

Commodification of Human Values in Oscar Wilde's Selected Stories

In selected stories of Oscar Wilde: "The Devoted Friend," "The Model Millionaire," "The Teacher of Wisdom" and "The Young King", the researcher aims to show commodification of human values in the modern world utilizing the Marxist concept of commodification. Human value has been degrading gradually in the modern capitalist society due to influence of materialism. In all these selected stories human value has exchange meaning. Human sympathy, human emotions, and compassion are exchanged with material value. In the story "The Devoted Friend" Miller exploits and utilizes his friend Hana for material benefit. In "The Model Millionaire" money prevents marriage between Hugh Eriskine and Laura Merton. Laura's father asks 1000 pounds for marriage. In "The Teacher of Wisdom", teacher asks money with Millers but hesitates to teach well to his students. "The Young King" deals with the utility of power for the exchange value. The selected stories reflect the utilitarian mentality of people in modern capitalist society in which human value is exchanged with material benefits.

Keywords: objectification, human value, exploitation, domination, equality

This research focuses on the commodification of human values in the selected stories of Oscar Wilde: "The Devoted Friend," "The Teacher of Wisdom," "The Model Millionaire" and "Young King". In all these selected stories of Wilde, human has exchange value with material benefit. Marxists concern over the rise of a capitalist economy been a concern for the effects of capitalism on human values. In a capitalist economic system, an object's value becomes impersonal. Its value is translated into a monetary market. Growing rise of industrialism in the mid – nineteenth century was a concern for the effects of factory work. Growing numbers of industries and accumulation of capital definitely put some impact on human behavior. Along

with the large quantity of products, workers became disassociated not only from the products they produced but from their own labor as well. Human sympathy, human emotions and compassion are exchanged with material value. Marxism studies human behavior and psychology under the material and historical forces that shape socioeconomic systems. For Marxism, the family is not the source of the individual's psychological identity, but the product of material and historical circumstances. All the units of family culture are produced by socioeconomic culture. Economic puts upper hand over other culture

In the story "The Devoted Friend" Hana was a poor gardener shown as the devoted and sincere friend of Miller who is a wealthy man. Based on this friendship, the Miller helps himself to flowers in Hana's garden, and promises to give Hana an old, broken and useless wheelbarrow, to replace with one that Hana is obliged to sell so that he could afford food. In return, the Miller asks Hana to do a series of arduous tasks for him. In the Story "The Model Millionaire" money prevents marriage between Hugh Eriskine and Laura Merton. Laura's father appears to be judging Hughie based on his lack finances. The colonel does not allow Hughie To marry Laura till Hughie accumulates £10,000. In the story, "The Teacher of Wisdom" a teacher preached the gospel to the congregation but found that he remained unsatisfied and unhappy. The man's soul warned him that he was not only dividing but also wasting his treasure by giving away his knowledge of God to students in limited money. In "Young King" humiliates the prince who appears in the dresses of the lower class, but they start to respect him when he is recognized as the prince.

According to George Lukacs "The action or process of treating someone as a mere commodity" is commodification of human value (87). Commodification does means transformation of anything into commodities or objects of trade. Here in the selected stories of

Oscar Wilde we can find the commodification of Human values. In the story, "The Devoted Friend" love of a friend is misused for material benefit. Similarly retired colonel in the story "The Model Millionaire" didn't actually value the true love of Hugh Eriskine to his daughter Laura Merton. In the story marriage and relationship has been commodified as money. Also in the story "The Teacher of Wisdom" devotion of students towards teacher is commercialized. Therefore, commodification is something that does not have an economic value but is assigned or given value.

The characters of the selected stories are engaged in exploiting the fashionable fervor of consuming things that are available in the capitalist market. Resultantly they cultivate obsession with jewelries, money, and objects than human relationship. They compete with others in the race to consume fresh and latest commodities. The more exposed they are to glamour and glimpse of consumer society, the more disillusioned and exhausted they become. Ultimately, almost all the characters are bound to encounter the darker side of late capitalist venture, consumer society, and the widening gap between immediate experience and mediated experience.

The selected stories of Wilde are related to commodification of human values. Why does retired colonel demand with Hugh Eriskine to deposit money before handling hands of his daughter? Why Millar makes Hans to do hard labor? Why the teacher denies teaching his students without money? Miller, the teacher, and colonel want material benefit from other characters despite respecting their human values. These characters always expect something from other and are not ready to sacrifice anything of their own. Sympathy emotions and feelings do not matter the most for the characters.

