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THE IGNORANCE OF HUMAN'S FEELING DUE TO MATERIALISM AND INDIVIDUALISM: SOCIAL CRITIQUES TOWARD LATE VICTORIANS AS REFLECTED IN OSCAR WILDE'S SELECTED SHORT STORIES

A THESIS



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PADANG 2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer firstly addresses her hugest gratitude and praise to Allah SWT for His answers, blessings and guidance to all her prayers and struggles during the process of completing her study at English Department of Andalas University.

A special gratitude goes to her ordinarily extra-ordinary parents, Muswardi Darwis and Roslena, along with the extended family of Bendangs for everything they have given in love, supports and even doubts, especially for her one and only older brother, Harry Wardana, ST, for defeating her in every aspect of life—so far.

The writer dedicates an honorable gratitude to her perfectionist supervisor I, Marliza Yeni, S.S., M.A, and her supervisor II, Edria Sandika, S.S.,M.Hum who balances the thrilling vibe during the supervision. The writer also thanks Mr. B's Shadow and all English Department lecturers who still and still not remember her name for their shared knowledge and experiences.

A special "Thank-You" belongs to the writer's second family, NEROBERS, for all the love, laughter, originality, solidarity and also retardation. Her lovely gratitude is dedicated to Mr. E.XV.O36.AB's indescribably-essential companionship. Though miles keep them apart, the writer also addresses her gratitude to her long-time best friends, Karina D.P, SH and Meika F., SE. Her gratitude is also sent to all English Department '08 friends who make college felt somewhat like high-school. And still not the last or the least in the list are Aldo Erianda, S.T and Rayes Mahendra, S.Hum for being the persons she needs in her least optimistic moment.

The writer does not limit her gratitude to names in her friendly actual atmosphere, but also opens to all the souls and pieces of art in her gadgets for the priceless inspiration. To end the list, the writer thanks herself for being remarkably her.

Padang, October 2012

Citra Ayu Wardani

ABSTRAK

Skripsi ini membahas tentang gambaran keadaan sosial masyarakat Inggris di akhir abad ke-19 atau yang disebut juga *Victorian Age* yang tercermin pada cerita-cerita pendek pilihan karya Oscar Wilde. Karya-karya pilihan tersebut adalah “The Nightingale and the Rose”, “The Devoted Friend” dan “The Remarkable Rocket”. Analisis ini mengungkapkan tentang ktitik-kritik sosial atas prinsip dan pandangan hidup masyarakat era Victoria terbentuk seiring dengan adanya pembagian kelas-kelas sosial atau stratifikasi sehingga masyarakat Inggris pada saat itu cenderung materialis dan individualistis. Dalam menganalisis karya ini, penulis menggunakan pendekatan historis yang menghubungkan karya sastra dengan keadaan masyarakat zaman tertentu. Semua keadaan ini dikritik melalui cerita-cerita pendek pilihan karya Oscar Wilde tersebut. Data-data dianalisis dengan metode kualitatif dan dijabarkan secara deskriptif. Adapun data yang diperoleh berasal dari unsur intrinsik dan ekstrinsik karya-karya tersebut.

Keywords: kritik sosial, era Victoria, Oscar Wilde, materialisme, stratifikasi sosial, individualisme



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Research

Literary work is not only used for individual expression and entertainment but also as a documentation, reflection and media of social critique of a particular society in a certain era. As S.C Denney, a student at Yonsei University School of Graduate Studies states in his forum site, *Political Cartel*, that literature has two roles for individual and society which he calls “active-engaging role and passive-reflective role”. The first role represents the very action of reading in which the reading stems individual motivation and engagement to do something. Meanwhile, the second role focuses on “the thing observed than the thing done”. The reflective role of literature is to “show” to society the history of ideologies, of thought, and of action. It reveals “what” people thought during a particular time and “how” they thought about it. It allows the individual to understand how a society functioned and why it functioned that way (Denney). This explains how literature may underlie social messages of its surrounding environment and atmosphere of a particular society in a certain period of time. This is also believed to be found in selected short stories of Oscar Wilde.

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde (16 October 1854 – 30 November 1900) was an Irish playwright, poet and author of numerous short stories and one novel who lived during the second half of the nineteenth century, part of the Victorian period

when Queen Victoria ruled England. During that time, England was enjoying economic strength and growth. Viewed as a whole, the 19th century had been a prosperous century for the British. But on the other hand, this condition resulted a particular social phenomenon where social values underwent changes and influences the social structure of the society. As described by Roebuck in her *The Making of Modern English Society from 1850* that Victorian morality can describe any set of values that espouse low tolerance of crime and a strict social code of conduct. At the same time when the upper class and middle class were enjoying the glory of Victorian period, the poor became poorer (19). Looking at this situation, Wilde always had a critical spirit and tried to challenge the society. The writings of Oscar Wilde involve different elements that are still present nowadays. For example, the behavior of the different social classes in society, especially the problems between the low and high class, the common problems between couples, parents and friends. Several of his plays continue to be widely performed, especially *The Importance of Being Ernest*. His most famous works are: *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *An Ideal Husband*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and the collections *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* and *A House of Pomegranates*.

In this thesis, there is a social discussion on Oscar Wilde's selected short stories from his short story collection *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* since the writer assumes that his short stories are the least-discussed compared to his other works. The first story is "The Nightingale and the Rose", which revolves about nightingale overhears a student complaining that his professor's daughter will not

dance with him, as he is unable to give her a red rose. The nightingale visits all the rose-trees in the garden, and one of the white roses tell her that there's a way to produce a red rose, but only if the nightingale is prepared to sing the sweetest song for the rose all night with her heart touching the rose, and sacrifice her life to do so. The second short story, "The Devoted Friend" tells about Hans the gardener, the devoted friend of a rich miller. On the basis of this friendship, the miller helps himself to flowers from Hans' garden, and promises to give Hans an old, broken wheelbarrow, to replace one that Hans was forced to sell so that he could buy food. Then, "The Remarkable Rocket" concerns a firework, who is one of many to be let off at the wedding of a prince and princess. The rocket is extremely pompous and self-important, and denigrates all the other fireworks.

The writer believes that all of them contain social critiques toward the society of the late Victorian era since it is written in that era. In this case, the writer attempts to connect the social condition of the era when the works were written with the works themselves. For this reason, a data on the late Victorian era's social condition is necessarily needed. Therefore, by analyzing the context, the writer hopes that she will be able to dig out the symbol and implications of the social messages relied in the stories. For those reasons, the writer settles the research title "The Ignorance of Human's Feeling Due to Materialism and Individualism: Social Critiques toward Late Victorians as Reflected in Oscar Wilde's Selected Short Stories."

1.2 The Identification of The Problem

The selected works of Oscar Wilde, “The Nightingale and the Rose”, “The Devoted Friend”, and “The Remarkable Rocket” were produced during the late Victorian era. The writer finds that those three works have similarities in the social theme each implies which is about the values that held by the particular class of society of late Victorian, focusing on their attitudes and points of view toward the importance of social status, materialistic tendencies and hyper-individualism in that era that the writer assumes to be the issues existed in late Victorian era by comparing the works and the social context.

1.3 The Scope of the Research

Since a social condition is a dynamic phenomenon, the writer finds the importance of setting period border/ limitation for the analysis into the late Victorian era and society. To analyze the short stories, the writer has to limit the problem of her analysis. In this analysis, the writer focuses on these cases:

1. Analyzing the social condition and values held in Victorian society during 1880-1900 among the particular social class represented in Oscar Wilde’s “The Nightingale and the Rose”, “The Remarkable Rocket” and “The Devoted Friend”,
2. Analyzing the implications of social criticism relied in the themes, characters and symbols of the three short stories to seek how and what

social critiques toward the late Victorian society delivered through the short stories.

1.4 The Objective of the Research

The objective of the research is to find out how and what social messages are delivered in the selected short stories with considering and relating the sociological environment during the particular periods of time in a particular society of late Victorian by analyzing the themes, characters and symbols implied in Oscar Wilde's "The Nightingale and the Rose", "The Remarkable Rocket" and "The Devoted Friend".

1.5 Reviews of Previous Studies

To enrich the analysis, the writer needs to do a research of the previous studies by other researchers and academicians on both Wilde's short stories and the life of Victorian society. The writer does the research by library research and internet research. As the writer conducts some reviews from the internet, she gets some researches on Oscar Wilde's short stories. Most of the researches focus on author's biographical reflection in the works and also the author's stylistic and satirical phenomenon. But the writer does not find any researches using the selected short stories as a social discussion.

