defined as a mode of fictional or non-fictional representation through dialogue and performance. Etymologically, the term originates from the Greek word *dran*, which literally translates to "to do" or "to act," emphasizing that action is the very core of this genre. In recent academic discourse (2019–2024), experts have expanded the definition of drama beyond mere imitation. Erika Fischer-Lichte (2020), for instance, describes modern drama through the lens of "performative aesthetics," asserting that it is no longer just a reflection of life but a transformative process where the event on stage creates a new reality through the immediate co-presence of actors and spectators. Expanding on this performative aspect, Stephen Purcell (2021) argues that drama functions as a "space for negotiation," where human experiences are not just shown but critically dismantled through physical interaction and behavior. Furthermore, drama is not merely about physical movements on stage; it heavily relies on internal and external conflicts expressed through language. According to semiotician Patrice Pavis (2023), drama acts as a "mediatory action" where the written script is viewed as an "open map" – a flexible framework that integrates visual, auditory, and psychological elements to describe the complexity of human activity. This indicates that drama possesses a unique dual nature: it is a written literary text as well as a live, evolving theatrical event. Through this combination of intense dialogue, psychological tension, and real-time interaction, drama provides a profound platform to dissect human nature. Modern playwrights use this medium as a "humanistic laboratory" to challenge societal norms, expose moral dilemmas, and trigger radical empathy, making it an essential tool for analyzing the human condition in the contemporary era.

Humanism serves as a core philosophical and ethical framework centering on human autonomy, liberty, and moral accountability. This perspective

considers individuals as independent entities capable of utilizing rational thought and ethical principles to direct their own destinies. In line with this, Hardiman (2012) posits that humanism establishes individuals as conscientious subjects mindful of their obligations to both themselves and society. His analysis emphasizes the necessity of safeguarding human dignity by validating each person's potential for ethical choice and moral introspection. Consequently, this principle emphasizes that humanism fundamentally opposes any form of dehumanization while fostering empathy and mutual respect. Concurrently, a complementary definition by UNESCO (2021) describes humanism as an approach that champions human worth, moral mindfulness, and the inherent capacity of individuals to behave responsibly within a community. This conceptualization strengthens the argument that humanity possesses not only rationality but also a deep moral consciousness, enabling the development of compassionate social bonds through deliberate ethical decisions. Such an outlook motivates people to navigate life guided by empathy, conscience, and moral awareness. Ultimately, humanism advocates for the continuous improvement of society through collective reason and principled conduct, demonstrating that ethical standards must transform from theoretical concepts into practical human interactions. Within creative domains like literature and art, these humanistic principles frequently manifest through the emotional journeys, interpersonal struggles, and moral dilemmas of characters, offering audiences a profound look into the complexities of human existence.

The primary focus of this article is the legendary comedy-drama play titled *Caste* (1867) by Thomas William Robertson. The play narrates the domestic dynamics of George D'Alroy, a nobleman and army officer, who marries Esther Eccles, a ballet dancer from an impoverished working-class background. Although this work gained immense popularity in the 19th century for its sharp humor and its courage to break away from traditional melodramatic stage aesthetics, the script harbors a very rich philosophy of humanity. When examined through a philosophical discourse, the characters' actions directly reflect the theory of moral autonomy proposed by Hardiman (2012), which posits that the true value of a human being lies in the capacity to reflect on one's conscience independently, without succumbing to external societal pressures. Rather than presenting a melodramatic and overly sentimental narrative, Robertson brings a direct collision between the rigid traditions of feudalism and human free agency. These humanist values are explicitly manifested in the ideological debate between George and his close friend, Hawtree, who represents the rigid doctrines of the upper class:

George : "Caste is a giant, if you please, but love is a bigger giant still.

My dear old fellow, you can't understand it. You've never been in love!"

Hawtree : "I have, scores of times. But I never lost my head. I never forgot my position. A man should marry in his own rank."

George : "I don't care for rank. I marry the girl I love. I don't marry her family, or her father's debts, or her sister's trade. I marry her."

