

DEONTOLOGICAL ANALYSIS ON
OSCAR WILDE'S SELECTED FAIRY TALES

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APPROVAL FORM

This research paper attached hereto, entitled “Deontological Analysis on Oscar Wilde’s Selected Fairy Tales” prepared and submitted by “Kiang Chyu Vey” in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts (Hons) English Language is hereby accepted.

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ABSTRACT

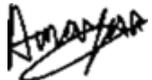
Classic fairy tale authors often use death for moral lessons due to its association with punishment towards evil characters for their actions. But Oscar Wilde's fairy tales contradict the typical connotation of deaths, whereby his own characters experienced death or physical disfigurement. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the theme of morality in Wilde's selected fairy tales based on the deontological approach. This study addressed the relationship between the personalities and actions of Wilde's main characters, followed by the consequences which comprise death and/or physical disfigurement. In addition, the study will determine the moral permissibility of the characters' maxims underlying their actions in application of Kantian Ethics. Based on the findings, Kantian theory suggests that the actions of Wilde's main characters are motivated by their desires that reflect their personalities which comprises their principles and beliefs. The study also addressed the consequences of their actions that contradict the general connotations of death. Besides, the analysis suggests that the maxims underlying the actions of Wilde's characters could be categorised into "for duty" and "for other means". Readers would be able to use a deontological approach to understand a character without consideration of the typical "right versus wrong" principle.

DECLARATION

I declare that the material contained in this paper is the end result of my own work and that due acknowledgement has been given in the bibliography and references to ALL sources be they printed, electronic or personal.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

Fairy tales have been used by authors to convey certain moral lessons through the portrayal and actions of the main characters which reflect their morals and beliefs. Over the years, authors integrate morality with their tales that have accompanied many people in their lives as they are often used to educate readers (Abler, 2005), commonly through the consequences of the characters' actions which could reveal their personalities. In some cases, the authors instill moral lessons into their work with the addition of grisly consequences for the actions of certain characters (Abler, 2005). Characters such as the witch in *Hansel and Gretel* (1812), the wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood* (1812), and the evil queen in *Snow White* (1812) are rewarded by the authors with death as a form of fair punishment due to their actions. This is when readers make their judgements based on their own beliefs and morals that may differ from the authors'. In regard to this matter, this study aims to highlight the theme of morality in Oscar Wilde's fairy tales, which have contradicted the central themes of the stories they evoke. They reject the generic happily-ever-after concept of classic fairy tales, and a shift occurs in the story when the characters make certain decisions that may challenge the readers' morals and beliefs. Consequently, the characters experience death, denial, or physical disfigurement.

Morality often acts as an unconscious system of behaviour when people make certain decisions on the basis of certain standards of right or wrong. It describes the principles that govern the behaviours of people who often use it to make a morally acceptable choice among several alternatives or to justify an action. Depending on where it originates, the conscience is where the concepts of right and wrong are programmed in each individual. Although morality is said to belong to certain religious points of view, Gert (2005) argues that this belief originates from the false equation of morality with the customs or standards of a particular society,

resulting in equating morality with the code of conduct adopted by that society, especially with its legal system (p. 387). As a result, this explains why some believe that morality is limited within the same society despite the significant variations of morality.

Furthermore, this study will utilise of deontological ethics such as Kantian Ethics in Wilde's fairy tales to examine the morality of the main characters' actions. In his work *The Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant (1999) stated that an action does not result from reason or its conditions in accordance with empirical laws, but it results from the internal effects of that reason towards an individual which precedes the act (p. 185). Based on this statement, the reason for an action is not subjected to the conditions of time. Rather, its causality relationship is subservient to certain phenomena consisting of a series of causes and effects occurring at particular moments. These phenomena are intelligible and not subjected to any sensuous conditions or determined by time. Therefore, the morality of an action – including its merit and conduct – is unknown to the individual, and can only be judged based on the result of an action conducted by the individual's will free from any obligations or expectations.

For this study, the five Wilde's fairy tales chosen are "The Happy Prince" (1888), "The Nightingale and the Rose" (1888), "The Selfish Giant" (1888), "The Devoted Friend" (1888), and "The Birthday of the Infanta" (1891). The main characters acted in certain situations where they believe that their actions could serve a greater good to others. But mentioned in the Kantian Ethics, morality is not about being happy after carrying an act, and rather about being worthy of the happiness that derives from the act itself, which was not what the characters received at the end as the main characters in the five short tales experienced deaths as a result of their actions.

1.2 Statement of problem

Fairy tale writers often incorporate morality into their work. They depict certain moral values through the actions of their main characters, as well as their interactions with the other characters in the story. This can be done by putting two powerful, yet opposing, forces into play – good and evil. According to Brand (2001), ‘the dichotomy of good and evil provides readers with an experience in moral education’ (p. 15), allowing them to evaluate them based on their own judgement or morality. He added that classic fairy tales such as ones from The Brothers Grimm’s *Children's and Household Tales* (1812), later titled *Grimm’s Fairy Tales*, often show that evil loses out to good, and readers – especially children – tend to be attracted to the good deeds of the hero or heroine. While fairy tales are not necessarily virtuous, nor are they examples of the way of a moral life, they still act as a guide to a certain extent. They assist in interpreting the rules that societies’ conventions have set through the main characters’ personalities and actions, which are further justified by the consequences that reflect the conventions of society.

Morality explains why certain actions are considered right or wrong in certain situations. It provides individuals with a framework that allows them to think, discuss, and then evaluate specific moral issues in a given situation. Individuals often evaluate those moral issues based on the concept of right or wrong that is independent of what determines such judgements. As everyone makes their own judgement according to their own morality, what seems to be right to one person may be considered as wrong to another. Thus, there is a need to take into consideration the subjective definitions of morality, especially in investigating its theme in fairy tales which often has elements of “good versus evil”. As argued by Churchland (2013), morality is subjective and stems from the complexity of an individual’s interactions and emotions. Over the years, morality has branched into moral theories such as virtue ethics (Rachels & Rachels, 2018; Alavudeen et al., 2008), contractarianism (Hobbes, 1998; Gauthier,

1986), utilitarianism (Bentham, 1781; Mill, 2015), and deontological ethics (Scruton, 2017; Wierenga, 1983). Albeit the differences, each theory provides individuals an unconscious guide in many phenomena in their lives.