Frank Browning uses several of Wilde's works, including his short stories, to seek the homosexual desire of Wilde reflected in his works then Browning

settled a research thesis title *Oscar Wilde and Modern Homo: A Distorted Evidence*. Two short stories from Wilde's short stories collection *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* had been analyzed to support his analysis. He claimed that the story of "The Selfish Giant" and "The Happy Prince" convey Wilde's repressed homosexuality by representing the relationship of The Giant and The Little Boy and also The Prince statue that The Bird adores (2006).

Meanwhile, M.I Macaulay from McMaster University is more interested in doing stylistic analysis on "The Nightingale and the Rose". He assumes that throughout the story, Oscar Wilde employs various stylistic devices for the expression of aesthetic concept. He summarized the stylistic features, which help the author creating a story that successfully absorbed by readers with a comprehensive stylistic analysis of the story in phonetic, lexical, syntactic, semantic and contextual aspects (2010).

After surveying the library of English Department of Andalas University, the writer found out that there have been some numbers of graduates' thesis focusing on Oscar Wilde's works, some using psychological approach or other approaches but none of them had analyzed his short stories nor applied social criticism on them. However, researches on English society had been done by some graduates with different objects of literary works.

The first is Khairul Ihsan, the previous English Department student, who conducts a research entitled "The Impacts of Social Classes toward Marriage System in the Late of 19th Century in Britain as Seen in *A Room with a View* by E.

M Foster”. In his thesis, he analyzes the impacts of social classes toward marriage system in the late of 19th century by applying sociological theory proposed by Alan Swingewood. Ihsan assumes that the novel *A Room with a View* is a reflection of British society in the late of 19th century since he finds a close relationship between the novel and the factual data about Britain society toward social classes and marriage system at that time that was under the control of material possession and social status (2005).

There is also Donna Apriani with her thesis titled “The Characteristics of English Society in 19th Century as Reflected in *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen”. Using the same approach, she assumes that the work describes the characteristics of English society at that time which were the open stratification and the authoritarian church. In her analysis Apriani focuses in marriage system and order to show how marriage was based on and functioned at that time (2004).

Compared to other previous researches, the writer’s analysis will be different since she focuses on Oscar Wilde’s selected short stories and late Victorian society’s values by using traditional historicism which aimed to point out what was wrong with the society as reflected in Oscar Wilde’s “The Nightingale and the Rose”, “The Remarkable Rocket” and “The Devoted Friend”.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

To analyze the works, the writer chooses historicism as the appropriate criticism relating to the thesis discussion. Historicism or traditional historicism is a

larger scope of interpretation activity to more texts, such as fiction. As Dilthey then develops it as the historical method that by hermeneutics, the researcher seeks the interpretation by analyzing the symbols that may be used as the representation, allegory and analogy of particular event, period of time and other historical aspects (128-129). It can be concluded simply that historicism suggests that to know a text, one needs to understand its insertion in a particular moment in time, as an expression of a writer influenced by his/ her times.

In doing historic criticism, researchers often consider comparable texts from the same time period, utilizing other resources to come to a greater understanding of how a specific text interacted with its environment when it was written in order to show how the text reflects its time's ideology, social, political, economic beliefs, trends and many other aspects.

1.7 The Methods of the Research

In conducting the research, the writer has three steps; collecting the data, analyzing the data and presenting the result of analysis.

1.7.1 Collecting the Data

In conducting this research, the writer applies library research method which relates with books and other written sources. The primary data are the selected short stories from Oscar Wilde's short stories collection itself, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales*. Besides the three short stories in it, the history books of the late

Victorian era's social information also become the primary data since the writer wants to compare and relate directly between the social condition and the works. While some books, thesis and journals/ articles from the internet that have relationship with the author are being the secondary data.

1.7.2 Analyzing the Data

In analyzing the data, the qualitative method is applied to conduct the research. Here, the writer reads the short stories first in order to understand the stories and find out the social issues. To process the analysis, the intrinsic elements of the short stories are analyzed to find out the data, which are the themes, characters and symbols. Traditional historicism is used to conduct this analysis. Furthermore, the writer tries to seek the forms of social messages relied in the works.

1.7.3 Presenting the Results

Since the writer uses the qualitative method, she automatically applies the descriptive method in presenting her analysis because the collected data are served in the form of words rather than numbers. Consequently, the written results of the research contain quotations from the data to illustrate and to substantiate the report or presentation. The quotations also have important role in supporting the writer's argument in analysis.

CHAPTER II

PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF OSCAR WILDE’S SELECTED SHORT STORIES: “THE NIGHTINGALE AND THE ROSE”, “THE DEVOTED FRIEND” AND “THE REMARKABLE ROCKET”

Before going to the main analysis, the writer wants to analyze the elements of fiction in Oscar Wilde’s “The Nightingale and the Rose”, “The Devoted Friend” and “The Remarkable Rocket” which consist of characters, setting, plot, point of view and theme. It is important to reveal the intrinsic elements and relate them later on with the historical context. In this chapter, the writer will give explanation about these five elements of fiction found in the short stories as the primary data of research.

2.1 Characters

According to Abrams, characters are the persona presented in dramatic or narrative works who are interpreted by the reader as being endowed with particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it—the dialogue—and from what they do the action (32-33). This is supported by Mario Klarer who distinguishes characters into two categories; round and flat characters. A flat character or a typified character is dominated by one specific trait meanwhile round character usually denotes a persona with more complex and differentiated features (17). The

flat character is also called as minor character and round character as the major one.

Wilde with his wittiness creates awesome short stories in which the characters in them represent the people of the society they came from. Each character has his/ her own personality which can be interpreted from each character's dialogue and action.

2.1.1 The Nightingale and the Rose

As self-explanatory described in its title, The Nightingale in "The Nightingale and the Rose" plays the major character role. She is portrayed as caring and kind-hearted one. This is illustrated by the lines "Night after night I have sung of him, though I knew him not" (13) which shows how she cares so much about the student whom she only sees from far every day. The other trait of her that makes her round character is her affection towards the student evidenced by the lines "what is the heart of a bird compared to a heart of a man" (15) when she knows that to help the student to get the red rose she has to stain it with her own heart's blood which leads her to her own death. It describes that she not only cares about the student but she also has special feeling for him that she sacrifices her life. The other major character in the story is The Student himself who is interested in philosophy therefore he is expected to be wise. But on the other hand, he is portrayed to be too naïve in life and love as illustrated by his lines "all

the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red rose is my life made wretched” (13).

The author also provides the story with other characters who role as the minor characters. They are the little Green Lizard, The Butterfly and the Daisy which are all personified elements of nature. They think that it is ridiculous to weep for a red rose and the Green Lizard even laughed outright (14). They are also used to narrate what happens to the Nightingale when she sacrifices herself. The professor daughter whom the Student wants to dance with is also the minor character in the story. She is materialistic and demanding a lot that one should have something to dance with her that she eventually picks the Chamberlain’s Nephew who has sent her some real jewels (17).

2.1.2 The Devoted Friend

In “The Devoted Friend”, the major characters are played by Mr. Miller and the Little Hans. Mr. Miller is wise in preach but poor in action that he always tries to benefit himself from his friendship with Little Hans. As explained by his sentences on the so-called friendship,

“There is no good in my going to see Little Hans as long as the snow lasts,’ the Miller used to say to his wife, ‘for when people are in trouble, they should be left alone, and not be bothered by visitors. That at least is my idea about friendship, and I am sure I am right. So I shall wait till the

spring comes, and then I shall pay him a visit, and he will be able to give me a large basket of primroses and that will make him so happy.”(25)

Little Hans is another phenomenal main character. He has a kind heart and a funny round good-humoured face (24). Hans is a poor gardener and earns his livelihood by selling flowers. Though he is poor, he is very generous and light-hearted and likeable. But similar to other major character in the previous short story, he is too naïve that he is always tricked by Mr. Miller’s ‘golden’ speech about how friendship is supposed to be. He always believes in everything Mr. Miller says to him and is so thankful for having a wise friend like one. As for Little Hans, “it is a privilege to hear you talk” to Mr. Miller’s convincing preach on friendship (26) that he is welcome to all flowers in Little Hans’ garden and he would rather have Mr. Miller’s good opinion in than the silver buttons he traded for life in winter (27) since Mr. Miller never gave him any visit and help in winter which was contradictory to the values of friendship.