This dialogue serves as a profound manifestation of Solidarity (Point 6) and Caring for Others (Point 4), which are the fundamental cornerstones of a

humanist attitude. George's categorical refusal to acknowledge "rank" or "caste" in favor of the woman he loves is not merely a romantic whim, but a radical act of inter-class solidarity. By declaring, "I don't marry her family, or her father's debts... I marry her," George consciously chooses to strip away the dehumanizing labels imposed by the Victorian social structure. He intentionally separates an individual's worth from their socioeconomic baggage, prioritizing the intrinsic value of Esther as a human being. This choice demonstrates a deep sense of caring for others that transcends the superficial barriers of hierarchy. George does not see Esther as a social liability to be managed, but as a person deserving of unconditional dignity. Furthermore, as Stephen Purcell (2021) argues that drama is a "space for negotiation," George is effectively negotiating a new social contract—one where empathy and moral connection replace rigid status. Through this dialogue, Robertson highlights that true humanism is found when an individual has the courage to stand in solidarity with those marginalized by systemically enforced "rank," proving that the human heart is the only "giant" capable of toppling the giant of caste.

To strengthen this research, several previous studies related to the value of humanism have been reviewed. Euis Meinawati et al. (2021) in "Humanism Value of Main Character in War for Planet of the Apes Movie" show that the protagonist's empathy, moral awareness, and desire for peace represent humanist values amid the tension between humans and apes. Similarly, Supriyanto et al. (2022) in "The Value of Humanism in Andrea Hirata's Novel *Orang-Orang Biasa*" highlight the struggle of ordinary people to uphold dignity, solidarity, and justice despite social limitations. Agustina and Sri Widayati (2022) in their analysis of Tere Liye's work note that empathy, sacrifice, and togetherness reflect humanist values that are applicable in educational settings. Expanding into broader media, Muhammad Malik (2023) in "Nilai-Nilai Humanisme pada Film *Freedom Writers*" explains that the film portrays understanding, respect, and equality. This is further supported by Sevti Anasari and Dewi Ratnaningsih (2024) who identify cooperation and solidarity in Habiburrahman El Shirazy's literature, and F. Siregar et al. (2024) who find that religious values and humanism coexist through sincere help and deep empathy in film. Recent international perspectives provide even deeper theoretical grounding. Nicholas Lawrence (2022) in "Humanism, Drama, and Performance" (Modern Drama) explores how humanist ideologies fundamentally shape the interaction between performers and audiences in contemporary theater. Furthermore, A. Rahmansyah et al. (2024) in "Humanism Values in William Shakespeare's Drama *Romeo and Juliet*" establish a framework of six core humanist categories—appreciation of opinions, cooperation, sacrifice, caring for others, helping, and solidarity—which are crucial for analyzing classical scripts. In a more modern context, P. Pavis (2023) and S. Purcell (2021) emphasize that drama acts as a "mediatory action" and a "space for negotiation," where human dignity is reclaimed through the deconstruction of rigid social hierarchies. Syamsul Bahri (2026) in "Humanism Values in William Shakespeare's Drama *Romeo and Juliet*," published in *Jurnal Motivasi Pendidikan dan Bahasa*, establish a framework of six core humanist categories—appreciation of opinions,