In his fairy tales, Oscar Wilde would let readers know why the main characters in his fairy tales would commit certain acts; whether it is to help others or to gain something for their own self-interest. But the reason behind the deaths of these characters are due to their moral obligations, where they had some form of expectations or desires and did something not out of their own will; or the Good Will, which states that morality is based on rationalism or reason. As Kant stated in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1997), anything in this world or beyond can be considered to be good without limitation only when there is a good will (p. 7). An action is regarded as moral only if it is done out of one's own moral duty, not out of sympathy, pleasure, or the desire for personal happiness. In the case of Wilde's fairy tales, there is a need to address whether the actions of main characters resulted from their own will to do something – which may have benefited themselves, others or society – and how this justifies the consequences the characters had to face towards the end of the stories.

Therefore, this study proposes to identify the actions and its relation to the personalities of the main characters from Wilde's fairy tales. Based on the actions taken by the characters in certain situations, this study proposes to investigate their consequences. Using Kantian Ethics, this study proposes to evaluate the intentions that prompt the main characters of Wilde's fairy tales to make certain decisions.

1.3 Research objectives

1. To examine the relation between the personalities and the actions of the main characters from Oscar Wilde's fairy tales.

2. To discuss the consequences of the actions taken by the main characters of Oscar Wilde's fairy tales in a certain situation.
3. To justify the reason behind the actions that prompt the main characters of Oscar Wilde's fairy tales to make certain decisions based on Kantian Ethics.

1.4 Research questions

1. What is the relation between the personalities and actions of the main characters from Oscar Wilde's fairy tales?
2. What are the consequences behind the actions taken by the main characters of Oscar Wilde's fairy tales in a certain situation?
3. What are the reasons behind the actions that prompts the main characters of Oscar Wilde's fairy tales to make certain decisions based on Kantian Ethics?

1.5 Significance of the study

Oscar Wilde was known for resisting the strong sense of morality in Victorian society through his works which reflect his radical beliefs and reclusive behaviour. His challenge to the Victorian sexual conservativeness has enabled the twentieth century to embrace his insights and arguments about morality. As Europe was expanding overseas the dynamic social and cultural transformations, society was looking towards writers or thinkers such as Wilde who were liberated from the conventions of the nineteenth century bourgeoisie. As a writer during the late 1800's, Wilde used his works to question the aestheticism of Christianity and the moral obligation enforced by the Victorian bourgeoisie. The austere Victorian code of conduct and its practice by members of the British society prompted questions about what morality truly is; what did right or wrong mean when those who upheld the highest social code in society turned out to have, what society perceived as, lower moral values behind closed doors.

Given how morality was defined based on the code of conduct in the nineteenth century, the purpose of this study is to discuss the theme of morality in Wilde's fairy tales using one of the theories of deontological ethics – Kantian Ethics. At this stage of the research, readers would be provided with a new approach in analysing the characters based on their actions which could be influenced by their personalities. From this connection, readers can deduce the consequences of the main characters' actions which mainly consisted of death or physical disfigurement. As this study involves Kantian Ethics, readers would be able to understand the main reasons behind the actions committed by the characters, and whether they were done out of their own will or obligation.

Moreover, readers of Wilde's fairy tales will be provided with an understanding of moral theories that guides readers in making moral judgements when faced with situations of moral dilemma. This new understanding could educate readers on applying certain moral theories when making judgement in a particular situation, rather than basing their justifications on the surface concept of right or wrong. As Kantian Ethics suggests, the merits and demerits of an action is not determined by the consequences of the actions as long as the individual has only good will. Through the analysis of the characters' actions and its reasons using Kantian Ethics, readers could apply the principle of Good Will in their lives, whereby they carry out an act out of their own will and intentions without any expectations or desires.

1.6 Definition of terms

1. Fairy tale – A story used to convey moral, social or political lessons to educate and sometimes frighten readers – children and adults – into compliance through the grisly descriptions of the consequences for wrong actions (Abler, 2005).
2. Morality – Gert (2005) describes *morality* as a universal guide which governs one's behaviour that affects others and its goal is to reduce evil or harm.

3. Deontological ethics – According to this moral theory, the morality of an action is determined based on the characteristic of the action itself, not because the consequence is right or wrong (“Deontological ethics”, 2020).
4. Kantian Ethics – Kant (1999) argues that good or bad is not determined by the consequential action, but the motivation or incentive preceding the act that is unconscious to an individual (p. 185)..
5. The Good Will – “A good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes, because its fitness to attain some proposed end; but only because of its volition [...] it is good in itself” (Kant, 1997, p. 8).

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the study

This study involves five out of the nine Oscar Wilde’s fairy tales, namely “The Happy Prince” (1888), “The Nightingale and the Rose” (1888), “The Selfish Giant” (1888), “The Devoted Friend” (1888), and “The Birthday of the Infanta” (1891). In these five stories, the main characters committed certain actions that readers would perceive as morally good or have good behaviours. However, at the end of the stories the characters experience either death or physical disfigurement; these are aspects in classic fairy tales commonly used by authors to educate readers on the consequences of certain actions. Not only this study will focus on the characters who commit the acts, their personalities which affect the actions committed in a particular situation, as well as the consequences, will be included to determine the extent of morality in the stories. To analyse the reasons for those actions, this study will incorporate one of Kant’s principles, the Good Will, to determine whether the characters were committing those acts for the benefits of either the self, others or society.