The secondary characters are the Miller's Wife, the Miller's son, the Doctor and the Blacksmith. The Miller's Wife is always saying that her husband is the best friend in the world and the most generous man. The Miller's son just asks why they don't bring Hans to live with them in the winter, to what his father asks saying that if Hans would see what they have in their house, he might get envious, and envy is the most terrible thing, and that could change people personality, and he would not allow Hans to led to any temptations (25). The Doctor appears at the end of the second story; he is the one that is going to heal the Miller's son. The

last character is the Blacksmith; he is who starts the conversation after Hans' funeral, saying that Hans is a great loss (31). Other secondary characters are the Water-Rat, the Duck and the Linnet which appear in the beginning of the story.

2.1.3 The Remarkable Rocket

In the last short story, "The Remarkable Rocket", the major character also derives from the title of the story; the Rocket himself. He is extremely pompous and self-important, and denigrates all the other fireworks, "...I am a very remarkable Rocket, and come of remarkable parents..." (35) as he braggingly introduces himself.

Similar to Mr. Miller character from the previous short story, he often speaks something wise which is on the contrary of his action for example when he says "...You should be thinking about others. In fact, you should be thinking about me. I am always thinking about myself, and I expect everybody to do the same. That is what is called sympathy..." (36) to the Roman Candle who was joking and interrupting the Rocket's speech of his self-enthusiasm. The minor characters in the stories are the Prince, Princess, King and the Young Page who appear in the beginning of the story. The Squib, Roman Candle, Catharine Wheel, The Cracker, The Bengal Light and The Frog who are the companies of The Rocket in the stand are also the minor characters of the story.

2.2 Setting

Mario Klarer defines setting as the location, historical period and social surroundings in which the action of a text developed (24). Since all the short stories are fairy tales which involve many personified characters, the historical period of the stories is not existed.

In “The Nightingale and the Rose” the action takes place in the room of the Student, when he is reading at the end of the story (20); in the garden that is near the Student's room's window, there grown a Rose-tree that has the red rose (14) and where the Nightingale knows about the problem the Student has. The last place is the Professor's house, where the daughter despises the Student and his rose.

It is easily seen in the story that the action develops in some hours. The evening and the night of one day, when the Nightingale listens to the laments of the Student (13), when he find the Rose-tree that can give her a red rose and then she dies building the red rose for the Student (16). The other period of time is the next morning when the Student goes back to see the girl he adores (17).

“The Devoted Friend” takes two settings. The first story takes place in a pond, where the Water-rat, the Duck and the Linnet speak (23). The action lasts just some minutes (the time that the Linnet uses in telling the story), but in the middle of this first story, the story leads to the second setting.

The second story has different places. The house of Hans, that is described as a tiny cottage with a garden that in all the country-side there was no garden so

lovely as his is (24). Another important place in this story is the house of the Miller. There is a description of it made by the owners "... our warm fire, and our good supper, and our great cask of red wine..." (25). Another important place for the development of the action is the moors where Hans dies (31). The second whole story lasts some months, because it is said that the winter went by. But the concrete story takes just some days, in spring.

Moving on to the last short story, a celebration of the Prince's wedding at the King's garden is the opening setting of "The Remarkable Rocket". People are waiting for the bride who is a Russian Princess driven in a sledge shaped like a great golden swan (33). Then, three days after the marriage celebration, a great ceremony is held at the King's garden where there stands a great stand of fireworks which has been properly designed by the Royal Pyrotechnist for the last event of the celebration at night (34). The stand becomes the setting where the major part of the story takes place that a conversation between the fireworks occurs. In the morning after the firework display, the setting moves to the muddy environment since The Rocket is thrown away by the workingman to the mud. It becomes the final setting that lead to the end of story. The whole story takes just some days, started from the arrival of the bride, marriage celebration, the following ceremony, and the day after the ceremony.

2.3 Plot

According to Mario Klarer, plot is the logical interaction of the various thematic elements of a text which lead to a change of the original situation as presented at the outset of narrative. He also divides an ideal traditional plot into four sequential levels; exposition, complication, climax, and resolution (15).

2.3.1 The Nightingale and the Rose

“The Nightingale and the Rose” is exposed with the Nightingale overhearing a student complaining that his professor's daughter will not dance with him, as he is unable to give her a red rose (13). It leads to complication when she tries to help the student to find the red rose. The Nightingale visits all the rose-trees in the garden, and one of the white roses tells her that there's a way to produce a red rose, but only if the nightingale is prepared to sing the sweetest song for the rose all night with her heart touching the rose, and sacrifice her life to do so (14-15). The turning point occurs when she finally stains her life with the red rose. At night, the Nightingale went to the Rose-Tree and set her breast against the thorn. She sings all the night long. She presses closer and closer against the thorn until the thorn finally touches her heart and she finally dies when the red rose is finished (16). As the resolution, the student who already finds the red rose in the next morning goes home with a broken heart because when he goes to the professor's house to ask for the girl's promise, she refuses it by saying that the rose “will not go with her dress” and that the Chamberlain's Nephew had sent

her real jewels and that everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers. After arguing with her, the Student throws the rose into a gutter, where a cart-wheel goes into it. He says that love is a silly thing and that he prefers Logic and Philosophy (17-18).

2.3.2 The Devoted Friend

The story begins with Green Linnet telling a story about an imbalanced friendship of the greedy Mr. Miller and Little Hans the gardener to Water-Rat and the Duck at the pond during the teaching of little ducks to stand on their heads in order to tell the selfish Water-Rat the moral of the story. Mr. Miller, who never practices what he preaches, always tries to benefit himself from little Hans by asking for Hans' flowers every morning except in winter since flowers does not bloom in winter (23-25). The complication revolves several demanding requests from Mr. Miller after the winter as a pay-off for a wheelbarrow that he promises Hans. Mr. Miller takes all the flowers Hans has which Hans wants to sell in order to buy back his old wheelbarrow then the next day Hans has to help him carrying some heavy sacks of flour to the market and later fix Mr. Miller broken roof even though Hans has other things to do, but Mr. Miller will not take 'No' for an answer nor he will not give Hans his wheelbarrow (27-29). The story leads to climax when Mr. Miller asks Hans to find a doctor for his son during a stormy night that eventually causes the death of Hans who is lost in the storm. His body is found in the following morning (30-31). In the resolution of the story, a funeral

of Hans is held with Mr. Miller as the chief mourner and he says that Hans' death is a great loss for him because Hans had not fixed his wheelbarrow yet so it could not be sold (31). And until the end of Linnet's story, Water-Rat still cannot find the moral of the story as for him a story should not be with moral (32).

2.3.3 The Remarkable Rocket

The exposition of "The Remarkable Rocket" is the celebration of the Prince's marriage with people always give good comments no matter how bad the King's dance is and how ugly the bride is (33-34). The complication comes during the great ceremony, when the fireworks are having a conversation with The Rocket who always wants to be the center of attention and brags about himself as he denigrates others (35-38). The climax follows at the firework displays at night in which The Rocket fails to shoot wonderfully as he said he would be. Every firework is a great success except him who is so damp by his tumultuous cry that he cannot go off at all (38). Leading to the resolution, after being thrown into the mud, he meets the Frog who is as self-pompous as he is and annoys him in the conversation. The Rocket then is found and picked by two little boys who want to fire him, but he is too damp that it takes too long time for him to burst and the little boys are already asleep. He finally makes a bit success in shooting but unfortunately it is witnessed by no one (41-42).

2.4 Point of View

Klarer has defined point of view in his *An Introduction to Literary Studies*

“The term ‘point of view’, or narrative perspective, characterizes the way in which a text presents persons, events and settings. The subtleties of narrative perspective developed parallel to the emergence of the novel and can be reduced to the three basic positions, the action of a text is either mediated through an exterior, unspecified narrator (omniscient point of view), through a person involved in the action (first-person narration) or presented without additional commentary (figural narrative situation).” (20)

In delivering the story, “The Nightingale and the Rose” and “The Remarkable Rocket” share similar point of view which is the omniscient type that mediates the story through an exterior and unspecified narrator. Meanwhile “The Devoted Friend” uses a combination of two points of view since the story can be divided into two stories; the one that happens in a pond, where the Water-rat, the Duck and the Linnet speak (23) and the second is the story that is being told by the Linnet. The first part uses omniscient point of view and the rest part is delivered with figural narrative situation since it is being told by the Linnet.