Wilde produced most of his known work in late twentieth century. His early works are

mainly concerned with malaise and maladies faced by people who are trapped modern society. He raises postmodern genre to the peak of sophistication and artistry by the end of the last century. He then writes mainly on some of the latest trends and fashions. This ensures the success of Oscar Wilde's signature approach of aestheticism and art for art's sake. Rohini Widyalkara talks about Wilde's art in the stories, "devoid of the age limitations, has a powerful impact on the readers" (62). Sacrifice of Hans is the most memorable and poignant experience for young minds which creates many questions. He has further said, "The short story makes them sensitive to the reality in life, human weaknesses and it has the power to open a path to self-inquiry. Thus for the early teenagers who are embarking on a journey of literary appreciation it is a cameo which is perfection in the genre of story" (63). He further mentions that the early teenagers need not be exposed to the many meanings, secrets and answers which according to Wilde is inherent to the text. However, they too possess the maturity to unravel at least some age relevant meanings, some secrets and answers to some problems they are confronted with in their young lives through analysis of this story.

Meysam Tabrizi depicts about the concept of love in the stories of Wilde. He has said that even after the boy has brought red rose his love left him. He has said, "The loving boy furiously shoots the rose into the kennel, comes back to his study of metaphysics, and comes to conclusion that true love doesn't exist anymore" (43).

Similarly, Asad Mehmood talks about transitivity analysis in the stories of Wilde. He shows how actions are performed through the use of material processes. We get a clearer idea from the verbal processes that describe the actions as well as revealing the situations and conditions. Furthermore, the relational processes strengthen this impact.

Similarly, Betsy Moeller has explored on the cultural of Contemporary England through

the stories of Wilde. Such English cultural values can be found in the short stories of Oscar Wilde. He has said “The English cultural history confirms Wilde’s belief that life imitates art, and that literature provides modes and models of self-expression for its readers as well as its creators” (468). His contribution to Russian modernist culture lies primarily in the crucial concept of life as art.

Finally, Udhya Sajeeval in his journal has done research on whether short stories of Oscar Wilde help to develop writing skill. He has concluded, “short stories have an immense effect on students’ learning process and can be used as a powerful tool to enhance the sub skills of writing. It was also found that Millers feel it more appealing when they are allowed to think outside the text and develop their ideas in an interesting way. Moreover, it established that employing any short story would create a positive environment for the development of learning writing skills. This can be one of the strategies that is beneficial to enhance the writing skills of Millers. Teachers can adopt suitable strategies according to nature of the classroom” (464). However, this present research is totally different from above mentioned where the researcher explores the commodification of human values in the stories of Wilde. The characters who commodify other characters and just like to use other character as their commodities in the stories.

Although critics have viewed selected stories from various angles the issue of commodification is still untouched. This research identifies the human commodification in selected stories of Wilde. In the society where commercialization and industrialization have gained massive foothold, the fate and future of financially weak people remain bleak. Even the prosperous people are devoid of any affection, emotion and grace of humanity. Everything is cast into the mould of monetary values. It is the adverse situation created by economic hardship that

compels people to exchange feelings and emotions with monetary worth. Since, the topic of the commodification of human emotions, affection and subjectivity is untouched and unexplored; the researcher claims that it is the fresh, new and original topic.

The researcher makes use of the theory of Marxism as conceptualized by George Lukacs to probe into the issue of commodification of human behaviour. Marxists insights into human behavior involve the damaging effects of capitalism on human psychology. Those damaging effects often appear in our relationship to the commodity. For Marxism, a commodity's value lies not in what it can do but in the money or other commodities for which it can be traded. An object becomes a commodity only when it has exchange value or sign–exchange value. Every commodity does have its relations to other commodities and social status. An object becomes a commodity only when it has exchange value, or sign exchange value and both forms of value are determined by the society in which the object is exchanged. Lukacs says that “Marx’s dialectical approach to it insures that his fuller subject is always capitalist society. The actual changes that occur in history are seen here as the outcome of opposing tendencies, or contradictions” (54). Marx's dialectic is materialist. Marx was primarily concerned with capitalism as lived rather than as thought about, but people's lives also involve consciousness.

Marx's materialism puts ideas back into the heads of living people. In this interaction, social conditions and behavior are found to have a greater affect on the character and development of people's ideas than these ideas do on social conditions and behavior. Lukacs argues:

Marx's specific theories are best understood as answers to his pointed questions about the nature and development of capitalism. In the theory of alienation, Marx gives us his answer to this question. Workers in capitalist society do not own the means—machines,

raw materials, factories. (37).

These are owned by the capitalists to whom the workers must sell their labor power or ability to do work, in return for a wage. This system of labor displays four relations that lie at the core of Marx's theory of alienation. The worker is alienated (or cut off) from his or her productive activity. The capitalist also sets the conditions and speed of work and even decides if the worker is to be allowed to work or not. According to Marx, "The worker is alienated from the product of that activity, having no control over what is made or what happens to it. The worker is alienated from other human beings, with competition and mutual indifference replacing most forms of cooperation"(Marx 213). This applies not only to relations with the capitalists but also to relations between individuals inside each class as everyone tries to survive as best he can.