cooperation, sacrifice, caring for others, helping, and solidarity – which proves highly effective for analyzing classical and canonical theatrical scripts. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that humanism remains a vital lens for interpreting both literary texts and performative actions in the modern era. However, despite these extensive explorations, a significant empirical gap remains in previous literature. While existing studies primarily focus on modern cinematic media, contemporary novels, or Renaissance tragic drama (such as Shakespeare's work), they often overlook how these six humanist categories operate within 19th-century Victorian realism comedy-drama. Most prior research describes humanism qualitatively without clear empirical proportions, leaving a gap in understanding how specific humanist actions are quantitatively manifested in theatrical dialogue. Our study directly addresses this gap by applying Hardiman's framework to Thomas William Robertson's masterpiece, *Caste* (1867). Unlike previous works, this research provides an empirical percentage breakdown of how sacrifice, active caring, and solidarity explicitly operationalize to challenge rigid Victorian class hierarchies, offering a novel cross-disciplinary insight into historical theatrical realism.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As proposed by Hardiman (2012), humanism is a philosophical framework centered on the sanctity of human dignity, individual liberty, and the capacity for rational thought in cultivating a purposeful collective existence. Within the realm of literature, specifically drama, humanism functions as a vital ethical and conceptual anchor that explores human virtues through the intricate lenses of class conflict, societal pressure, and personal struggle. In Thomas William Robertson's *Caste*, these humanist principles transcend a simple moral guide; they act as a deliberate narrative instrument used to deconstruct rigid Victorian social hierarchies and highlight the necessity of acknowledging individual dignity over inherited rank. This review establishes the theoretical groundwork for examining humanism in dramatic scripts, asserting that drama serves as more than just a source of amusement. Instead, it acts as a profound reflective tool that fosters inter-class solidarity, deep empathy, and an awareness of human agency in the face of systemic discrimination. Hardiman's theoretical model further underscores how core values – such as autonomy, open dialogue, and social justice – enable individuals to perceive themselves as sovereign moral agents. Nevertheless, the manifestation of these principles in *Caste* demonstrates that the realization of one's humanity is often shaped by the surrounding social environment, power dynamics, and the individual's courage to maintain moral integrity despite social ostracism.

Appreciate Opinions

Dialogical humanism emphasizes the importance of respecting the thoughts and opinions of others as part of human dignity. According to Franz Magnis-Suseno (2021), appreciating opinions reflects moral awareness and recognition of every individual as a rational human being. In drama, this value can be seen when characters listen to, consider, and respond respectfully to different perspectives despite social differences or conflicts. In *Caste*, the value of

appreciating opinions appears through interactions between characters from different social classes who try to defend their feelings and personal choices. Example (Hamlet, 1600–1601):

Hamlet : “Give me that man That is not passion’s slave, and I will wear him in my heart’s core.”

Horatio : “My lord, I came to see your father’s funeral.”

This dialogue illustrates a profound mutual respect between Hamlet and Horatio. Hamlet’s statement is an acknowledgment of Horatio’s intellectual and emotional stoicism, essentially valuing Horatio’s honest judgment and character over mere flattery. Conversely, Horatio’s sincere response shows his attentive presence and respect for Hamlet’s state of mind. This interaction illustrates "Appreciating Opinions" because both characters validate each other’s internal reality and perspective, acknowledging one another with mutual respect.

Cooperation

Social humanism views cooperation as an essential aspect of human life because individuals cannot live independently without others. According to Budi Hardiman (2012), cooperation reflects collective awareness in achieving shared goals and maintaining harmonious relationships. In drama, cooperation is portrayed through characters who work together to solve problems or support one another. Example (Julius Caesar, 1599):

Cassius : “Come, Antony, and young Octavius, come; revenge yourselves alone on Cassius.”

Antony : “Friends am I with you all, and love you all.”

This dialogue illustrates Cooperation through a strategic peace offering and the formation of a collective alliance amidst a high-stakes political crisis. Cassius’s invitation for Antony and Octavius to join him—even while acknowledging their grievances—serves as a call for a unified front. Antony’s response, declaring himself "friends with you all," is a pivotal humanist gesture where he prioritizes diplomatic collaboration over personal vengeance. This interaction highlights that cooperation in a humanist context is often a conscious decision to subordinate individual egos to a shared purpose. By choosing to interact as allies rather than enemies, the characters demonstrate that collective action is the most rational path toward restoring stability and achieving their political objectives.

Sacrifice

Ethical humanism teaches that true humanity involves a profound willingness to sacrifice personal interests, comfort, or even existence for the sake of others or a higher moral principle. According to Franz Magnis-Suseno (2020), sacrifice is not merely a loss of something valuable, but a conscious, intentional ethical act that reflects the highest form of empathy, love, and moral responsibility. In literary works, the theme of sacrifice often serves as the moral compass of the story, where characters choose to endure suffering or physical loss to ensure the survival of another. Example (Romeo and Juliet, 1597):

Romeo : “Eyes, look your last! Arms, take your last embrace! And, lips, O you the doors of breath, seal with a righteous kiss a dateless bargain to engrossing death!” (Drinks the poison)