There are a few limitations to this study. In the case of Oscar Wilde’s fairy tales, “The Remarkable Rocket” (1888) and “The Young King” (1891) are not included because the main

characters did not die as a result of their actions. Although the main characters in “The Fisherman and His Soul” (1891) and “The Star-Child” (1891) go through death and/or physical disfigurement, the stories are not chosen because the characters go through trials which determine the morality of their actions and there is no clear indication of who either provides or receives the moral treatments. The intentions or motives of the main characters’ actions may be ambiguous to readers, but this study will not take into consideration the readers’ interpretation and the underlying meaning conveyed by the author in the chosen fairy tales, as Kantian Ethics considers such information as extraneous and that the situations should be investigated merely as individual scenarios.

1.8 Conclusion

As stated by Kant’s principle of the Good Will, this study will determine if the action is considered moral regardless of the characters’ personalities and actions as depicted in the short stories. Therefore, Chapter 1 introduces the general idea of classic fairy tales, how authors instill moral lessons through characterisation in their stories, how different they are from the ones written by Wilde, as well as Kantian Ethics and its application in this investigation. Chapter 2 reviews the histories and studies relating to fairy tales and morality, Wilde’s tales, and his theory on the integration of arts and morality. Chapter 3 introduces the research procedure to investigate Wilde’s fairy tales while applying Kantian Ethics. In Chapter 4, this study will highlight the analysis of Oscar Wilde’s selected short stories on the main characters’ personalities and the influence on their actions, the consequences, as well as the reasons behind the actions which led to those consequences. Chapter 5 discusses how those reasons or intentions justify the actions, and evaluates their morality based on Kantian Ethics and the principle of the Good Will.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The definition of morality went through many changes; from the insights and arguments of Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, to Bentham, Kant and Mill from the Victorian era. In this chapter, the study will describe the changes of the fairy tale genre from the generic classic tales to the ones produced by literary authors such as Oscar Wilde, and the transformation of morality which led to the various moral theories which continue to exist today, especially Kantian Ethics which will be incorporated into this study. Moreover, this chapter will highlight how fairy tale authors use their works to instill the moral values which reflect the social standards of their own society, and how Wilde's fairy tales vary from them. The second chapter will also review the studies on classic fairy tales, Wilde's fairy tales, and the relation between aesthetics and morality in Wilde's tales.

2.2 Fairy tales

Long before printing contributed to the widespread use of literary works, the fairy tale genre is believed to be the product of folklore told or enacted for millennia. As its oral tradition has been passed down from one generation to another, its origin remains obscure. However, Jones (2002) suggests that fairy tales are mere retellings of folklore into literary forms. Despite the replication of the oral texts, fairy tales are altered to the extent of tampering with the texts. For this reason, fairy tale collections are a form of fairy tale different from its oral tradition (pp. 32–43). Nevertheless, there are evidences found 'in early ancient manuscripts that reveal how people came to know the world through metaphor, ritual, custom, and transformation' (Zipes, 2012, p. 170); these elements are often found in fairy tales. Even before people learned how to write and identify various narrative structures, both literary and oral fairy tales often consisted of plot, characters, themes, and a distinctive style in which they were told. Citing Nurse, Zipes

(2012) highlights that some of the fairy tales catered for the Western audience originated from the oral and literary traditions of foreign folktales. As collections of foreign folktales provide frameworks for certain literary works, they are translated before scholars, storytellers and scribes record and shape the tales from these collections; this creates either a new framework or a framework similar to that of the original tales (pp. 169–173).

There are certain characteristics that are distinctive to the fairy tale genre. Besides their anonymous authorship, both written and oral traditions of fairy tales have character archetypes, which are commonly distinguished in accordance with the theme of “good versus evil” regardless if the character was a human or another being, and the “good wins” is the rule of thumb in fairy tales (Dan & Kauffmann, 2013). Besides stereotypical characters, there is a common structure found in fairy tales. As observed by Dan and Kauffmann (2013), the antagonist disrupts the lives of the community in the story and the protagonist goes on a quest to restore the order. At the end of the story, the protagonist triumphs with both the help of several side characters and their own ingenuity. Apart from that, Brewer (2003) notes that in some cases such as the classic fairy tales, the protagonist often recovers through a ‘magical’ event after committing some form of crime, resulting in the protagonist having their wish fulfilled; finding their true love; or an unexpected escape. Fairy tale endings often mention how the characters live happily ever after, although sometimes the ending could be the opposite. Regardless of the numerous origins and structures, fairy tales incorporate morality in their stories as means of implicating social wisdom of the community which acts as the standard of human behaviour (p. 15).

According to Zipes (2000), the fairy tale genre was believed to be popularised during the Renaissance by writers such as Giovanni Francesco Straparola and Giambattista Basille (pp. xi–xii). As fairy tales began to reach a wider audience in European countries, the genre was conventionalised by two prominent and dominating collections – Charles Perrault’s *Tales*

of *Olden Times* (1697) and the Grimm Brothers' *Children's and Household Tales* (1812–1857). As observed by Jones (2002), literary authors in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries began to produce a new form of the fairy tale genre. These authors use the generic fairy tale model to create original stories which imitate its oral tradition (p. 33).

2.3 Oscar Wilde's fairy tales

The Victorian era (1820–1914) gave way to Britain's recognition as the most powerful empire due to the rapid change and developments (Steinbach, 2019). As the cradle of the Industrial Revolution in the eighteenth century, Britain was making progress in industrialisation, especially in textiles and machinery, as well as overseas trade and export which generated profit for the British merchants (Ward, 1994). However, the Victorian society was also dominated by the insurmountable class distinction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat; a result of the radical shift in Britain's economic dependency which was moving from agricultural trade to mass production (O'Brien, 1996). Besides social classes, Steinbach (2019) notes that gender classes played a massive role in how Victorian society viewed morality. Men were viewed as the physically strong, independent gender who belonged to the public sphere where they were meant to earn a living for their family. On the other hand, women were said to be physically weak and depended on men, while they belonged in the private sphere running the households and raising their families. In short, morality during the Victorian era was bound to the strict code of conduct – based on the social values of class and gender – the British society was expected to adhere to.