In "The Devoted Friend", at one terrible and stormy night, the Miller requests Hans to fetch a doctor for his sick son. Returning from the doctor, Hans is lost on the moors in the storm and drowned in the sea. When a few days passes Hans' funeral, the Miller's only emotion is being sorry as he has been unable to dispose of the wheelbarrow. The story is told by a linnet to an intellectual water-rat, who fancies himself as a literary critic and at the same time the water-rat is sympathetic to the Miller rather than Hans. Miller utilizes Hans for material benefits. In this short story with a sad ending, the unenlightened or unpurified hero is punished; little Hans ought to die because he does not notice that he is only an object- matter of utilization for the miller; poor Hans has remained trapped in its illusion

Marx describes in his book *The German Ideology* what a commodity is. "It is something which can be exchanged for other things on the market - something which thereby has an exchange value" (67). Marx then distinguishes between the seemingly obvious appearance of that exchange value and its deeper, concealed truth. At first sight, exchange values appear to be

completely arbitrary. Marx, however, argues that if we look at the matter more closely we will see that all commodities have a property that explains their particular exchange values: the labour power that has been invested in them. Marx, however, insists that appearances are - once again - deceptive. Beneath the superficial differences there is "human labour in the abstract"(87).

The story provides contradiction of capitalist society, displayed through character roles. Hans is not sentimental; the tree is not generous; even Miller does not concentrate on Hans. He does not know patience and he doesn't want to undergo any suffering, unlike most classic friends. He has the potential factor of his final defeat in his inner self - egotism and a materialistic look, caused by pure science and rationality. He wants friend to materiality; he values the price of the friend according to scientific categorizations. "I have never seen any friend like it in all my life. He is beautiful that I am sure it has a long Latin name (Wilde 87)." Wilde's sarcastic ironies, hits the mind like a blow and prevents it from being drown in a lover's usually absurd vows and overflows. Wilde clearly tells us that these two characters, who normally play the main parts in every romance, do not deserve either to love or to be loved.

Marx is the dialectical materialist. He is known widely as the originator of the theory of historical evolution. The conflict between classes regarding to the ownership of productive forces of society paves the way for the evolution of human history. Marx gives us a theory of society. This theory gives an explanation of how society works and how and why history unfolds. This theory is an account of the nature of capitalism. These are of great value for the task of describing what is going on in the world and for understanding the problems and directions of our society today. But Marx also regarded capitalism as extremely unsatisfactory. He was very concerned with getting rid of it, via violent revolution. He is in favor of the establishment of a communist society. Marxism is therefore also about political goals and action.

Obviously very few people in western society today accept this second set of ideas. Most seem to think capitalism is desirable; most do not want to see it destroyed and most do not like the idea of revolution or communism. Terry Eagleton throws spotlight upon the doctrine of Marx.

Eagleton's view is mentioned in the following way:

Marx argued that the economic situation, the form of the productive system, is the most important determinant of all other aspects of the society. Matter has sovereign role in the determination of consciousness. Matter exerts pressures on the mind. Marx hardly imagines about the transcendental or autonomous consciousness. Hence, Marx is said to be a materialist. Marx rebelled against Hegel's philosophy in which ideas were taken to be the important determinants of history. Marx argued that dominant ideas are the result of material or economic conditions. He was therefore strongly opposed to reformers who thought that mere change in ideas could change society. (54)

The main types of society Marx distinguished are primitive, slave, feudal and capitalist. In a capitalist society capitalists own and control the productive resources, workers own only their labor and work for capitalists, who then own the product and sell it at a profit. The key to understanding a society at any point in history is to focus first on the mode of production. In feudal society, land was the crucial productive factor and the feudal lords owned and controlled it. In capitalist society capital, machinery, mines, factories etc. are the key productive factors and these are owned and controlled by capitalists.

In the whole story one-sided love can be witnessed as a major form of love where sometimes he calls it platonic and sometimes sacrificial love and sometimes courtly love, for instance he pointed out that; to like someone is better than loving someone so here, to prove this Wilde via personification insists that platonic love is better than family love because as he

believes that family love is not pure. Another view can be referred to the excuse for his own deeds because of his sexual affairs with Douglas although he had a family in his own life, so as in these sentences this fact is clearly understandable:

Ah! I know nothing about the feelings of parents,” said the Water-rat; “I am not a family man. In fact, I have never been married, and I never intend to be. Love is all very well in its way, but friendship is much higher. Indeed, I know of nothing in the world that is either nobler or rarer than a devoted friendship. I know the value of friendship (Wilde 218)

Hypocrisy is the parasite that chews at the foundations of every mansion this is a motion in contiguous progress to realize, to judge, to elude, to clean, never to convict, because there must always be forgiveness. As Miller asserted in this short story that people act well but not talk well it can be accepted as a criticism of Victorians for their attitudes and traits because hypocrisy is more than being dishonest and it goes deeper than moral failure.