Juliet : (Waking up) "What's here? A cup, closed in my true love's hand? Poison, I see, hath been his timeless end. O churl! Drunk all, and left no friendly drop to help me after? I will kiss thy lips." (Stabs herself)

This tragic exchange serves as the ultimate illustration of Sacrifice because both characters consciously choose to relinquish their lives for one another. Romeo's decision to drink poison is a form of sacrifice driven by his inability to exist in a world without Juliet, while Juliet, upon witnessing Romeo's ultimate sacrifice, chooses to follow him into death. This represents a radical moral choice that prioritizes emotional loyalty over the primal instinct for survival. Within a humanist framework, their mutual sacrifice acts as a final rebellion against the dehumanizing social feud (caste-like divisions) of their families. It proves that the commitment to another individual is far more precious than mere physical existence. Their self-sacrifice becomes a symbol that human dignity can be reclaimed through acts of selfless love, even in the face of inevitable tragedy.

Caring for Others

Humanistic theory explains that caring for others is an active expression of empathy and communal responsibility. According to Erich Fromm (2021), genuine care is a manifestation of an individual's inner power, involving consistent affection, deep concern, and a holistic understanding toward another person's condition. In drama, this is portrayed through characters who provide emotional support to preserve the dignity of their peers. Example (King Lear, 1605-1606):

Lear : "So young, and so untender?"

Cordelia : "So young, my lord, and true."

Lear : "Let it be so; thy truth then be thy dower!"

This interaction demonstrates Caring for Others through the lens of radical honesty and moral integrity. While her sisters manipulate Lear with empty flattery for material gain, Cordelia chooses to show authentic care by remaining steadfast in her truth. Cordelia's care is not about "pleasing" her father's ego, but about a moral responsibility toward the truth. By refusing to manipulate him, she is actually protecting the purity and sanctity of their human bond. This action affirms that humanistic care involves the courage to be honest for the well-being of another person's soul, rather than their superficial comfort. It proves that genuine affection is rooted in a deep respect for human dignity rather than blind, deceitful obedience.

Helping

Praxis humanism emphasizes that moral values must be realized through concrete actions, particularly in helping others overcome adversity. According to Budi Hardiman (2012), the act of helping is a social glue that strengthens community bonds and reflects the equality of human dignity. In drama, this is shown when characters provide strategic or moral assistance to those who are marginalized or victimized. Example (Much Ado About Nothing, 1598-1599):

Leonato: (In despair) "Hath no man's dagger here a point for me?"

Friar Francis: "Pause awhile, and let my counsels sway you. Your daughter here the princes left for dead; let her be secretly kept in, and publish it that she is dead indeed."

Benedick: "Signior Leonato, let the friar advise you."

This group dialogue reflects Helping as a form of strategic and moral intervention. When Leonato falls into total despair due to the false accusations against his daughter, Hero, Friar Francis steps forward to provide a concrete solution to restore her honor. This help is not limited to words of sympathy; it is a practical plan designed to shield a vulnerable individual from social ruin. Benedick's support of the Friar's plan further demonstrates a collective responsibility to aid those who are unjustly treated. This illustrates that helping in a humanist context is a practical commitment to justice, where individuals use their reason and influence to save another person's dignity when it is threatened by a judgmental social system.

Solidarity

Critical humanism identifies solidarity as a vital moral commitment to supporting justice and collective strength. According to Paulo Freire (2020), solidarity means standing together in a shared struggle to support humanity. In drama, solidarity is illustrated through characters who encourage unity, reminding others that their resilience depends on their togetherness. Example (Troilus and Cressida, 1601-1602):

Agamemnon: "Princes, what grief hath set these jaundice on your cheeks? The ample proposition that hope makes in all designs begun on earth below fails in the promised largeness."

Ulysses: "Great Agamemnon, thy great commander, heart of our numbers, soul and only spirit, in whom the tempers and the minds of all should be shut up!"