Oscar Wilde was associated with the Aesthetic Movement in the late nineteenth century (Humaish, 2017). During this movement, the aesthetic values for any form of art, such as music, literature and fine art, was more important than its underlying meaning (Fargis, 1998; Denney, 2000). According to Humaish (2017), Wilde believed that art could affect an individual's life,

but the scandal involving his homosexuality led to his downfall. Besides being known as an aesthete who subverted the traditional Victorian social values, Wilde's position as an Irish writer enabled him to challenge the contemporary approaches to the Victorian constructions of childhood. According to Kline (2003), pre-modern children's literature was regarded as a moralistic and conservative medium used to teach children the traditional social norms and positive values through conduct and behaviour, education, religion, and entertainment (pp. 2–9).

Wilde's biographers and critics wrote that he was torn between two choices – John Ruskin and the moral and didactic nature of art; and Walter Pater's purely aesthetic and hedonistic influence under the doctrine 'Art for Art's Sake' (Goldfarb, 1962; Dirkmeier, 2006). Although Wilde expounded Pater's doctrine through his essays, his works show more of Ruskin's belief in the supremacy of art as a philosophy that can make a big difference in life. In the two collections *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) and *A House of Pomegranates* (1891), Wilde was creating a new form of the fairy tale genre by merging popular folklore and contemporary literary styles in adult and children's literature. Based on a study conducted by Thompson (2009), Wilde objected psychological realism, and his fairy tales rejected many of the generic conventions of classic fairy tales. Instead, his tales consisted of signifiers with underlying meanings, the use of complex language and narrative style, and characterisation without the generic theme of "good versus evil". Although his works demand readers to use a critical approach in understanding the conveying morality, Wilde asserted that this does not mean that hedonism through art is immoral, and that people should live for pleasure as it gives them happiness and the joy of living (Wilde, 2014).

2.4 Morality

According to Long and Sedley (1987), morality is a system an individual is provided with to disjoin what they perceive as proper and improper conducts (pp. 366–367). As stated by Hare (1965), when moral judgements are universalised by the person making the judgement, morality is then said to be associated with the behaviour a person regards as most important, and it acts as a standard that everyone has to adhere and govern one's conduct in accordance with those universal rules (pp. 30–31). On the other hand, Churchland (2013) argues that morality is neither intelligible nor an object. It is derived from an individual's complex social interactions, whereby morality emerges due to the individual's both positive and negative feelings which reflect how they feel and think about certain kinds of human behaviour (p. 85). However, because an individual's own personal reason cannot make them carry out acts that they perceive to be irrational unless they are prompted to do so, Gert (2005) suggests that it should be limited to motivating beliefs (p. 392). Hence, morality impacts people's decisions that prompt them to act in certain ways, and those choices are directed by their conscience. Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, involves the definition of the concepts of right and wrong. It acts as a guide that people can use in their lives in understanding, justifying and recommending human behaviour.

There are four main ethical theories which evaluate the morality of an action. One of the theories is virtue ethics. Aristotle said that virtue refers to 'a trait of a character manifested in habitual action', but Rachels and Rachels (2018) argue that this definition is not enough as it 'does not distinguish virtue from vice', which is also a trait of character manifested in habitual action (pp. 161). Therefore, they define virtue as 'a commendable trait of character manifested in habitual action', which allows others to seek for that virtuous person due to the belief that they can prosper in life (pp. 161–167). Virtue ethics highlights that morality is derived from the nature of the person's identity or character, whereby right and wrong are determined by

how the person acts in accordance with the traditional virtues. Based on this theory, Alavudeen et al. (2008) concludes that the person is judged based on their character which includes the person's morals, reputation, and motivation instead of an action that deviates from their normal behaviour, which may be considered unethical (pp. 43–44).

According to the ethical theory of contractarianism, moral norms stem from the idea that people are subservient to the government and/or authority in a particular society. Hobbes (1998) states that the words or actions of humans are limited by their own necessities, and thus, they have the natural liberty to say or do anything; including the liberty to harm those who threaten their self-interests (pp. 139–140). Therefore, a social contract is necessary to bind the actions of mankind to attain peace and preserve the social order, which could be done through the formation of civil laws and social structures (pp. 140–141). Gauthier (1986), who supports Hobbes's view of contractarianism, asserts that morality arises from an individual's own rational self-interest, and because humans are believed to have no natural harmony of interests, they should maximise their interests through cooperation with others on the assumption that the others should reciprocate (pp. 13–15). Based on Gauthier's model for social contract, two independent and self-interested individuals can achieve optimal utility if they adhere to the original arrangement which they negotiated, as well as the moral rules outlined by the contract (pp. 117–119).

Utilitarianism is one of the ethical theories espousing consequentialism, which states that morality stems from the consequences of an act. An action is regarded as morally right as long as it produces the most pleasure to the person while minimising pain. Bentham (1781) recognises the fundamental role of pain and pleasure, labelling them as two sovereign masters who govern what people ought to do, say, and think (p. 14). As they have strong connections with the standard of right and wrong and the following series of causes and effects, people's actions are judged on the basis of the amount of pain or pleasure brought upon them. This

school of thought promotes the maximisation of utility, which Bentham (1781) defines as well-being or concepts which maximises benefits or happiness and reduces sufferings or unhappiness (pp. 14–15). On the other hand, Mill (2015) contends that the overall human happiness is desirable because it is people themselves who desire for their own happiness and believe that it is attainable (pp. 148). Hence, if the individual happiness is good for that person, then the overall human happiness must be worth pursuing because it is merely a fraction of the happiness of all persons (p. 149–150).

Deontological ethics, also known as deontology, highlights the relationship between duty and the morality of human actions (“Deontological ethics”, 2020). In contrast to consequentialist theories such as Utilitarianism, actions are considered morally right based on the intentions behind the actions carried without considering the consequences. When defining contemporary deontological ethics in his work *On Human Nature*, Scruton (2017) implies that proportionality and obligation are crucial components of the way people act (pp. 66–82). He also defends the field of “natural law” which is accepted by the negotiating parties, and believes that virtue ethics and deontological ethics are linked due to their own nature (pp. 89–111). Another formulation of deontological ethics is the divine command theory. According to Wierenga (1983), the divine command theory states that what God commands is coextensive with what actions are right. The rightness of an action is evaluated when it is performed as obligatory, not because such action would result in good consequences.