Marx saw the relation of production might loosely regard as the type of productive technology the society has. In capitalist society, capitalists own society's productive resources and employ workers to operate these for a wage when capitalists think profits can be made. Scott Reetberg is the ardent supporter of Marxism. He makes the following utterances about Marx's doctrine of social progress and historical evolution:

Marx stressed the great increase in human welfare that economic growth under capitalism had brought. The new social relations of production begin to hinder the full development and ...production. These practices were inhibited although they eventually ... in production and benefits that capitalism brought. That is, the relations of production take a form in which control over ...in the hands of capitalists. (65)

These are major contradictions are reflected in the story. In the capitalist society, such

contradictions have been intrinsic in all characters. Each character has developed the contradictions that become more and more complex, to the point where they lead to revolutionary change. Therefore, the relation between the forces and the social relations of production and the consequences generates the major dynamic problems.

Hans represents, and takes a role of lower class. Having heard the passionate complains of Miller, he thinks that he has found a "true love" the hero of all those love-songs he is singing, and decides to help him. In this very scene, "Wilde uses an old but effective technique in artistic social critique through literature: microcosm" (Jameson 56). This miniature model of real world, which is created by an author as a comprehensive representation of a special group or society, has been used by a variety of writers as a symbol of the world from their perspectives. In this sense, a house can symbolize a real society, with appropriate roles for each of its members. For example, a father can symbolize a king or ruler, and his children who suffer under his ill-tempered manners can appear as subjects. The characters "introduced in this interlude of culminating despair, with Miller faced down the earth weeping, are a Green Lizard, a Butterfly, and a Daisy. All of them enter the story with an act which looks like compassion, but proves to be curiosity" (Jameson 57). When they all find out that Miller is weeping "for a friend", a thing contains nothing extraordinary for them, they just show a sign of astonishment and the cynic Lizard begins to laugh. But Hans who understands love and passion, wonders silently about the mysteriousness of love. Wilde uses this contradictory confrontation, or rather juxtaposition, to put emphasis on the contrast between the ignorance and shallow-mindedness of ordinary mass of people, who just live a plant- or animal-like life, and the awareness of conscious elite, who care about hidden meanings of the universe and life - and suffer of this understanding and the loneliness resulted by it.

For Marxism, literature does not exist in some timeless, aesthetic realm as a passive object. Literature grows out of and reflects real material historical conditions. Marxism offers critics to criticize the certain ideologies and their conditions of the time and place in which they are written. For some Marxists, realism is the best form for Marxist purposes because it clearly and accurately represents the real world, with all its socioeconomic inequalities and ideological contradictions. Literature based on reality encourages readers to see the unhappy truths about material historical reality. Marxist fans of realist fiction often have been inclined to reject nonrealistic, experimental fiction for being inaccessible to the majority of readers. Adorno states:

The Literature reflects the object without doing violence to it and “silently laments the fact that truth has betrayed happiness. An essay's rhetoric is fused with its truth content equivocation in the essay is used in order to clarify the unity of the differences between words the totality of its sentences must fit together coherently. By transgressing the orthodoxy of thought, something becomes visible in the object which it is orthodoxy's secret purpose to keep invisible. (56)

All Marxist theories assume that literature can only be properly understood within a larger framework of social reality. Marxism doesn't imagine literature in isolation from society and history. Marxism expects literature to be in close touch to society and history. Literature should reflect social contradictions, as the society exists in different forms of exploitation. All Marxists theories establish literature as a part of socio-political process. For Marxist, social reality is a distinct background out of which literature emerges. Each literary work has a definite shape and, this shape is found in history. Literature stands on series of struggles between antagonistic social classes.

Wilde exerts some fables by repeatedly using personification to teach people a lesson that

devoted friendship should be mutual and companionate and it should not be in a form of one-sided love. He asserts:

An intentional desire for the realization of truth is not only useful, it is essential. When desire is directed toward a high ideal of one's own choosing, and is sustained, it is called devotion. And what would you do in return? said the little bird, swinging upon a silver spray, and flapping his tiny wings. I and you, answered the Water-rat. Let me tell you a story on the subject, said the Linnet. (220)

Paradox is the other technique Wilde uses deliberately to criticize Victorian society where people are hypocrite and they are not honest and as a matter of fact their inside and outside are not the same. It is about not being true to oneself and most of the people value and yearn to be true to themselves:

How well you talk'! said the Miller's Wife, pouring herself out a large glass of warm alert ;really I feel quite drowsy. It is just like being in church. "Lots of people act well," answered the Miller; 'but very few people talk well, which shows that talking is much more difficult thing of the two, and much the finer thing also and he looked sternly across the table at his little son, who felt so ashamed of himself that he hung his head down, and grew quite scarlet, and began to cry into his tea. He was so young that you must excuse him. (223)

Hans' desire, an adventure associated with class-consciousness and self-promotion. So helpless without "a red rose" to impress the girl he is infatuated with, Miller regrets the futility of his education. This reveals that his education has not got any elements to ensure his intellectuality and maturity as a young man. "Ah, on what little things does happiness depend! I have read all that the wise men have written, and all the secrets of philosophy are mine, yet for want of a red

rose is my life made wretched” (Wilde 88) .Oscar Wilde ironically presents here the shortcoming of the bourgeois type education of Europe of his time. Dependence on material gifts for the sustenance of personal relationships signifies a primitive and immature level of thinking. In “The Teacher of Wisdom” , The story started from the point that when the man accumulated his remaining knowledge, he made a shelter in a cave where a Centaur settled down. Having lived in that shelter for a while, the hermit encountered a robber passing by. The robber was arrested by the hermit’s gaze. It was a look of regret because he had treasure more valuable than all of the thief’s stolen materials. The thief threatened the hermit, but the hermit would not submit his knowledge until the robber intimidated to sell his stolen treasure for the joy of the town. Eventually, the hermit gave away his remaining knowledge and passed away, but was then greeted by God, who told the man that he would now understand the perfect love of God , ‘The Teacher of Wisdom’ by Oscar Wilde has a history rooted in Capitalism. There are ample journals, books, and even some occasional movies that demonstrate Wilde’s work comment a bourgeois ideology (Packer 35). The teacher is presented as a capitalist who is accumulating money and house who uses children for utilitarian value when they bring spring in his garden.

The necessary starting point for an examination of Marx's theory of reification is the famous section in Chapter One of *Capital* entitled "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof." The notion of commodity fetishism which lies at the heart of Marx's theory of reification is introduced in the following passage:

A Commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labor is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between.

This I call the Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labor, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities (Marx72).

Marx notes that the relations of interdependence between individual commodity producers are not manifested as social relations, but appear instead in the "fantastic form" of relations between things. This "fantastic form" is the relative value (viz., exchange value) which commodities assume in the process of exchange. What is "mysterious" here is that, as a value, the commodity exhibits a property which cannot adequately be explained by any material or perceptible attribute of the object. The mystery is solved, however, once we recognize that value is an expression, not of any physical-technical characteristic of the object, but of the social relations with which it is connected in the commodity economy. Value is the "social form" which objects acquire as a consequence of the "peculiar social character of the labor that produces them" (Marx 72).

The point to be stressed here is the precise nature of the illusion or mystification which commodity fetishism implies. This illusion is not, as some have suggested, that human relations take on the appearance of relations between things. This, Marx makes clear, is nothing but an expression of the real nature of social relations in a competitive market economy. Individual producers do not confront one another directly as social beings, nor is their collective labor regulated by any common plan. Each contributes to the total social product solely on the basis of private calculations of individual advantage. Consequently, it is only through the relative values which are established among their products in the act of exchange (and individual actions responsive to those relative values) that each individual's labor is coordinated with that of the rest. Thus, social relations among individual producers not only take on the appearance of relations among things, they are in fact realized only through the relations among things. Marx

further extends:

As a general rule, articles of utility become commodities, only because they are products of the labor of private individuals or groups of individuals who carry on their work independently of each other. The sum total of the labor of all these private individuals forms the aggregate labor of society. Since the producers do not come into social contact with each other until they exchange their products, the specific social character of each producer's labor does not show itself except in the act of exchange. (Marx73).

Neither does the illusory nature of commodity fetishism lie in the fact that human relations appear subordinate to relations among things. This too is an expression of the real nature of social relations in a competitive market economy. Since individuals do not enter into productive relations with one another directly as social beings, but only as owners of particular things, the possession of things becomes a condition for and determines the nature of each individual's participation in the productive relations of society. Persons are thus reduced to functioning as representatives or "personifications" of the things in their possession, while productive relations among them become dependent upon the market relations that are established among those things (Marx 24).

“The Teacher of Wisdom” moves around a person who is very selfish by nature. In Wilde’s mesmerizing story of the teacher, the Teacher’s Soul ordered to at least let him take the Teacher’s heart because the world is a relentless place and hence it would be going to survive there with no heart. Even this request, however, is rejected because without a heart how the Teacher would love his mermaid bride. Therefore the teacher’s soul has no option but to go forth into the world without a heart. Each year, the Teacher’s Soul comes back to the edge of the sea and attempts to attract his lord out of the waters with splendid stories of the odd places that the

Soul has visited. When finally it manages in tempting the Teacher out of the waters, his Soul deceives him into doing many evil affairs.