2.5 Theme

Theme is the central topic, subject, or concept the author is trying to point out. As DiYanni states in his book, *Reading Fiction, An Anthology of Short Stories*, “Theme is a meaning of a story that consists of ideas and views of life, it is related to other elements of fiction, such as characters, settings and plots” (37). After reading all the short stories, writer concludes that the three works contain a similar theme which is about “how being in love can make one suffers”.

In “The Nightingale and the Rose”, it is conveyed in two ways, firstly, love from the Nightingale towards the Student and then the Student’s love towards the Professor’s Daughter in which both of them are unrequited love. The Nightingale’s life sacrifice becomes useless that after the red rose she bets by her heart blood is thrown away after The Student being rejected by The Professor’s Daughter even though he had brought what she asked for.

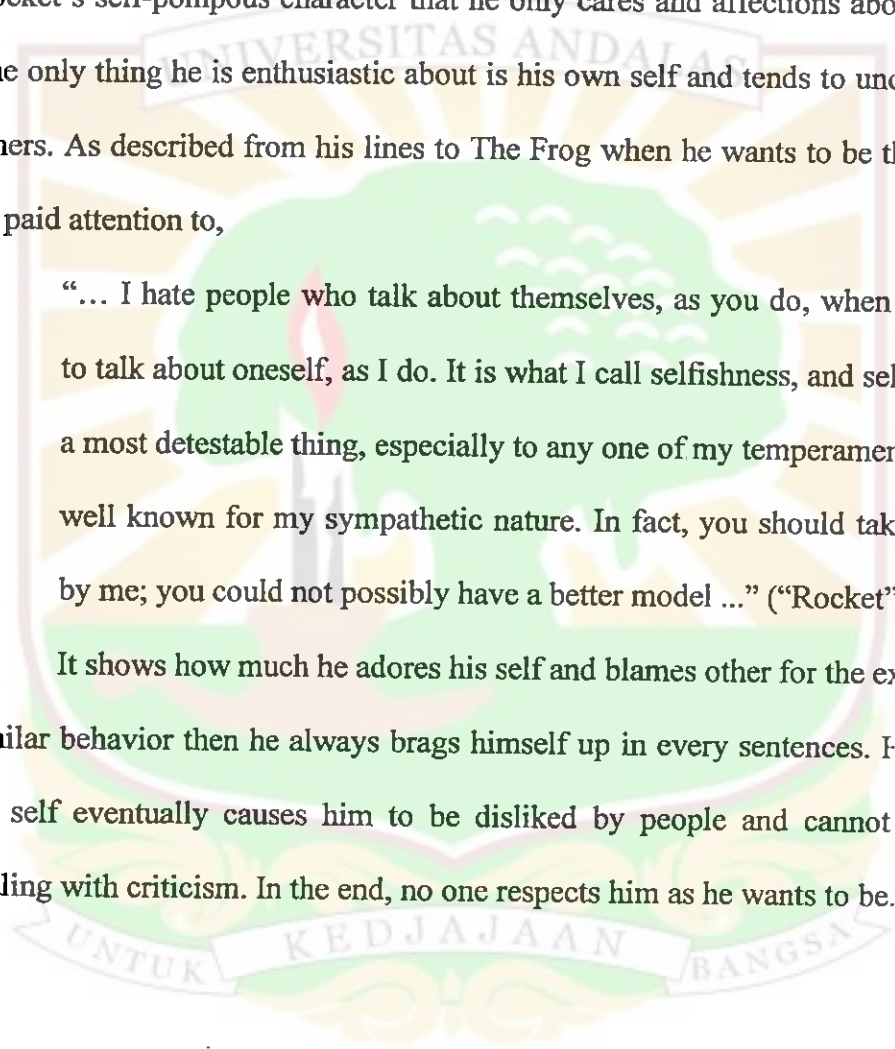
“The Devoted Friend” performs the misery of love in friendship by showing how devoted and sincere Little Hans is to his so-called best friend, Mr. Miller though Mr. Miller will not do the same. Little Hans will do and give anything for his “dearest and best friend” Mr. Miller (27) even when he himself is in trouble and suffering. Starts from giving him all the flowers he has to sell in order to get back all the silvers he traded for continuing life during winter to distressing himself to do everything Mr. Miller requests him to do as the gratitude for the promised wheelbarrow Hans never got until the end of his life. Even until

his death, he sacrifices his life for helping Mr. Miller getting a doctor in a heavy storm though Hans himself is not in his fit condition.

In “The Remarkable Rocket”, it is shown in another way to describe how love to one’s self will disadvantage or suffer him in the end. It is portrayed in The Rocket’s self-pompous character that he only cares and affections about himself. The only thing he is enthusiastic about is his own self and tends to underestimate others. As described from his lines to The Frog when he wants to be the one that be paid attention to,

“... I hate people who talk about themselves, as you do, when one wants to talk about oneself, as I do. It is what I call selfishness, and selfishness is a most detestable thing, especially to any one of my temperament, for I am well known for my sympathetic nature. In fact, you should take example by me; you could not possibly have a better model ...” (“Rocket”:40).

It shows how much he adores his self and blames other for the exactly similar behavior then he always brags himself up in every sentences. His love to his self eventually causes him to be disliked by people and cannot help him dealing with criticism. In the end, no one respects him as he wants to be.



CHAPTER III

THE IGNORANCE OF HUMAN'S FEELING DUE TO MATERIALISM AND INDIVIDUALISM: SOCIAL CRITIQUES TOWARD LATE VICTORIANS AS REFLECTED IN OSCAR WILDE'S SELECTED SHORT STORIES

3.1 Social Condition of Late Victorians in Brief

This subchapter is a supporting part which explains about the social condition among England's late Victorian society. It is necessary to help the writer in doing the analysis. Since she applies historicism in this research, it is required to give additional subchapter as the factual data of the stories about the social critique toward the society represented in the selected short stories of Oscar Wilde; "The Nightingale and The Rose", "The Devoted Friend" and "The Remarkable Rocket".

In this research analysis, the issue of social critiques toward lifestyle of late Victorian society becomes the main topic. In accordance to this, the writer provides information concerning on those issues. The data in this chapter are based on historical sources such as books, articles, and other sources that are related to the social critiques about Victorian society in the late 19th century.

3.1.1 Social Hierarchy in Late Victorian England

The Victorian era of British history was the period of Queen Victoria's reign since 1837 until her death in 1901. This era is a remarkable period for England since it was a period of prosperity when there were many changes and developments

occurred in many aspects such as social, economics, politics and technology as the impact of Industrial Revolution in the late of 18th century. In addition, Industrial Revolution also influenced the social structure of society. Roebuck in her *The Making of Modern English Society from 1850* states, "By 1850 the social effects of industrialism had crystallized out to produce a society which most contemporaries felt was basically sound and stable" (1). The quotation shows that the social phenomenon which occurred in England society is assumed to be the effect of industrialization. This formed a social condition in which social distinction was based on birth and income in 19th century. It is also found on Benton's *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* that the term *class* first came into widely used in the early 19th century, replacing such terms as *rank* and *order* as descriptions of the major hierarchical groupings in society. There is also an explanation that social class is a group of people within in society who possess the same socioeconomic status. This makes it obvious that social grouping could not be separated from economic aspect and this situation resulted social group divisions among late Victorian society.

McDonough in his book, *Class and Politics*, divides the 19th British society into three social classes; upper class, middle class and working class. The first class, the upper class, is the most influential class in the society of the 19th century England. The upper class refers to the aristocracy as the higher class in the society as evidenced by McDonough's statement, "The traditional upper class was always closely associated with the aristocracy" (179). According to Raw in his book, *Changing Class Attitude*, the upper class consists of the House of Lords, House of Commons,

and Establishment. House of Lords is the royal family that gets their wealth and honor from the queen. Meanwhile, the members of House of Common were elected by the Member of Parliament (33).

The second class is the middle class whose income can fulfill their needs. It is found on *About Britain* that having a profession was another way of being a member of the middle class of Victorian society. Shopkeepers, doctors, nurses, a schoolmaster, or parish priest were all notable professions.