2.5 Kantian Ethics

Kantian Ethics is a deontological theory developed by German philosopher Immanuel Kant as a result of the Enlightenment, which dominated the intellect and philosophy of Europe in the eighteenth century (Bristow, 2017). Kant did not intend to specify what people ought to do, but according to Singer (2001) Kant believed that reason is the main determinant of how

people should behave, and therefore people ought to act morally in accordance with rationality. According to this theory, an action is considered morally good only when the underlying motives follow the universal law of reason and morality; one commits an act because it is one's duty and one should do it for its own sake (pp. 39–42).

Kant (1998) constructed the basis for his ethical theory in accordance to the concept of duty, arguing that “a good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes, because its fitness to attain some proposed end; but only because of its volition [...] it is good in itself” (p. 8). Qualities of temperament such as understanding, wit, judgement, and so on are admirable and desirable to many, but the person can make use of such qualities to achieve harmful or immoral ends when the will behind their action is not good (p. 7). Therefore, the only virtue that can be qualified as good is a good will. As mentioned by Benn (1998), the moral value of the good will remains unassailable even if it does not achieve its intended results, regardless of the external circumstances (pp. 101–102). In short, Kant rejects the idea that characterising one's moral obligations through several independent virtues, and a good will requires a single moral principle which freely chooses to conform, such as deciding when and how to use these virtues for moral ends (Guyer, 1994, p. 194).

Moreover, Kant's ethics revolves around an objective, rationally necessary and unconditional principle that people must always follow regardless of their desires – the categorical imperative (Johnson & Cureton, 2004). Based on this principle, even if one intends to be truthful, everyone has a duty to not lie despite the circumstances. Driver (2007) states that the categorical moral law is an imperative – also known as a command or an order – which binds the individual regardless of their desires because such obligations are based in reason rather than desire (pp. 82–83). The formulation of the categorical imperative is universalizability which Kant (1999) states that one should act according to a maxim, which is the person's intention behind the act. An act is qualified to be a moral law if one's maxim is

universalised and thus allows everyone to commit the act based on that maxim. When the result is either a contradiction in conception or a contradiction in the will when universalised, the maxim fails and hence becomes immoral (pp. 14–31).

2.6 Morality in fairy tales

The theme of good and evil is commonly associated with fairy tales, and according to Benediktsdóttir (2014), the instances the authors create influence the behaviours of readers which, in turn, affects the social constructions of society (pp. 5–8). Children are taught life lessons through the portrayal of the main characters in the stories and the perceptions of good or evil based on the consequences of the actions taken by these characters. Readers intently follow the progress of the story by putting themselves in the place of the main characters. They are placed in situations in which they themselves have seldom, or never, experienced in real life. In fairy tales, characters often go through many challenges that are viewed as risky or dangerous, and it is through the authors' creative narration that is able to arouse emotions from the readers as they use their imagination to create their own narratives (Mathies, 2019). At the same time, these authors project their beliefs and messages to readers based on their moral subjectivism, whereby morality is subjective as it is decided by the individuals themselves. However, in stories that contradict with the generic "good versus bad" theme such as Howard Pyle's *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883), fairy tales could challenge the readers' morality as they are left to identify and interpret the characters' underlying intentions or motivations for their actions.

Oscar Wilde's fairy tales appear to contradict with these generic "good versus evil" themes of classic fairy tales. The main characters faced death at the end even though readers would perceive these characters to have good behaviours or that their actions were morally good. Death in pre-modern fairy tales and other children's literature adds ubiquity and drama

to the plot, but Lamers (1995) notes that the usage of death in stories have changed, thus protecting children from the nature of death. In the case of Wilde's fairy tales, the main characters are faced with denial or death that are commonly associated with the dominant "good versus evil" theme in classic fairy tales. Some of Wilde's fairy tale characters avoid death when faced with situations that challenge their decisions based on their morality, while some experience real suffering and its accompanying implications as a result of their decisions. In this sense, actions made by the main characters bring an abrupt change in Wilde's fairy tales, disrupting the fairy-tale-world aesthetic and the generic happily-ever-after. Apart from death, the main characters in Wilde's fairy tales were faced with denial or physical disfigurement; and these consequences were usually given to seemingly immoral or evil characters (Tatar, 2002). The usage of these aspects in Wilde's tales contradicts the conventions of classic fairy tales where authors reward their main characters who have good behaviours and done good deeds with happy endings.

2.7 Review of past studies

While fairy tales or other forms of literature have been used as tools to instill beliefs and morals of where it originates from, Patton (2013) argues that they have the potential to infiltrate readers, especially the younger and more impressionable ones. In the nineteenth century, fairy tale authors recognised their roles in dispensing moral values to their younger audiences, and exploited it through catering their works with children's literature to continuously preserve the concept of deontological ethics. However, such theories could include the numerous decades of normalising intolerance, discrimination and abuse, and in hopes of elevating it, revisions have been made by modern authors who advocate for utilitarianism. According to Patton (2013), many of the pre-modern works such as the *Grimm's Fairy Tales* institutionalised "cultural norms, gender roles, and other various social

idiosyncrasies”. These fairy tales reinforced the patriarchal values of the society that crafted them, which were based on sexuality and gender, through the creation of “an ideal image of how men and women should behave” (Zipes, 2006, p. 194). Children may be susceptible to such patriarchal values, as they lack proper guidelines to help them evaluate these morals and beliefs. They are unable to critically analyse fairy tales with polarising messages reflecting the patriarchal values of society, and may integrate these values into their lives which, in turn, could perpetuate the oppression of women from roles deemed too masculine.