He is tall, massive and looks ugly. He has massive land and property” (Korsh 67). Following lines elaborates about his bourgeois nature:

And after the space of some hours his disciples came near him and bowed themselves to the ground and said, ‘Master, talk to us about God, for thou hast the perfect knowledge of God, and no man save thee hath this knowledge.’ And he answered them and said, ‘I will talk to you about all other things that are in heaven and on earth, but about God I will not talk to you. Neither now, nor at any time, will I talk to you about God. (87)

Teacher’s efforts to dispose of his Soul that Wilde expands the story’s circle of meaning. The Priest whom he consults drives him from his door; the merchants mock him. The Teacher’s heart remains with the Mermaid, though he is separated from her. The Soul, sent into the world without a heart, has learned to love evil

In the section entitled "The Fetishism of Commodities" Marx begins by referring to the "mysterious" quality of commodities, which he also calls their "mystical character". The mystery is the ground of their exchange value. The reason why commodities have use values is obvious; the reason why commodities have particular exchange values is not. That is the mystery - a mystery solved finally (to Marx's satisfaction) by the "discovery" of abstract socially necessary labour time. Marx draws an analogy between the commodity and "the mist-enveloped regions of the religious world. In that world the productions of the human brain appear as independent beings endowed with life." The fetish is something in which a thing is thought to have powers which really belong to people. The commodity is a fetish insofar as it is thought to have a quality (exchange value) which seems to have a life of its own while in truth it is really a product of the

equivalence between qualitatively different forms of human labour. In Marx's explanation of why he calls this fetishism he initially highlights the mystery of exchange value and the failure of those without the right scientific understanding to see the connection with (abstract) human labour.

In "The Model Millionaire" Hughie Erskine, a handsome young man, hasn't been able to get his act together. He has tried many things to make a living, including being a stock trader and also a merchant. Hughie is in love with Laura Merton, the daughter of a retired merchant. Although the retired Colonel likes and approves of the young man, he will not give his daughter's hand in marriage unless Hughie is able to amass a wealth of £10,000, and then he will revisit the matter. Hughie does not have a profession and doesn't know how he will ever get the money. This story reflects how social relations, morality and marriage are commodified in capitalist society.

The story is the mirror of the modernist society. Each and everything is decided in terms of money. People get the marriage to secure the life in the future and people are being immoral and corrupted in the society, which aspects are captured the text. Shaw shows the modernist culture from the traditional social structure, society analyses everything from the viewpoint of social and economic status so that he excels in the representation of the modernist culture. The society dominates, controls and exploits such aspects are represented in the text. The protagonist of this story Hughie is a misfit in a mercantile world. He is at a loss in the world of bulls and bears.

Raymond Williams, a Welsh academic, developed the theoretical paradigm and research method about the class construct in the society. Embracing the political nature of Marx's theory and his critical focus on power and the class structure, Williams's class construction took aim at

how culture and cultural products relate to a class-based system of domination and oppression.

Williams further argues:

Straight incorporation is most directly attempted against the visibly alternative and oppositional class elements: trade unions, working-class political parties, working-class life styles...The process of emergence, in such conditions, is then a constantly repeated, an always renewable move beyond a phase of practical incorporation: usually made much more difficult by the fact that much looks like recognition, acknowledgement, and thus a form of acceptance. (124)

The working-class's perpetual struggle to destroy capitalism comes to a halt with the belief that the current system is good enough, insofar as it has been able to take into account the needs of the emergent working-class. The feeling that the current system, which was being challenged.

Williams express that relationship between base and superstructure is vague. More centrally, base and superstructure are taken as objective categories that exist in some sort of a hierarchical relationship of importance favoring the base. As Williams and Marx both tried to demonstrate, institutions, forms of consciousness, and institutional and political and cultural practices are inseparable from economic relations and practices, such that the two cannot be treated as separate entities. Williams concludes that the neither the base nor the superstructure can be considered as separate objects, as:

It is one of the central propositions of Marx's sense of history, for example, that in actual development there are deep contradictions in the relationships of production and in the consequent social relationships. There is therefore the continual possibility of the dynamic variation of these forces. The 'variations' of the superstructure might be deduced from this fact alone, were it not that the 'objective' implications of 'the base' reduce all such variations

to secondary consequences. (77)

Material production is for Marx only a subset of all productive forces, but it has been taken as representative of all productive forces in a society, such that production has been equated only with economic activity, in turn identified with the base that determines the superstructure (not in the sense of providing limits and pressures but in the reductive sense of reflection) thus giving rise to economism. Marx himself gives emphasis to material production because he is studying production under the system of capitalism, which sharply divides between material production and society, culture, and aesthetics, all of which could be considered types of production.