The last social class is the lower class. Raw with his *Changing Class Attitude* divides two categories of lower class; the working class and the poor. The working class consists of the skilled or unskilled workers but somehow they still hardly struggle to survive the live. And the poor is the people who gets charity from the society and can be said that they are the lowest class in the late Victorian society (35).

The social groupings above clearly reflect the importance of status for late Victorians. As Raw describes, the horror for most Victorians was to be in a wrong social status (36). This explains why the Victorian society valued heritage and nobility and always tried to maintain theirs and reach a better position in social hierarchy as described through quotation from *About Britain*, "Victorian society can be quite pleasant but only depending on one's financial status."

3.1.2 Materialism

According to *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, materialism can be defined as a doctrine that the only or the highest values or objectives lie in material well-being and

in the furtherance of material progress. It means that material is the standard of the highest value of life. In this case, the economic aspect cannot be separated from social condition of Victorian society in the late 19th century since, related to the previous part of this subchapter, late Victorians were shown to appreciate material well-beings. For that, it can be said that materialism in late Victorian society was one of the effects of Industrial Revolution. As it has been explained earlier, the social class structures were based on the economic aspect and the ownership of property in society. Therefore it made them worshipped money and success thus worked hard to reach them. This is strengthened by Roberts in his book, *A History of England*, “It could be passionately pursue the heroic and the beautiful or settle into materialism and philistinism” (630). The quotation shows that the condition of England at that time had created the formidable outlook about anything in life such as materialism.

People in this era tried to find ways to achieve wealth and pursued happiness in the matter of materialism. *Victorian Web* also states that, the upper class or aristocracy also reckoned that money was the measurement of social status in the society. They even do some tricky ways to get wealth, such as marrying a noble family member. This explanation shows that wealth in late Victorian era could defeat love which is an important value in human life since material possession was more important than true love though love is the basis of a sacred thing like marriage.

2.3.3 Individualism

Having looked at the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*, the term individualism can be defined as 1) A belief in the primary importance of the individual and in the virtues of self-reliance and personal independence, 2) the action or principle of asserting one's independence and individuality; egoism. This means that in one way, individualism is a positive thing since it characterizes independent individual but on the other hand, it can give a negative impact which is ignorance toward other that in other word we call it egotism. The materialism and social grouping had made a change in society's point of view and way of life. The individualism is one of the issues existed in Victorian era as Roebuck states in *The Making of Modern English Society from 1850*, "Individualism is the competing reform ideology of the later Victorian era" (43). Walter in his book, *The Respectability of Late Victorian Workers*, argues that individualism in late Victorian era had led to the immense need of self-respect by one's self. As quoted from his book;

"Feelings of self-respect were not a sudden "invention" of the Victorian period and may have been accentuated by the cultural shift in the late nineteenth century away from "corporate" understandings of identity toward those based on the "uniqueness" of the individual self and the centrality of the personal narrative." (24)

This quotation shows how the late Victorians were an individually caring phenomenon and often considered their selves as self-made individuals. This resulted how personal narratives of success to be an important part of the culture as the lines

also describe how they were fond about their selves and liked to talk in a high profile way on their personalities.

In addition to that, the late Victorian's individualism also gave impact to the society in a whole where the poor were being neglected as for them success is a self-reliance. As quoted from *English Uwosh*, "More than anything else what makes Victorians Victorian is their sense of social irresponsibility." Furthermore it is also described how the poor were considered 'invisible' among the society through this quotation;

"Those members of England who worked as chimney sweeps, rat catchers, or spent their days in factories had no place in the echelon of the upper class, although their services would be needed from time to time. The best way for society to deal with the poor was to ignore them. They were 'burdens on the public.

There were people who cared, however. Unfortunately, in trying to help the lower class, conditions usually did not improve. Workhouses were developed, but the living was horrendous and it was almost better to be back on the street." (<http://www.english.uwosh.edu/roth/VictorianEngland.htm>)

The lines above clearly illustrate the social irresponsibility of the late Victorians that they exploited the lower class to work for them but at the same time neglected their existence.

3.2 Social Critiques toward Late Victorians Reflected in Oscar Wilde's Selected Short Stories

In this subchapter, the writer investigates the social critiques toward the late Victorians she finds in the short stories. In doing the analysis, the writer relates the social information with the data she finds in the works to explain and show that they are the social critiques toward the society during the time the short stories were written. To make it clear and easy to comprehend, the writer discusses the issues point by point.

3.2.1 The Importance of Social Status and Unequal Social Treatment

To investigate the importance of social status at that time is important because the social grouping is the root of other problems in late Victorian that will be analyzed later in this thesis. As explained in the earlier subchapter, social class was an essential part of the late Victorians. People would do almost everything to protect and maintain a respectable place in the social hierarchy. Social status one belonged to also determined the treatment he/ she achieved from society and also happened the same way for the treatment giver. Like as been explained in previous subchapter, the lower class tended to be ignored and been treated badly.

The importance of social class for the late Victorian English is found in the selected short stories of Oscar Wilde that the writer uses in this research.

The Nightingale and the Rose

“The Nightingale and the Rose” story brings out the issue of social status through the representation of two different classes between the Student and the Chamberlain’s Nephew. Referring to the earlier explanation in the previous subchapter, the Student here is categorized as the middle class people while the Chamberlain’s Nephew represents the higher class. The issue of importance of social status and unequal social treatment becomes obvious through the Professor’s Daughter’s attitude toward the difference.

The Young Student is described as being in love with the Professor’s Daughter so much that he cannot sleep thinking about where to find a red rose that he is supposed to give her if he wanted her to go and dance with him at the state ball. However, even though he finally has the red rose he still cannot take the Professor’s Daughter to the ball because he loses in the aspect of wealth. Moreover, when rejecting the Student’s request, she gets her temper rising that she says, “...and after all, who are you? Only a student.” (17) to the Student. It evidences how social status matters for her to get in public.

This is also supported by description on *About Britain*, “Young ladies were constantly chaperoned. To be found alone with a gentleman who was other than family was tantamount to social death. Her reputation would be ruined and her gentleman companion would find himself the object of gossip, and most usually derision.” This explains how important social status was, not just social status of one’s own self but also the companion of his/ her because to be with someone from

lower social status could harm his/ her class too. Here, Wilde points out a criticism toward the middle class of late Victorians who always tried to be the member of high class society.

The situation made the condition of the poorer classes worse because the middle class tried to make their selves prosperous so they could be called high class and the high class did not want to be competed by the middle class that they also tried to make themselves better. In the story, Wilde uses the “jewels” to symbolize the power of the ruling class. The Chamberlain’s Nephew gives to the Professor’s Daughter since the Student only got a red rose, therefore he provides himself with jewels in order to keep unbeatable. This situation really pressed the poor class because from the very beginning they did not have any opportunity and they would never have any chance of getting any better because they had already lost the competition in the very first place.

The Devoted Friend

In the “Devoted Friend” the problem of social class appears in the superiority of the rich toward the poor. In this story Wilde uses the character of Mr. Miller as the media to criticize the rich. Besides the different economic condition, the writer finds social critiques addressed the social snobbery through the animal character in the story in a satiric way.

The story begins with the descriptions of how a mother Duck tried to teach attitude to her little ducklings. There is a remark that really suites the late Victorian

society, “You will never be in the best society unless you can stand on your heads’, she kept saying to them, and every now and then she showed them how it was done. But the little ducks paid no attention to her. They were so young that they did not know what an advantage it is to be in a society at all.” (“Devoted”:23) This is a social critique toward how the society conditioned at that time. The people tried their best to be accepted into the ‘right society’ that was the high society. They tried so hard to stay on top of the social pyramid since social status was very important in that era. The phrase “stand on your heads” is used to ridicule it and to say how it went beyond logic.