This dialogue illustrates Solidarity because Ulysses is attempting to reconstruct a fractured collective strength. When Agamemnon questions the despair visible on the faces of his leaders, Ulysses responds by emphasizing that they are all bound together as one entity. By describing the leader as the "heart" and "soul" of the entire group, Ulysses reminds the soldiers that their dignity and power do not lie in their individual selves, but in their group solidarity. Solidarity here is portrayed as a unifying moral force that binds individuals together amidst chaos, proving the humanist idea that no individual can truly thrive in isolation. True human strength is found in the collective loyalty to stand firm against the challenges of their time

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to analyze the humanism values in *Caste* by Thomas William Robertson. According to Creswell (2021), qualitative research focuses on understanding social and human problems through detailed interpretation of words, dialogue, and meaning. The descriptive method is used because this study aims to explain and interpret the humanistic values reflected in the characters, dialogues, and conflicts in the drama. The primary source of data in this research is the drama **Caste** by Thomas William Robertson. The secondary sources are books, journals, articles,

and previous studies related to literature, drama, and humanism theory. This study applies the theory of humanism, especially the concepts proposed by Franz Magnis-Suseno, Budi Hardiman, Erich Fromm, and Paulo Freire, to identify and analyze the values of appreciate opinions, cooperation, sacrifice, caring for others, helping, and solidarity in the drama. The technique of collecting data is conducted through close reading and note-taking. The researcher reads the drama carefully, identifies important dialogues and actions related to humanistic values, and classifies the data based on the six aspects of humanism discussed in the literature review. After collecting the data, the researcher analyzes the dialogues and character interactions descriptively by connecting them with the theory of humanism. The purpose of this methodology is to reveal how the drama *Caste* represents human dignity, equality, empathy, and moral responsibility beyond social class differences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To examine Humanism Values in Thomas William Robertson's drama *Caste*, this study applies a descriptive qualitative method. This method is used to understand the humanistic values reflected through dialogues, actions, and relationships between the characters in the play. According to Sugiyono (2021), descriptive qualitative research is used to analyze natural conditions in which the researcher becomes the main instrument in interpreting the data. The data in this research are identified, classified, and analyzed using Hardiman's theory of humanism values (2012).

Table 1

NO	Humanism Value	Amount	Percentage
1	Appreciate Opinions	5	15%
2	Cooperation	5	15%
3	Sacrifice	8	25%
4	Caring for Others	6	20%
5	Helping	3	10%
6	Solidarity	5	15%
	TOTAL	32	100%

Appreciate Opinions

(Act I, Scene 1: The Little House in Stangate)

George : "I am going to take a step which is either very good or very bad. I am going to marry."

Hawtree : "Marriage! The very word sends a thrill of horror through my veins. Who is the lady?"

George : "Her name is Esther Eccles. She is a dancer."

Hawtree : "A dancer! My dear George, you're joking. Consider your position. You can't do it. A man should marry in his own rank."

George : "Caste is a giant, if you please, but love is a bigger giant still. I've thought it all over. I don't care for rank. I marry the girl I love. I don't marry her family, or her father's debts, or her sister's trade. I marry her."

Hawtree : "But consider what people will say."

George : "I have considered. I've looked at it from every point of view, and the more I look at it, the more I'm determined."

In the full dialogue above, we witness an intense debate representing the clash of two major Victorian ideologies. Captain Hawtree provides a pragmatic-traditional view, reminding George of "position" and "rank." To him, marriage is a social institution meant to preserve class purity. However, George counters with a profoundly humanist argument. By acknowledging that "Caste is a giant," he recognizes the reality of Hawtree's perspective regarding the weight of social pressure. Nevertheless, he firmly asserts his personal autonomy by declaring that love is a greater force. The value of Appreciate Opinions in this context emerges through the interaction between these two characters. Although Hawtree attempts to obstruct George with class-based logic, George continues to listen and evaluate every point raised by Hawtree, stating, "I have considered. I've looked at it from every point of view." Conversely, Hawtree remains attentive to George's explanation, even though it sounds irrational for a military officer of that era. According to Hardiman (2012), appreciating opinions is an acknowledgment that every individual is a rational being with the right to determine their own path in life. Robertson utilizes this extended dialogue to demonstrate that true humanity is achieved when one dares to maintain their integrity in the face of judgmental public opinion while sustaining a mutually respectful dialogical relationship.