Hughie often visits his friend, Alan Trevor, a renowned painter, whose paintings are always in demand. Alan happens to like Hughie, and allows him to visit even while he is working. One day when Hughie is visiting, Alan is painting a beggar with a piteous and miserable look on his face. The two friends talk about the beggar and Hughie asks how much the model gets, and he learns that it is a shilling for an hour while Alan gets 2000 guineas for the painting. Hughie declares that the model works as hard as the painter and should earn more.

Nonsense, nonsense! Why, look at the trouble of laying on the paint alone, and standing all day long at one's easel! It's all very well, Hughie, for you to talk, but I assure you that there are moments when Art almost attains to the dignity of manual labour. But you mustn't chatter; I'm very busy. Smoke a cigarette, and keep quiet. (Wilde 87)

A servant informs Alan that the frame maker wants to speak to him. While he is gone, the beggar takes the time to rest his weary body. Hughie starts to speak to him, and feeling compassion he dips into his pocket and shares the little he has, thinking that the beggar needs it more than he does. The beggar is very grateful for the money. It's at a great sacrifice because that means that Hughie has no transportation for two weeks and will have to walk home. Is that such a bad

thing? Anyway, much later when he visits Laura and tells her what he did, she scolds him for being extravagant. He sacrifices all his compassion and desires and passions for Laura.

What Marx describes as the "illusory" aspect of commodity fetishism is the distorted manner in which this dialectic is experienced and apprehended from the standpoint of the individual producer. At this level, historically determined social relations of production take on, in the process of their materialization and personification, an appearance of naturalness or inevitability. Productive relations, to the extent that they are manifested not as relations between persons but relations between things, appear to be rooted in the inherent properties of things as natural objects. The fetishism of commodities is merely the most abstract and universal instance of a more general and pervasive fetishism encompassing all aspects of capitalist relations of production

Hughie meet up again later. The artist tells his friend that, after he left, the old man asked several questions about him. Alan goes on to say that he told the old man all about Hughie, Laura Merton and the condition which Colonel Merton set that prevents their marriage. Hughie is unhappy that his friend told "that old beggar" all about his private life. The amused Alan tells Hughie that the old man he was painting was Baron Hausberg, one of the wealthiest men in Europe and someone who often buys Alan's paintings.. The tattered clothes he was wearing were supplied by Alan. Hughie feels ashamed about having given a coin to a millionaire, although Alan tells him not to worry. Hughie based on his financial status without taking into consideration that Laura loves Hughie. While Laura and Hughie are very much in love and long to marry it is the Colonel who is dictating what will happen. His devotion to Laura is described as:

Hughie came in he found Trevor putting the finishing touches to a wonderful life-

size picture of a beggar-man. The beggar himself was standing on a raised platform in a corner of the studio. He was a wizened old man, with a face like wrinkled parchment, and a most piteous expression. Over his shoulders was flung a coarse brown cloak, all tears and tatters; his thick boots were patched and cobbled, and with one hand he leant on a rough stick, while with the other he held out his battered hat for alms. (Wilde 87)

Laura doesn't appear to have a voice. Which may be important as Wilde could be suggesting that women at the time the story was written may not necessarily have had a voice. Their futures determined by other people. In this case the Colonel. The compassion that Hughie shows the Baron is not mirrored by the Colonel's actions. He is determined that Hughie must have £10,000 before he is allowed to marry Laura. But this view of the contemporary society is challenged by Wilde. Here Wilde aims to modernize the contemporary culture. Love is a term meaning different things from generations to cultures. In Marriage and money are closely linked. Hughie accidentally meets the disguised Baron at Trevor's studio. Then he gets the chance to have an intimate exchange of feelings with the latter. Accidentally there is a sovereign in his pocket. Strangely enough the beggar turns out to be a millionaire. But we must not discard the story as based only on chance factors because we know that truth is stranger than fiction. Such chance factors are common in our life too. However, one question remains in the end: there is no doubt that without ten thousand pounds the marriage would not have taken place. On the other hand, it is also true that Hughie would not have got the prize from Baron had Hughie not shown his kindness to the beggar, the disguised Baron. Wilde is not an extremist. He believes that one must have a solid financial base to build the successful married life. On the other hand, he maintains that while following the ways of the world, one must not discard his cordial qualities completely.