Furthermore, “The Devoted Friend” also depicts the situation when England underwent the industrialism era as England became a prosperous country. “The Devoted Friend” clearly represents the era’s two of three social classes; the one representing the capital and the one representing the labor. There was a big gap between two classes and of course this gap created unfair treatment toward the weak. This difference is described through the character of Mr. Miller as the rich and Hans as the poor. The character of Mr. Miller represents the ruling class in the nineteenth century England who exploited the working class. As a rich person, Mr. Miller does not have any sympathy for Little Hans. He feels that it is his right as someone with a higher class than Hans to get the best and it was Hans’ duty to fulfill that. This is proven by all the demanding requests from Mr. Miller to Hans without concerning Hans’ own life and business such as taking all the flowers he has and commanding him to carry heavy sacks of flour to the market even though it got harder for Hans

even to breath that he often took time to rest (28). On the contrary, Mr. Miller never gives Hans in returns except noble ideas about friendship that he never practiced as reflected in the quotation below;

“Hans ... I will give you my wheelbarrow. It is not in very good repair; indeed, one side is gone, and there is something wrong with the wheel-spokes; but in spite of that I will give it to you. I know it is very generous of me, and a great many people would think of my extremely foolish for parting with it, but I am not like the rest of the world. I think that generosity is the essence of friendship, and besides, I have got a new wheelbarrow for myself. Yes, you may set your mind at ease, I will give you my wheelbarrow.” (“Devoted”:27)

The lines show that Mr. Miller obviously does not need the old broken wheelbarrow anymore, but instead of giving it directly to his friend who is in need, he gives him only some convincing lines of bullshit with a slight of noble idea about friendship. This criticizes the ruling class’ treatment toward the poor who kept feeding them artificial knowledge.

The condition in the story reflects the 19th century England when they helped the poor by only giving them their only ideas. This is also supported by Roberts in *A History of England* by stating that the upper class victimized the poor not only by withholding material wealth but also by withholding knowledge (621). Mr. Miller’s presence also strengthens the issue by these lines, “Lots of people act well but very few people talk well, which shows that talking is much the more difficult thing of the two, and much the finer thing also.” (“Devoted”:25)

In addition to that, the ruling class tended to take advantage of the poor to make their selves richer. Little Hans' is suffering of being abused by Mr. Miller until it causes his death, only because of an old broken wheelbarrow. Mr. Miller promises Hans that he will give his wheelbarrow to Hans. However, since Mr. Miller thinks that he has already done a very admirable deed by promising Hans the wheelbarrow, he thinks that he deserves something in return. Unfortunately, Mr. Miller demands not only one or two things from Hans but lots of things instead. Along with his unstoppable demands for favors, he also pictures the hypocrisy of the typical high class people of the 19th century England by preaching beautiful yet meaningless words about friendship and good deeds.

Later, in his quotation, "I am afraid that after I have mended my barn-roof there won't be any left for you to mend the wheelbarrow with; but, of course, that is not my fault. And now, as I have given you my wheelbarrow, I am sure you would like to give me some flowers in return. Here is the basket, and mind you fill it quite full." ("Devoted":27), Mr. Miller reflects another phenomenon of the typical ruling class of the 19th century England that they felt that they had done all their best to help the poor so they became proud of themselves that they tended to be conceited. They felt that the poor had to be grateful, that the rich had the right to treat the poor like they own them. To make it worse, the poor had to accept the attitude because in some ways they owed some things from the rich.

In the story, the rich Mr. Miller, as the representation of the high class people, on the other hand, also feels that he has already offered the friendship to the poor by

helping them. Moreover, he thinks that he knew everything about friendship already, and for that reason, he concerns himself more educated so that he has the right about this subject to the poor. In fact, what he preaches is only theory meanwhile what he does from day to day is different from what he says.

Then, in the last short story, “The Remarkable Rocket”, the importance of social status is delivered through the self-pompous character of the Rocket himself. He always talks about his family’s social background, as proven by the lines “...I am a very remarkable Rocket, and come of remarkable parents...” (35) as to show his superiority to others whom he always denigrated. This criticizes the Victorians who was obsessed with social status and hoped everyone knew the status they belonged to.

The Remarkable Rocket

Similar to the other two short stories, “The Remarkable Rocket” also criticizes the way Victorian society’s behavior on the importance of social status through the beginning of the story. The story begins with the description on how the citizens always praised the King no matter how terrible the situation was in order to get rewarded. This can be found in the lines of the story,

“After the banquet there was to be a ball. The bride and the bridegroom were to dance the Rose-dance together, and the King had promised to play the flute. He played very badly, but no one dared to tell him so, because he was the King. Indeed, he knew only two airs, and was never quite certain which one

he was playing; but it made no matter, for, whatever he did, everybody cried out, 'Charming! Charming!' ("Rocket":34)

A piece of the story's beginning above depicts how the power of the ruling class kept those of the lower class in silence as they were unable to speak and go against the rich as it is stressed by the clause "because he was the King" to criticize the superiority of the ruling class over the lower class. As a result, they just did whatever it took to satisfy the rich.

From all the three short stories, it can be concluded that Wilde uses each character's different class background to criticize the late Victorians who put the importance of social status and tended to give unequal social treatment toward each different class.

3.2.2 The Materialistic Way of Life

The previous subchapter has discussed that there were many developments in several sectors of life that caused the mindset of the Victorian England formed into materialistic. They were obsessed with money, wealth, and all the best things in life.

As stated by Roebuck in *The Making of Modern English Society from 1850*,

"The essence of the prosperous, confident, hard-working, and materialistic society which the middle class played an important part in shaping was distilled in its testament of faith in itself, the Great Exhibition of 1851, the forerunner of all later world fairs." (16)

The lines show that the condition of Britain in 1851 was prosperous and the society tended to be materialistic, especially the middle class. This class was known as hard working and they tried very hard to improve their status in society as Victorian era is also called the rising of the middle class.

The Nightingale and the Rose

In relation to the works, "The Nightingale and the Rose" has great impact to the writer to seek the materialistic quality of the nineteenth century England, especially from the middle class' perspective. The different attitude received by the rich compared to the attitude given to the less rich is clearly depicted here which is shown in two ways; the first is the Student's attitude toward the Nightingale's song and the second is the Professor's Daughter's attitude toward the Student's effort.

The way the Student criticizes the Nightingale's song shows his tendencies to material things rather than a true art and sincere feeling,

"She has form ... that cannot be denied to her; but has she got feeling? I am afraid not. In fact, he is like most artists; she is all style without any sincerity. She would not sacrifice herself for others. She thinks merely of music, and everybody knows that the arts are selfish. Still, it must be admitted that she has some beautiful notes in her voice. What a pity it is that they do not mean anything, or do any practical good." ("Nightingale";16)

From the quotation above, it shows that as a student, an educated person, the Student cannot value abstract things. It should have a clear, or in other word 'a material form'

to make something valuable. The writer finds the social critique toward the Victorians through these long sentences that they always tried to connect everything to material things before they could appreciate something.

The compassionate little Nightingale feels deep care for the young Student, therefore she sacrifices her life to make one red rose for the young Student. However, he does not realize this fact. In the morning, when the Student awakes, he finds a beautiful red rose outside the window. He picks the red rose and goes right away to see the Professor's Daughter.

Wilde then uses the later event to criticize the materialistic aspect of the late Victorian society which is implied by the attitude of the Professor's Daughter toward the Student's effort to find the red rose. The Student deals with a bitter reality when he arrives at the Professor's house. The Professor's Daughter does not want the red rose any more for the reason that she thinks that the red rose will not match her dress. However, that is not the main reason why she does not want to go with the Student despite the fact that he already brings her the red rose which she asks for, "I am afraid it will not go with my dress ... and besides, the Chamberlain's Nephew has sent me some real jewels, and everybody knows that jewels cost far more than flowers." (17) It is clear that the young student, as the common person could not compete with the Chamberlain's Nephew. The Professor's Daughter who belongs to the middle class society and that has the quality of being a materialist who has shallow values. It is proven by the fact that she only sees the material quality. Considered from the middle class society she feels prouder to go out and mingle with the people who belong to

the higher social group than hers. Her materialistic quality becomes clearer when she compares the Student to the Chamberlain's Nephew, "...I tell you what, you are very rude; and after all, who are you? Only a student. Why, I don't believe you have even got silver buckles to your shoes as the Chamberlain Nephew has."(17) The Professor's Daughter here was an insensitive girl. She deliberately hurts the Student's feeling by stating roughly that he is just a young Student who has nothing. She acts like this because she is aware that there is someone who is obviously richer than the student that can offer her more who is the Chamberlain's Nephew with his wealth and status. Both aspects are the things she looks for since she is a materialist. And by comparison of the things offered, a rose and jewels, jewels for her were more important and valuable than just a rose. The red rose here signifies sincerity and true art since the making process took a sacred hearts and the singing process during the creating of it implies how full of true art the rose was.

