

Recarving the Present Times by Retrospecting the Canonical Masterpieces of the Literary Legacy from the Past

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 12

Special Issue: 1

Month: April

Year: 2025

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

Citation:

Abisha, V. "Recarving the Present Times by Retrospecting the Canonical Masterpieces of the Literary Legacy from the Past." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts, Science and Humanities*, vol. 12, no. S1, 2025, pp. 28–32

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v12iS1-Apr.8931>

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Abstract

The classics, being the backbone of the present times and literature, can be used as a tool to cope up with life in this century. There are various classical works with valuable insights that can be very useful for our practical life. Frankenstein and Othello, being two of the greatest classical works, has a lot to teach about the dangers which are timeless. On top of it, applying the lens of Post Humanism can aid humanity to learn life lessons, especially warning moral values. This paper tries to revisit these works to understand the combats we face in the present world by relating to the characters of the past. It deals with the concept of finding out how the people of the past had faced similar challenges, committed mistakes leading to a tragic fall, highlighting the differences found while applying post humanism theory in Frankenstein and Othello, where the former literally deals with a non-human entity and the latter deals with a human entity having non-human characteristics. It will aid us to combat the critical situations of the present times through the lessons learnt from the past.

Keywords: Post Humanism, Othello, Frankenstein, Flaw, Manipulation, Passion.

Introduction

Literature is a vast sea in which one cannot measure the amount of knowledge he has acquired from it. Exploring it can provide us with a vast number of pearls and corals; Delving into the sea of literature can help us to reveal vast amounts of profound and timeless literary treasures. In this paper, we are going to see how two of the greatest works of the past masters, give a hand for the present generation to combat the challenges of the present world.

Material

The study uses two great texts from literature as primary sources: Frankenstein by Mary Shelly and Othello by Shakespeare. The edition used is Mary Shelley's Frankenstein which was published in 2003 by Penguin Classics and Shakespeare's Othello which was published in 1997 by Bloomsbury Arden Shakespeare. These works were chosen for their fine printing and good content. The research also draws on a range of secondary sources like books, journals, articles, essays to provide ideas on the deeper research and comparison of both the texts and helps in the application of the theoretical framework.

Method

This qualitative study employs a comparative analysis to introspect the characters, Victor Frankenstein from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Othello from Shakespeare's *Othello*. Both the characters suffer serious flaws. This research is going to use these characters to engrave the past and combat the present flaws. A post humanist framework is employed in the works to detangle different backgrounds and situations.

The Theory of Post Humanism

Post humanism is a critical theory, challenging the critical human traits and behaviour. It's a framework, redefining humanism in the light of modern world, under the influence of technological advancements, situational crises and more.

Post humanism revolves around several core principles like

Moving forward, going beyond the individual.

Interconnecting human and non-human agents.

Blurring the boundaries.

Recognizing non-human agencies.

Decentring human beings, recognizing non-human agencies.

Othello

Othello, the protagonist, marries Desdemona, a Venetian nobleman's daughter. Othello, a Moorish general is manipulated by Iago, the cunning, deceitful villain. Othello believes Iago's words, thinks that Desdemona is unfaithfully having an affair with Cassio. Thus, Othello kills Desdemona and comes to know the truth. Consumed by guilt, Othello kills himself.

Frankenstein

Victor Frankenstein, the flawed protagonist, is a scientist who creates a monstrous looking creature as a result of an unorthodox experiment. By seeing its unearthly appearance, Victor abandons it, leaving the creature to experience loneliness. The creature experiences pain and rejection from the society. It asks Victor for a companion, he initially agrees but later destroys the companion out of fear.

The study has taken a multi-disciplinary approach by using comparative study method and the application of post humanism, to analyse the texts, *Othello* and *Frankenstein* side by side.

Othello

Othering

Othello was a moor. So, he was constantly being subjected to prejudice. Despite possessing military prowess, he was never able to achieve the recognition he deserved for his position in the then society. So, Othello had to battle with his own insecurities, becoming more vulnerable towards the selfish plots of the villainous Iago.

Relatively, even in the 21st century, with modern advancements, people of the lower strata are still battling with issues of injustice and prejudice. They are not able to use their skills to the utmost, because of their ethnic identities, suffering from insecurities. They are vulnerable to the plots of the powerful. Some people, who are in public platforms like schools, still face discrimination, despite their skills and fall into the trap of the wicked and the shrewd ones like Iago and are forced to face the consequences.

Manipulation and Emotional Vulnerability

Iago aims at the vulnerability and insecurities of Othello. He tries to destroy the confidence and originality of the latter. He understands that Othello is insecure of his Moorish background and cunningly uses his emotional vulnerability, manipulates Othello by planting the seeds of doubt in his heart.