Cooperation

(Act II, Scene 1: The Lodgings in Mayfair)

Esther : "Polly, dear, we have been very happy in this little house, haven't we? But now that George is gone, everything seems so different."

Polly : "It is different, Esther. But we are still here, and we have each other. We will help one another no matter what happens."

Esther : "I am so afraid of the future, of the poverty, and of what his mother might do. We must try to endure these hardships together."

Polly : "And so we shall. I can work, and you can rest when you are tired. We are sisters, and no giant of caste can break our bond if we stand as one."

In the second act, tension rises when Esther must face the reality of her husband being sent to fight in India. Amidst economic uncertainty and social pressure due to her status being considered inferior by George's family, Esther and Polly build an emotional alliance. They realize that individuals from the working class can only survive if they practice close cooperation. By promising, "We will help one another no matter what happens," they establish a foundation of mutual trust that defies social instability. This dialogue reflects Cooperation not merely as practical assistance, but as a collective commitment to maintaining dignity. According to the framework of social humanism, cooperation is a manifestation of collective awareness in achieving harmony. When Esther calls for "enduring these hardships together," Polly responds with unconditional loyalty, asserting that "no giant of caste can break our bond if we stand as one." Robertson emphasizes that in a world that often separates humans based on

economic status, human cooperation is the only instrument that can ensure survival and maintain the mental integrity of individuals facing a crisis. Through this interaction, it is proven that cooperation acts as a social safety net that preserves human value when institutional structures fail to do so.

Sacrifice

(Act I, Scene 1: The Little House in Stangate)

George : "I have thought of it all, Hawtree. I know what it means to marry beneath me in the eyes of the world. But she is everything to me."

Hawtree : "You will lose your friends, George. You might even lose your commission. Is she worth the world?"

George : "She is my world. I sacrifice position, comfort, everything, for the woman I love. I would rather be a poor man with her than a Marquise's son without her."

Esther : "George, I do not want you to lose anything for me. I am just a poor girl."

George : "You are a queen to me, Esther. I ask nothing except your love and honesty. My choice is made."

As the most dominant value in this drama (25%), sacrifice is the "engine" that drives social change within the plot. George d'Alroy does not just sacrifice financially; he voluntarily relinquishes his aristocratic identity. By stating, "I sacrifice position, comfort, everything," he shows a readiness to face ostracism from his own class for the moral integrity of marrying the woman he loves. Conversely, Esther sacrifices by bearing the weight of slander and suspicion from a society that views her as a "social climber," yet she remains grounded by asking for nothing but "love and honesty." A broad analysis of Sacrifice in this script shows that sacrifice is the ultimate proof of empathy and moral responsibility. George's sacrifice is a direct attack on the Victorian power structure; he proves that true human relationships demand the release of privilege. Robertson intends to convey that without a willingness to lose "status," humans will never be truly free to value the dignity of their fellow beings equally. In this context, sacrifice is presented as a transformative force that purifies human intentions and bridges the gap between disparate social castes.

Caring for Others

(Act III, Scene 1: The Return of George)

Esther : "Mother, you look weak today. Please take some rest. You have been standing for too long."

Mrs. Eccles : "Why do you bother with me, Esther? You have your own troubles with the child and the debts."

Esther : "You are my mother, and I only want you to be well. My troubles do not make me blind to your health. Please, sit by the fire."

Mrs. Eccles : "You care too much about me, my dear child, more than I sometimes deserve."

In this scene from the third act, Esther continues to show gentleness and concern for a mother figure, even though the character often acts haughty and demeans Esther's class. By stating, "Mother, you look weak today. Please take some rest," Esther's concern becomes a manifestation of universal human ethics

that do not depend on how others treat us. Her sincere remark, "I only want you to be well," highlights that her kindness is not transactional but rooted in deep compassion. Caring for Others here shows that Esther possesses an ethical awareness that goes far beyond the boundaries of caste. She does not repay dislike with hatred, but with sincerity, even when Mrs. Eccles herself admits that Esther "cares too much" beyond what she deserves. This care is a form of recognizing the vulnerability of fellow human beings. Robertson uses Esther's character to challenge the audience: that true nobility is not found in aristocratic titles, but in purity of heart and unconditional care for others, even those who may look down upon us.