The Devoted Friend

Materialistic aspect is also found in "The Devoted Friend" through Wilde's characterization of Mr. Miller. Mr. Miller, though coming from a wealthy social background, applied the materialistic behavior that he always wants to advantage himself. It is proven by the way he keeps on demanding for more since he had promised Hans his old broken wheelbarrow as reflected in his lines;

"It is quite remarkable how one good action always breeds another. I have given you my wheelbarrow, and now you are going to give me your plank. Of

course, the wheelbarrow is worth far more than the plank, but true, friendship never notices things like that..... I am afraid that after I have mended my barn-roof there won't be any left for you to mend the wheelbarrow with; but, of course, that is not my fault. And now, as I have given you my wheelbarrow, I am sure you would like to give me some flowers in return. Here is the basket, and mind you fill it quite full." ("Devoted":27)

The lines show that he measures what he gives to people with things which have at least the similar material value. In the lines, he indirectly demands a plank of wood and a basket full of flowers as an exchange for his promised wheelbarrow. This is related to the late Victorians who valued material well-beings and gave less appreciation to things with less or no material value such as one's effort and feeling. As reflected by Mr. Miller who does not concern how important it is for Hans to sell his flowers to buy back his old wheelbarrow that he had grew the flowers in quite long time but then Mr. Miller took them all altogether. This short story's description criticizes the Victorian era's materialistic tendencies which had turned the society's value to put money and material things over human's feeling and effort.

3.2.3 The Social Irresponsibility of the Self-Centered Society

The title of this part points out the individualistic phenomenon which the writer finds to be the social issue in short stories. As been explained in the previous subchapter, one of the remarkable features of the late Victorians' social condition is

their high level of individualism which leads to egoism that they could care less about others but their own selves.

The Nightingale and the Rose

The critique is firstly found in “The Nightingale and the Rose” short story by the representation of The Student’s characterization and is proven by the sentences; “The Student looked up from the grass, and listened but he could not understand what the nightingale was saying to him, for he only knew the things that are written in books.”(15) The young Student closes his eyes on everything that happened around him. He only knows the things that written down on books and this quality describes how he tends to ignore the surrounding and prefers to what explained on books. This is clearly presented by the way he criticizes the Nightingale’s song which is actually sung in order to make him the red rose he needs. It is significant that the student loses interest in the rose when it is no longer useful to him. He cares for it only because he thought it would help him win over the girl. Another effort that is later being unnoticed, unrewarded and unappreciated is the Student’s effort himself for the Professor’s Daughter. The Professor’s Daughter’s rejection and ignorance toward the Student’s effort shows individualist’s characteristic that she does not care about others if it stands on her way to the top.

The Devoted Friend

Then, the writer also finds the issue being brought in the next short story, "The Devoted Friend". The individualist is shown through the characterization of the animal character which appears in the beginning of the story and Mr. Miller character who then becomes the major character of the story. The story opens with the scene of an old Water-Rat, mother Duck, and a green Linnet in a pond. They strike up a conversation about what it means to be a devoted friend. Water-Rat is the object of the story that the Linnet hoped in the end Water-Rat would mind his ego and could care about others more. The Water-Rat's individualism can be shown from a quotation from the story when the Linnet asked about his idea about the duties of a devoted friend;

" 'What a silly question!' cried the Water-Rat. 'I should expect my devoted friend to be devoted to me, of course.'

'And what would you do in return?' said the little bird, swinging upon a silver spray, and flapping his tiny wings.

'I don't understand you.' answered the Water-Rat." ("The Devoted Friend":23)

A piece of the story above shows how he just wants others to be devoted to him and does not think of the need to be willing to do the same in return. Wilde seems to use the animal characterization in the beginning of the story to criticize the egoism of the late Victorians which later is also presented by the characterization of the rich Mr. Miller. Mr. Miller has the same individualistic quality as the Water-Rat does that he

only counts what he gets rather than what he should have and has given. Even for everything Hans' had done for him until his death, Mr. Miller still thinks of himself as he said in Hans' funeral on the loss of Hans that explains another selfish information since, for him, he was the one who gets disadvantage from all things that happened;

“A great loss to me at any rate ... why I had as good as given him my wheelbarrow, and now I really don't know what to do with it. It is very much in my way at home, and it is in such bad repair that I could not get anything for it if I sold it. I will certainly take care not to give away anything again. One always suffers for being generous.” (“Devoted”:31)

The two short stories, “The Nightingale and the Rose” and “The Devoted Friend” present one thing in common which is how the weak had to rely on their own selves for a better life. This points out the late Victorians' value about self-reliance that one's success only could be reached through his own effort no matter what class and situation one was in. The poor who were obviously in need for help tended to be neglected as been explained in the previous subchapter, they were considered “invisible”. Those in the higher social pyramid neglected the factual situation and only cared for their selves. As quoted from *English Uwosh*,

“Those members of England who worked as chimney sweeps, rat catchers, or spent their days in factories had no place in the echelon of the upper class, although their services would be needed from time to time. The best way for

society to deal with the poor was to ignore them. They were 'burdens on the public.'

The previous subchapter also tells us that another phenomenon of the Victorians' narcissistic quality as the result of hyper-individualism that they were fond about their selves and liked to talk in a high profile way on their personalities. This is found in Water-Rat's and Mr. Miller's characters from "The Devoted Friend" and the Rocket's from "The Remarkable Rocket". The Water-Rat is obviously fond of himself, as he asks, "Is the story about me? ...If so, I will listen to it, for I am extremely fond of fiction." (24) when the Linnet begins to tell the story about the friendship of Mr. Miller and the Little Hans. The sentence points out the critique toward the late Victorian era's condition in which self-narration of success was part of the culture. As stated in Walter's *The Respectability of Late Victorian Workers* "Records of achievement were popularized and promoted in books like Self Help as examples of how all individuals could and should improve." (25) The word "fiction" in the sentence seems to make joke on how obsessed the late Victorians were with their selves. Mr. Miller who similarly liked to relate and promoted his self in every sentence and deed is also presented for the same use as the Water-Rat's presence. It is reflected in his quotes, "I know it is very generous of me, and great many people would think me extremely foolish for parting with it, but I am not like the rest of the world." (27) when he promised Hans the wheelbarrow. In the sentence, he stresses the

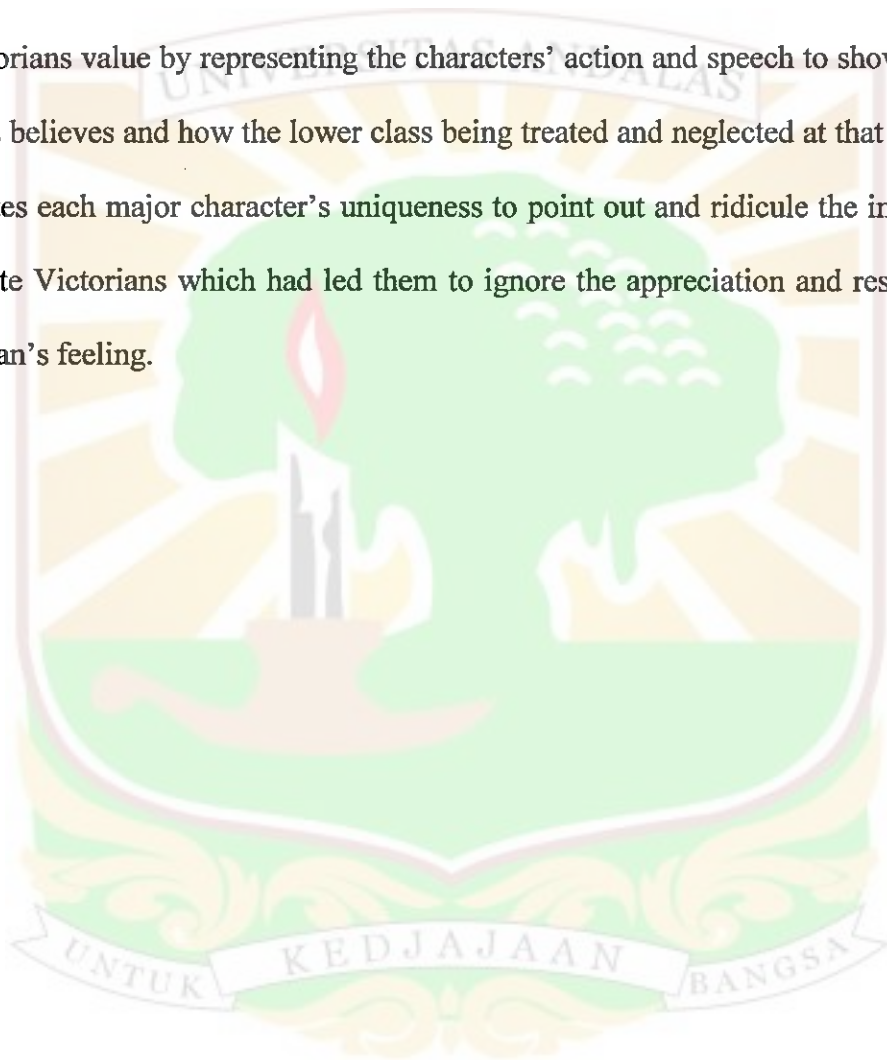
message that he is different as to mock the late Victorians who tended to consider their selves different and unique which, for them, made them special.