Likewise, today, we face challenges in our life and there may be chances for our acquaintances to find out our vulnerabilities and manipulate us, driving us to our own ends. Times may change and years may go, but the traits, mindsets and personalities of people tend to remain unchanged.

Post Humanism

Othello is considered as the “other”, as he was a Moorish outsider, being differentiated from the traditional notions of man. This otherness makes it unable for the readers to differentiate human beings and non-human entities. Manipulation and deception overpower his positive traits, blurring his identity as a human being. Even Desdemona’s inanimate handkerchief plays an important role. It convinces Othello that his wife was cheating.

Frankenstein

Reckless Scientific Passion

Victor was overly passionate about his scientific ambition. He gets into an adventure, and crosses the boundaries of human law. He did not consider any possible ethical backlash and recklessly decided to satiate his thirst for knowledge. So, he was forced to face the consequences.

Today, we might become overly passionate towards our goals and unknowingly cross the boundaries of nature, without any ethical consideration. If so, we will be forced to reap the consequences of our irresponsible actions of unchecked scientific passion. It’s a warning lesson that everything has its own limits which should not be crossed for our own good.

Present Times

There are numerous ways to expand and practically use our knowledge but without ethical considerations they are unproductive. In our era of scientific discovery, we are being overtaken by AI and robotics. So, one should know where to stop in his quest for knowledgeable advancements unlike Frankenstein.

Irresponsible Action of Creation

Frankenstein was able to create a creature with his scientific knowledge but he failed in the act of taking responsibility to all the mishaps which happened as an after effect. He was not careful in avoiding chaos. He was never ready to take responsibility for his mistakes.

Post Humanism

The plot challenges the human concept of taking control over non-human entities and making them to subject under human entities. There is a need to emphasize that even non-human entities replicate human actions.

Comparison and Findings

Both the characters, Othello and Frankenstein struggled with their identities, the former with his identity as a moor and a husband and the latter with his identity as a creator. Victor isolates himself for achieving his ambition, which goes unchecked in the pursuit of innovation. Othello fails to understand the importance of developing trust in relationship.

Othello isolates himself from his wife because of his suspicion. Human mind is complicated to understand. It fails to recognise proper motivations for good intentions and falls even for the smallest bait, when it is emotionally weak. Likewise, today many human beings are easily manipulated and fall from their greatness, when they are emotionally down. The human mind is greatly driven by passion, leading to dangerous conquests, ending up in disaster like Frankenstein.

Frankenstein focuses on scientific fascination but Othello focuses on human relationships, societal hierarchy and manipulation.

With Frankenstein, the creation is “the other” but with Othello, being a human, he is considered as other, as he was a moor, based on racial prejudice.

In Frankenstein, Victor fails to realise the importance of his responsibility as a creator, while Othello fails to develop the trust and closeness with his partner, leading to their respective downfalls.

Frankenstein focuses on the monster, which was made to feel as “the other” by the ones around him and he was really not a human. Othello being a human, was manipulated and considered as “the other” due to his background and character. He had inhumane qualities like lack of trust in his partner.

From Frankenstein, we can learn that the influence of technology and the passion for scientific advancements should have a limit and an end. It should not be overly emphasized and chased upon. People should be careful while creating AI and Robotics. In the near future, even they can develop feelings and human qualities, creating chaos in the society. Human beings should know the limits of their passion. Othello shows that, despite being powerful, there are basic problems in human relationships which cannot be avoided at any cost. It should be dealt with trust and compassion. One should not let others come inside the relationship and manipulate things further. We should not consider any human being as “other” because, even now, there are people who discriminate others based on their appearance and race, leading to tragedy. It is important to embrace human relationships. One should never manipulate the feelings of others and bring destruction upon himself and others.

Interpretation and Discussion

The study highlights the comparative discussion about the characters Frankenstein and Othello. Their application in the present age has been discovered. It shows how “the other” is being treated in the society. Both the works deal with dangerous frameworks of mind and society and the dangers of human superiority.

Frankenstein and his transgression show how human passion goes beyond the moral boundaries, being manipulated, showing the deadliness of vulnerability.

Both the works can be used to combat the present challenges of artificial intelligence. These works are relatable to the present era, which struggles to hold onto ethical values.

The study is limited to two works. For further research, other works can also be interpreted and compared with other practical literary theories.

Conclusion

The research had initiated an in-depth study and comparative analysis on the works, Frankenstein and Othello through the lens of Post Humanism. It demonstrated the timeless application and lessons they teach human beings, even in the present times. Times may change, but human beings always tend to possess flaws and weaknesses. These texts have highlighted few flaws in human beings and the study has brought out how it is so very relatable in the present times of difficulty. Frankenstein’s ethical transgression and Othello’s vulnerability can aid wisely, in combating the challenges of the present times!!

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