Although there was a lack of equitability between genders in classic fairy tales, it is important to take into account the historical context of these fairy tales. In the case of Grimm’s Fairy Tales, the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) caused great political and social turbulences, fracturing the German-speaking realm (Luu, 2018). Many German Romantics, including the Brothers Grimm, were driven by nationalism and wanted to highlight their homeland and heritage through the compilation of its history, language, and folklore. *Grimm’s Fairy Tales* was a compilation of folktales gathered from ‘all over the country, regardless of how violent, offensive, or grim’ (Luu, 2018). These stories were told by peasants, whom the German Romantics believed to be the closest to nature and God due to their simple ways of life, making them the best sources for folktales. Similar to the tales of Charles Perrault, fairy tales during that time were written for the upper-class social circles as literary or moral teaching materials, with the language ‘written to be read by the educated classes’ (Luu, 2018). Classic fairy tales were often used as an academic anthology for scholars of their own culture, not as bedtime stories for young readers (Hernández, 2019). Although there are fairy tales that reinforce the patriarchal values of masculinity and femininity, Zipes (2006) mentions that it is somewhat a simplification to list down the stereotypes of heroes and heroines of these fairy tales (p. 194). The emphasis of deontological ethics was the intention of the individual’s actions without consideration of gender or ethnicity of the characters in these fairy tales.

Killeen (2007) connects Oscar Wilde's two collections of fairy tales to the social, political, and religious plight of the Irish people in the second half of the nineteenth century. First, the five stories of *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) are connected to issues revolving the poor Irish Catholics. In the title story, the Happy Prince and the Swallow went through moral transformations when helping the poor, and were recognised by God due to their actions. Citing Guy Willoughby's *Art and Christhood: The Aesthetics of Oscar Wilde* (1993), the sacrifice of the title character in "The Nightingale and the Rose" is believed to be a symbolism of the crucifixion of Christ. In addition, "The Selfish Giant" is connected to the issue of the nineteenth century landlordism in Ireland due to differences in religion and the absenteeism of the landlords. The interpretation of "The Devoted Friend" highlights the English treatment of the starving cottiers and labourers during the Great Famine (1845–1849) in Ireland. In "The Remarkable Rocket", the rocket and fireworks are connected with the celebration of Guy Fawkes Day which annually falls on November 5, a celebration which commemorates the failure of the Catholic conspirators to blow up the House of Parliament in London in 1605 ("Guy Fawkes Day in the United Kingdom", n.d.).

Second, Killeen (2007) relates the four stories of *A House of Pomegranates* (1891) to the story of Christ. The title character in "The Young King" refuses to wear his coronation garments after discovering the sufferings of his people during the making, and is consequently rewarded by God. This message is 'dogmatically Christian' (p. 121), whereby people should turn to God and be saved or allow themselves to degrade in the shadows. In "The Birthday of the Infanta", the interpretation highlights authority of the pope to declare the apparition of Virgin Mary as the divine status, partly due to the usage of the Immaculate Conception (1854) doctrine to consolidate power in the hands of men to the exclusion of women. Furthermore, the revolution in the Irish Church between 1850 to 1875 is connected to "The Fisherman and His Soul", emphasising the issues relating to the Roman Catholicism which was perceived as a

major threat to the English Constitution due to the Catholics' royalty to the sovereign and the pope. Issues revolving around Roman Catholicism were also connected to the final story "The Star-Child", ending with the interpretation that humanity should turn to the power of Catholicism to save it from its follies.

However, this study uses an allegorical approach to interpret Wilde's fairy tales, which aims to seek for implicitly conveyed meanings in biblical narratives ("Types of biblical hermeneutics", 2020). While taking into account both the historicity and literal meanings of the text, allegorical interpreters often sought for a deeper symbolic meaning in the sacred text which gives the foreordination by God of the historical event (Mazzeo, 1978), regardless of whether it is intended to be understood in such a way. In reality, allegory is too obscure to directly convey the intended meaning of the text (Bloom, 1951), and allegorical interpreters tend to interpret without creating a boundary in accordance to the text itself. Consequently, it becomes easy for one to interpret the text based on its clarity and one's own interpretation. In this case, though many commentators highlight Wilde's interest in Christianity or Christ, his fairy tales did not provide clear or direct references to the issues of Catholicism in Ireland during that time. Although the fairy tales could be interpreted based on their religious dimensions, the morality reflected in these stories is not necessarily determined by religion.

Morality has also been linked to beauty in fairy tales, where authors attribute ugliness to characters portrayed as morally confused or completely immoral. But Jones (2011) suggests that Wilde used the concept of ugliness in his fairy tales to illustrate the influence of the hypocritical Victorian bourgeoisie, thus resisting the social standards of middle and lower classes. Apart from this, Wilde's tales appear to disregard the typicality of fairy tales by inverting its model commonly used by other authors. For instance, instead of using animals as morally pure metamorphosed humans, Wilde involved animals and flowers when characters experience moral transformations as reference to the concerns of the bourgeoisie (Youngs,

2013), rather than using them as metaphors of humans as exemplified in classic fairy tales. Wilde also used these contradicting conventions to highlight the complex dichotomy between beauty and morality in his stories. Moreover, Wilde was highlighting the struggle between art and morality; his fairy tales consistently object the intrusion of moral conformity into aesthetics, and its result was demonstrated with the theme of ugliness.

The happily-ever-after convention commonly epitomised in classic fairy tales is found to be flouted in Wilde's fairy tales as well. The moral education brings a destructive sense of reality to these fairy tales before creating a shift that ruins any signs of a happy ending, killing off the main characters which succumb to moral enlightenment. Based on this study, Wilde was likely using subversive components and the motif of ugliness to denote the damaging effects of moral conformity on the aesthetics in his fairy tales. In seven out of the nine fairy tales, the main characters either go through physical disfigurement or die prematurely after committing certain acts which reflect their morality. Instead of providing grisly deaths to the antagonists as what the Brothers Grimm did in few of their stories, Wilde ascribed death and physical deterioration for his protagonists. Jones (2011) concludes that the physical beauty of Wilde's main characters begins to deteriorate when they succumb to moral conformity, immediately stripping the aestheticism in this fairy tale dimension.