Helping

(Act III, Scene 1: The Return of George)

Polly : "Esther, you look like you haven't slept in days. Give the baby to me. Let me help you with the child while you rest for a while."

Esther : "I can manage, Polly. You have your own work with Sam."

Polly : "Sam can wait, and the work can wait. You do not have to face everything alone. We are family, aren't we?"

Esther : "Thank you, Polly. Your help means a lot to me. I don't know what I would do without you."

Polly's assistance to Esther in caring for her child is the most concrete form of praxis humanism. At a time when Esther is emotionally devastated because she believes George has died, Polly does not just offer verbal sympathy; she physically takes over daily responsibilities by insisting, "Let me help you with the child while you rest for a while," so that her sister can recover. This act of service proves that humanism is most effective when it moves from abstract emotion to tangible action. The value of Helping reinforces the idea of equal dignity. Polly reminds Esther that "you do not have to face everything alone," a powerful message about the strength of community in facing a bitter fate. This practical support strengthens social bonds and creates a safety net that the rigid Victorian society fails to provide. Through this interaction, Robertson shows that small acts of kindness—like watching a child—are heroic actions in their own right, capable of building a sense of togetherness and humanity in the midst of an individualistic society.

Solidarity

(Act II, Scene 1: The Lodgings in Mayfair)

George : "The world will be against us, Esther. My mother, my friends, the very law of caste will try to tear us apart."

Esther : "I know, George. I have felt their coldness already. They look at me as if I were nothing."

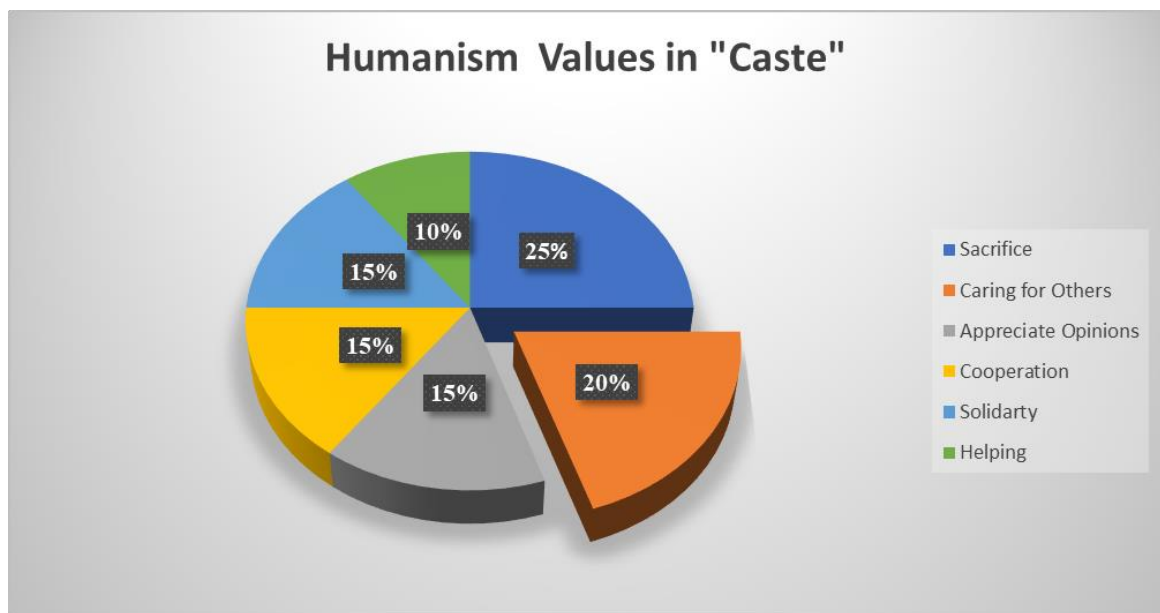
George : "You are everything to me. Whatever happens, we stand together. We will face them as one."