The Remarkable Rocket

A commentary on the 19th century England's egoism is also portrayed by the character of the Rocket in "The Remarkable Rocket". The Rocket performs many of the qualities that define an egotist; he talks only of himself and considers himself the most important. He brags about his parentage and thinks the Prince and Princess are being married in his honor, rather than the other way around. Furthermore, the Rocket adds that he comes from artistic stock; his mother was a Catherine wheel famous for her dancing and his father a rocket whose artistic performance was reviewed in the press. He is in fact somewhat of a narcissistically individualist; he insists that he is important on his own and considers himself as one of the most important creatures on earth as he said, if anything were to happen to him, "The Prince and Princess would never be happy again as for the King, I know he would not get over it" (35). The individualistic qualities of him refers to the society of 19th century England when it experienced the highest level of self confidence and tended to take other for granted. This is then strengthened by the Rocket's sentences, "The only thing that sustains one through life is the consciousness of the immense inferiority of everybody else, and this is a feeling that I have always cultivated." (37) The sentences obviously ridicule

the society's superior feeling that they liked to make others feel inferior in order to give superior feeling for their selves therefore they liked to over confidently narrate their selves.

From the three short stories, it is shown how Wilde criticizes the late Victorians value by representing the characters' action and speech to show what each class believes and how the lower class being treated and neglected at that time. Wilde creates each major character's uniqueness to point out and ridicule the individualism of late Victorians which had led them to ignore the appreciation and respect toward human's feeling.



CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Having analyzed the three selected short stories of Oscar Wilde, “The Nightingale and the Rose”, “The Devoted Friend” and “The Remarkable Rocket”, the writer comes to conclusion that the three selected short stories contain social critiques toward the particular society during the time it is written which is the Victorian era in which the people of this era tended to ignore human’s feeling due to materialism and individualism. By applying historical criticism, the writer relates the historical information with the short stories to show and prove how and what social critiques reflected in the works. By choosing to find critical aspects, the writer aims to point out what is wrong about the society of the late Victorian era as implicitly presented in the selected short stories of Oscar Wilde.

The first social critique is explained under the title “*The Importance of Social Status and Unequal Social Treatment*” which discusses about the importance of social status for the late Victorians and how treatment would be different depending on the social status one belonged to. The social classification is concerned to be the root of materialism and individualism that developed later on. Victorian era is well-known for its social grouping that was based on birth and economic aspects. Society of late Victorian era was categorized into three divisions of social hierarchy; high class, middle class, and lower class. As social tagging was important, people in late

19th century of England always tried to protect and maintain a good position in the social hierarchy that they would do everything. Social status one possessed also determined the way he/ she been treated and the way he/ she treated others from different classes. Lower class people was the one who got disadvantaged by the stratification as they were treated badly and exploited by those from higher class.

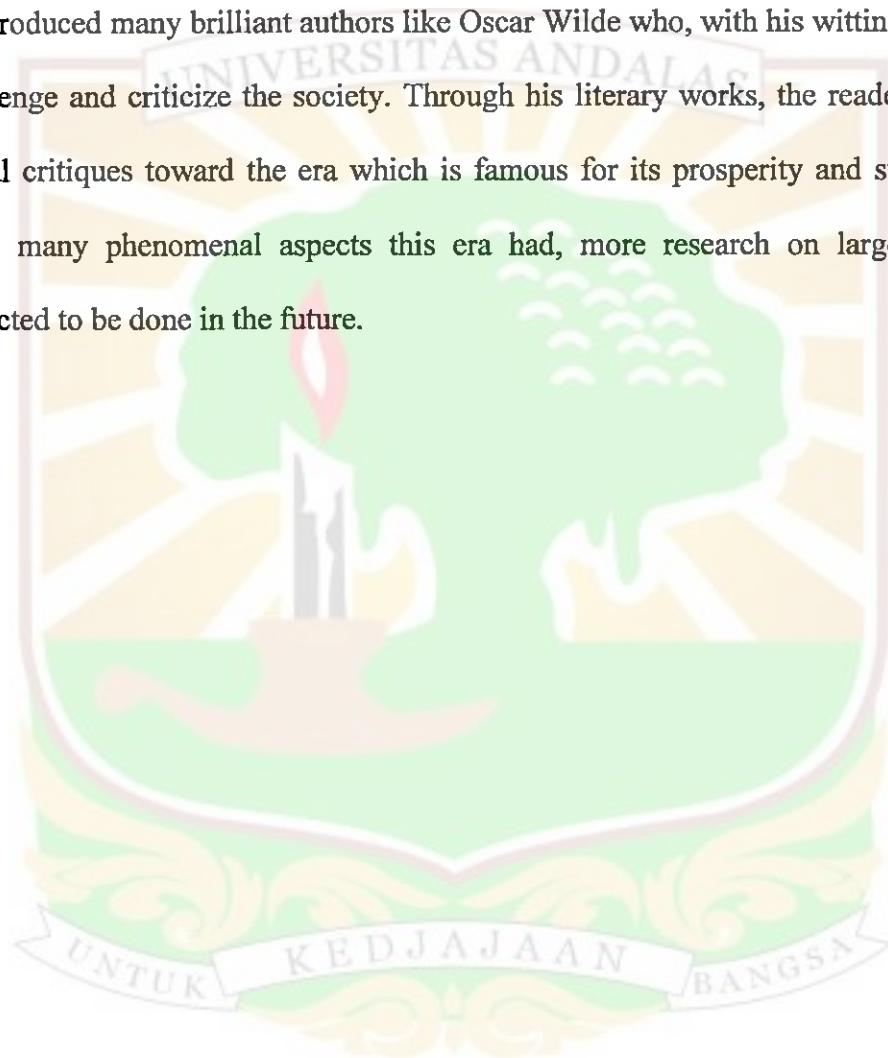
This social stratification with economic basis reflects how important material possession was for England society in 1880-1900. This condition formed a materialistic point of view and way of life among the late Victorians. Along with the materialism, the society put tolerance toward human effort and feeling aside and put material things on the top of everything instead. This situation is investigated under the title "*The Materialistic Way of Life*" of the analysis.

Since people of late 19th century England were busy protecting and maintaining their position, a high level of individualism were formed among the society. In "*The Social Irresponsibility of the Self-Centered Society*", the writer discusses how the self-reliance value went too far that they only cared about their selves, neglected others from the lower class and tended to consider their selves as the most important valuable and special human being on earth.

Having related the secondary data with the primary data, the writer concludes that the three selected short stories of Oscar Wilde, "The Nightingale and the Rose", "The Devoted Friend" and "The Remarkable Rocket" implied social critiques toward late Victorians' social class system, materialism and individualism which had led the society to ignore appreciation and respect toward human's feeling. The writer finds

that the author uses the characterization, themes and symbols in the story to deliver his critiques toward the society.

The writer considers the research on late Victorian era necessary as it is a remarkable period of English history with the development of literature as well. This era produced many brilliant authors like Oscar Wilde who, with his wittiness, liked to challenge and criticize the society. Through his literary works, the readers can find social critiques toward the era which is famous for its prosperity and strict values. With many phenomenal aspects this era had, more research on larger scope is expected to be done in the future.



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