The story "The Young King" is about a prince who is about to be crowned King. Yet, he

never lived the life of a prince before. This prince is an unclaimed son of the now dead King and, as a rule, he is the heir to the throne. Once he is brought to court, he is given all the rich luxuries of a future king. Yet, the night before his crowning, the boy has three nightmares involving the evils of Death, Avarice, the Plague, and Fever. In these dreams the young future King is clearly told that a lot of less fortunate people had to work hard at creating his jewels, and many sacrifice their lives so that the king could have all the things he needed on time for his coronation. Hence, the day of his coronation the boy wore the robes of a peasant, a stick instead of a sceptre, and a crown made of twigs. People around him felt ashamed of him and treated him disrespectfully, saying that he is embarrassing the upper classes. Yet, by this sacrifice something seemed to take place: The sun rose, and the boy's meagre clothing seemed to shine with the colors of the church glass. The stick grew into a beautiful vine, and in all it was as if the sacrifice showed the true beauty of his spirit. Even the bishop noticed this and gives validity to the kingship of the young king. He is hegemonized by upper class morality.

Hegemony is a concept whose meaning in Marxist theory stems from Gramsci, who differentiates hegemony from rule, which is power exerted through direct political and even coercive physical means. In everyday life, however, “the more normal situation is a complex interlocking of political, social, and cultural forces, and ‘hegemony’, according to different interpretations, is either this or the active social and cultural forces which are its necessary elements.” (108) Hegemony for Raymond Williams goes beyond the concepts of culture and ideology. Hegemony relates the whole social process to specific inequalities, demonstrating the necessary connection between social processes of creativity and dominance and subordination in societies, such that culture is revised to include aspects of inequality that affect the process of creativity. At the same time, hegemony emphasizes the wholeness of the process of cultural

creation, refusing to equate consciousness with a worldview of set of beliefs as with ideology.

He further asserts:

Hegemony is then not only the articulate upper level of 'ideology', nor are its form of control those ordinarily seen as 'manipulation' or 'indoctrination'. It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values – constitutive and constituting – which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming. (890)

For Williams, this understanding of hegemony has two advantages, first in that it corresponds the most closely to actual forms of social organization in modern societies than the classical Marxist conception of projections from the ruling class, and second, because it allows cultural activity to be seen not only as tradition but also as practice. Culture is no longer relegated to the superstructure, but is in fact that ways in which individuals become conscious of their identities and of the social and economic activities of the societies in which they live. Modernist society judged females as the docile objects to entice the males. This view was powerful in case of the love and marriage when the females were supposed to be passive and silent.

The young king who lives in opulence and extravagance has an epiphany through a dream, realizing that the golden and expensive robe he is to wear for coronation was paid for by the sacrifice of the poor, and with money that could have gone somewhere necessary. Hence, like a born-again Saint, the young king decides to wear robes instead of the kingly cape, and adopt a martyr-like pose for his coronation. Bringing shame to those around him, he is nearly killed until an apparent miracle occurs and what seems to be the presence of Christ in the church shines through his jewels, and makes all bright up. This, is a symbol of the commodification;

people respected him only after recognizing his power.

Wilde is able to critique and comment on society through narratives, leaving his imprint on the very fabric of society. Wilde reflects the reality of the contemporary society. Throughout the stories, characters are continuously recognized for who they are through different factors such as how they are dressed, their manners, how they speak, morality or their money. It is however noticeable that a combination of all factors is rarely to be found. The idea of ranking individuals based upon their wealth and behaviors has endured through all cultures, countries, and times. Wilde addresses an individual's capability to advance through society, an idea as old as social distinction.

In conclusion, Wilde's selected stories represent the modernist virtue of money, marriage and morality. Wilde presents these themes with the help of different characters from working class to upper class. The modernist practices of money, marriage and morality get highly institutionalized during the period the stories were written. We observe a society divided, separated by language, education, and wealth. Wilde gives us a chance to see how that gap can be bridged, both successfully and unsuccessfully. As he portrays it, London society cannot simply be defined in terms of upper and lower class but also it is necessary to address their behaviours and culture. Within each group there are smaller less obvious distinctions, and it is in the middle, in that gray area between wealth and poverty that many of the most difficult questions arise and from which the most surprising truths emerge. Wilde also represents the issue of females. Back when Wilde wrote Wilde, women could not vote in the United Kingdom; in 1918 women over the age of 30 were given the right, and it took another ten years for all women to be given a voice. Wilde's depiction of Laura and attitudes toward them is impressively and sometimes confusingly varied. They are shown in conventional roles as mothers and

housekeepers and as strong-willed and independent. The selected stories pays special attention to the problem of lower class people's place in society .They are highly marginalized and excluded in capitalist society.Wilde forces us to think this through his selected stories. Some characters want to change who they are, others don't want to change at all. Things get even more difficult when they effort to avoid exclusion. The selected stories want to justify the other aspect of capitalism where lower class people are always the matter of utility for the benefit of capitalists.

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