Esther : "Yes, against society if we must. Our love is our own, and they cannot take it."

This dialogue in the second act is the boldest declaration of collective resistance in the play. George and Esther realize that the entire structure of "society" is an enemy to their union, yet they remain undeterred. By asserting, "Whatever happens, we stand together," they choose to build a "fortress" through

Solidarity. This commitment is further solidified by Esther's defiant response, "Yes, against society if we must," which highlights their shared resolve to prioritize their human bond over social approval. This solidarity symbolizes a moral commitment to stand together for justice. George and Esther shed the labels of "aristocrat" and "dancer" and replace them with an identity as equal human beings. Solidarity is the courage to defend human dignity above the system. Robertson proves that human solidarity is the only true giant capable of toppling rigid social castes, making it a powerful conclusion to the discussion on the transformative power of humanist values.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Based on the critical analysis of Thomas William Robertson's 1867 drama *Caste*, it can be concluded that the play is a significant literary work that actively advocates for humanist values within a highly stratified Victorian society. Through the turbulent journey of the main characters, George d'Alroy and Esther Eccles, Robertson demonstrates that human dignity is not an inherent trait defined by birthright, aristocratic "rank," or social privilege. Instead, the narrative establishes that genuine human worth is earned through moral integrity, individual autonomy, and an unyielding capacity for empathy. By focusing on the emotional and moral depth of characters who cross class boundaries, the play dismantles the structural assumption that social status correlates with human value. The empirical data gathered in this study provides concrete evidence of how these principles are operationalized, identifying six fundamental humanist values within the theatrical dialogue: Appreciating Opinions, Cooperation, Sacrifice, Caring for Others, Helping, and Solidarity. Among these manifestations, Sacrifice emerged as the most dominant value, accounting for 25% of the total indicators. This quantitative finding highlights the central thematic framework of the drama: true humanity often requires a profound willingness to surrender personal comfort, societal acceptance, and institutional

privileges for the sake of higher ethical principles, such as love and justice. George's defiance of aristocratic expectations and Esther's resilience against systemic poverty serve as localized representations of this larger humanist struggle.

Furthermore, the interpersonal dynamics and interactions between characters from vastly different social backgrounds prove that solidarity and mutual care are essential instruments for overcoming systemic discrimination. Rather than merely passive representation, Robertson's *Caste* functions as an active space for negotiation, successfully proposing a new social contract. Within this framework, rational freedom, open dialogue, and emotional sincerity effectively replace rigid Victorian norms and institutionalized prejudices. The play illustrates that when individuals choose active caring (20%) and mutual cooperation (15%) over social segregation, the artificial barriers created by class hierarchies begin to erode. In summary, the drama remains deeply relevant today, serving as a timeless "humanistic laboratory" that transcends its original nineteenth-century context. It offers a powerful reminder to contemporary audiences that empathy, equality, and the unconditional recognition of others as rational, dignified beings are the ultimate measures of a civilized society—far outweighing the artificial labels of social class. Ultimately, this research confirms that analyzing classical dramatic texts through a humanist lens not only recovers the progressive socio-political intentions of historical playwrights but also provides vital ethical frameworks for navigating the complex social divisions of the modern era. Based on the limitations and findings of this study, several suggestions are proposed for future research. First, subsequent researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of analysis by conducting comparative studies between Robertson's *Caste* and other Victorian realism plays from the same era to determine if empirical proportions of humanist values remain consistent across different playwrights. Second, future studies could apply alternative theoretical lenses, such as Marxist literary criticism or Marxist feminism, to scrutinize how economic capital and gender roles intersect with the operationalization of these humanist values. Lastly, it is highly recommended to explore these six humanist categories through the lens of performance studies, analyzing how modern theatrical adaptations, stage directions, and actors' physical expressions alter or enhance the delivery of humanism compared to the textual script.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations, so it is necessary to conduct further research related to the topic of Humanism Values in Thomas William Robertson's *Plays D'caste* in order to perfect this research and increase insight for readers.

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