According to Humaish (2017), Wilde expounded in his short stories his aesthetic and moral theory which highlights the importance of integrating art into morality to create a healthy and prosperous socialist society. Although his theory was misunderstood as an attempt to deprive art of its moral code under Ruskin's doctrine of 'Art for Art's Sake', Wilde had shown in his fairy tales that art is crucial in establishing a socially prosperous society through the morality it is subjected to. However, moral theories are subjective to the individual's own beliefs and philosophy. As espoused by Smith (2014), it is crucial for a moral theory to be usable for the individual to guide them in their decision-making, even if they lack accurate and

complete information of the standard moral theories everyone is expected to adhere to. There are various theories which justify whether an action is right or wrong, such as deontological ethics and utilitarianism which judge morality based on intentions and consequences respectively. What may seem virtuous may not result in one's own advantage, while the seemingly unjust might appear to be more successful and happier (Barbour, 1983); and such complexities should be taken into account in the creation of a thriving socialist society as advocated by Wilde himself.

2.8 Conclusion

Wilde's fairy tales appear to reflect his ideology of a flourished society through the integration of aestheticism and morality. Despite that, morality went through many changes over the years, and there is no guarantee that everyone within society would follow a fixed, conventional moral theory. Studies have yet to address the various moral theories in fairy tales which could influence the main characters when they make certain decisions. In addition, there is a lack of emphasis on the motives or reasons behind the actions of the characters, as well as whether such motives or reasons could be linked to their personalities and actions. To address this matter, the following chapter will elaborate how this study will embody deontological ethics, such as Kantian Ethics.

CHAPTER III CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study will incorporate Kant's deontological ethics, which is concerned with actions and their reasons, not the consequences. By applying the Kantian Ethics, this study will first analyse the personalities and their relation to the actions committed by the main characters in Oscar Wilde's selected short stories, namely "The Happy Prince" (1888), "The Nightingale and the Rose" (1888), "The Selfish Giant" (1888), "The Devoted Friend" (1888), and "The Birthday of the Infanta" (1891). Then, this study will determine the consequences of the action committed by the character, which comprises death in all the five short stories chosen. Based on the analysis, this study will apply Kantian Ethics to justify the actions committed by the characters with the underlying intentions (see Appendix A).

In the first part of the analysis, this study will examine the relation of the personalities of the main characters in Oscar Wilde's fairy tales and the actions committed in the stories. As this study will apply Kantian Ethics, the main characters chosen for the analysis are the ones who commit the acts. The personalities of the chosen character are portrayed through characterisation at the exposition in each of the five stories. The main characters of the selected short stories are introduced through direct characterisation where the author deliberately tells what the character is like, or indirect characterisation such as dialogues which displays the characters' nature through their own words, descriptions and metaphors of their appearance and behaviour, as well as their thoughts and reactions at particular moments. Besides focusing on the characterisation, the main characters' interactions and how they are perceived by the other characters are also considered because these two aspects reveal the personalities of the main characters from a different perspective within the chosen stories. As the story progresses to the rising action in the plot, the characters begin to reveal more about themselves through their own actions as the main issue in the story comes into play. Hence, this study will also examine the relation between the personalities of the main characters and the actions they

committed. In each of the short stories, the acts committed by the main characters are as a response to what the other characters say or do.

In the second part of the analysis, this study will discuss the consequences of the actions committed by the main characters of Oscar Wilde's selected short stories. Whether those actions are done voluntarily or not as a response to others, their motivations and intentions to commit an act leave an impact which eventually directs the story to a particular direction. Eventually, it creates a shift at the climax and diverts the story to another direction which could affect the characters. In each of the selected stories, the main characters face death as a result of their actions, and therefore, this study will discuss the consequences that characters face due to the decisions they made prior to committing the act. For this study, the consequences will be analysed based on how Wilde narrates characters' deaths. In the selected stories, this study will examine the foreshadowing used to hint the consequences that the characters would face later as the story progresses. This foreshadowing includes direct information of what the main character would expect when they decide to commit an act, as well as the characters' subtle reactions to their surrounding which reveals the implications of their actions. Besides foreshadowing, descriptions of the main characters' deaths will be analysed as it could reveal the impacts of the actions committed by the characters.

In the third part of the analysis, this study will justify the reasons behind actions of the main characters of Oscar Wilde's selected short stories in accordance with Kantian Ethics. The acts committed by the characters examined at the beginning of the analysis will be investigated with Kant's principle of the Good Will, which states that actions should be done out of nothing but good will only. In each of the five selected stories, this study will investigate the reasons or motivations behind the actions of the main character. These reasons explain the character's decision to commit an act, and what made them proceed with the action. By identifying those reasons based on the selected short stories, this study will determine how those justifications

benefit the self and the others or society. In regard to this, the study will examine each of the consequences, which will then be utilised to reanalyse the action of the main character to verify whether the act is done out of the characters' own will or for the sake of others or society. As Kant's principle of the Good Will suggests, morality stems from the action of the character which should be done out of one's own good will and not out of obligation or desires. At the end of the analysis, this study will conclude whether the main characters' will justify their actions in Oscar Wilde's selected short stories.

As this study focuses on the actions and motives of the main characters in Wilde's selected fairy tales, Kantian Ethics is most suitable because it disregards the consequences of the actions. To discuss the actions and personalities of the chosen characters, it is important to consider the characterisation in each of the short stories and how the main character interacts with others. The consequences of their actions will then be highlighted based on how Wilde narrates the deaths of his characters, including the elements of foreshadowing. Using Kantian Ethics, this study will justify the consequences of the main characters' actions according to the principle of the Good Will, which determines how beneficial the actions would be to the character, others and society. In Chapters 4 and 5, this study will discuss how the actions and personalities of the main characters would eventually lead them to their demise. These chapters will also delve into the application of Kantian Ethics in explaining how their intentions or motives justify their actions.

CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

As mentioned in Chapter 1, fairy tale authors convey their morals and beliefs by educating readers through the consequences of the actions of the main characters. Morality is because of one's own beliefs, and thus, it is up to the readers to make their judgements based on how they evaluate the characters based on their personalities, actions, and the consequences. In this chapter, the findings and analysis of the study show the interpretation of morality in Oscar Wilde's selected short stories based on Kant's perspective on morality, particularly the principle of the Good Will. For this chapter, the selected fairy tales are "The Happy Prince" (1888), "The Nightingale and the Rose" (1888), "The Selfish Giant" (1888), "The Devoted Friend" (1888), and "The Birthday of the Infanta" (1891). These stories are investigated accordingly, and the results are presented based on the research questions. The analysis in the first and second for each story are carried out solely based on the chosen short stories, as they aim to identify the relation between personalities and the actions, and the consequences of those actions taken by the main characters of Wilde's fairy tales. In the third part of the analysis, the study incorporated Kantian Ethics to justify the reason behind the actions that prompt the main characters to make certain decisions, which led to their demise at the end of the stories.

4.2 "The Happy Prince" (1888)

This fairy tale centers around a friendship between a statue of a late beloved Prince and a Swallow that happened to pass by the city. When he took shelter from the cold under the statue, he realised that the Prince was not as happy as everyone thought. Wilde's story dwells on social injustice and inequality, which is relevant to not only the late 19th century when Wilde wrote this story but in modern society as well. It highlights issues such as capitalism and the

poverty gap between the rich and the poor; which in this case are the rulers and the citizens of the city.

Fairy tale characters, in general, are categorised based on the common rule of “good wins out over evil”. Death is used as ‘a strong moral dimension and a form of a fair punishment’ towards the characters that were depicted as evil in classic fairy tales (Violetta-Irene and Anastasia, 2015). But in the case of Wilde’s fairy tale, both main characters experienced death at the end of the story even though the conventions of fairy tales would categorise their actions as morally good. But ironically, not only did their acts go unnoticed, they were instead disposed of when the others deemed them as unworthy to them and/or society. Therefore, the Prince and the Swallow are chosen for this study to discuss the interpretation of morality based on Kantian Ethics and its principle of the Good Will.

4.2.1 The Prince

In this story, the Prince is portrayed as a happy prince who did not have sorrow or worry. This is found in the excerpt when he shared the Swallow his life before death on their first meeting, ‘My courtiers called me the Happy Prince, and happy indeed I was, if pleasure be happiness’ (Wilde, 2008, p. 8). When the Prince was still alive, he would often spend his days playing with his companions in the garden, and by night he led the dance in the aristocratic ball. He needed not to worry about food and shelter, or clothes that could keep him warm from the cold. This shows that the Prince had spent his life within the comforts of his sheltered royal life. He never asked about the world beyond the wall surrounding the palace garden, because he believed that if everything about him was beautiful, then so would the outside world. When he passed away and his statue was placed on top of the tall column overlooking the city, however, he realised that the reality had been different from what he thought. He was not aware that the civilians had been suffering from poverty and did not receive any aid from the rulers or the upper class. The Prince was heartbroken by this revelation and wept; thus, he

wished to ease the misery of his people with whatever he had, along with the help of the Swallow who delivered them to the people as requested by the Prince. This is where the story depicts him as someone compassionate and sympathetic towards his people to the extent where he wanted to help them even though he was a mere statue.

There were several actions taken by the Prince to help needy civilians. The first act involved a mother who worked as a seamstress. According to the Prince, the woman was tired from embroidering ‘passion-flowers on a satin gown for the Queen’s maids-of-honour to wear at the next Court-ball’ (Wilde, 2008, p. 9), and had no time or money for the treatment of her young son’s illness. The Prince thus requested the Swallow to remove the red ruby on his sword hilt and deliver it to the young mother. Next, the Prince had sacrificed both sapphires which were his eyes to help two people in need; a young man who was writing a play for the Director of the Theatre but was too cold and hungry to finish the script, and a little match-girl who had to bring money back home otherwise she would be beaten by her father. The Swallow was initially reluctant to do so, as they knew that the Prince would not be able to see without the sapphires. But the Prince was committed to easing the sufferings of his people, even if it meant to lose something in return. The Prince’s final act was to deliver the gold leaves adorning his statue to the poor civilians of the city after the Swallow had gone around the city before reporting back to the Prince what he had witnessed. He believed that gold could make the living happy, in hopes that the people would utilise the gold leaves to get their necessities. These actions have reflected the Prince’s personality as someone sympathetic and compassionate towards his people, as he was willing to sacrifice what he had to help his people.

With the following actions, the Prince would have been rewarded with a happy ending as depicted by classic fairy tale characters who are deemed as the “good” ones. However, Wilde’s character experienced physical disfigurement before his death; both aspects were often reserved as a just punishment for evil characters as a result of their actions. At the start of the

story, the Happy Prince's statue was described to be decorated all over with 'thin leaves of fine gold; for eyes he had two bright sapphires, and a large red ruby glowed on his sword-hilt' (Wilde, 2008, p. 4). Civilians who stopped by to admire his statue remembered the Prince as someone who was angelic. The Prince's commitment to helping the poor and needy, however, resulted in him losing all the gold and fine jewels that adorned his statue. As written in the story, the Swallow picked all leaves of the fine gold until the statue of the Happy Prince looked dull and grey'. This is where physical disfigurement comes in. What was left of the once beautiful Happy Prince that was admired by all walks of life, was an ordinary statue no longer deemed as beautiful or useful, as shown in the excerpt where the Mayor and Town Councillors commented that the statue was shabby and no different than a beggar. As stated by Norman (2002), people are often attracted to beautiful or aesthetically pleasing things because it allows them to be in a positive emotional state. The statue that was once covered with fine jewels and gold leaves used to bring happiness to the people, as one of the civilians said he was glad that there was someone in their world who was happy. But now that the statue was no longer beautiful, it did not bring the joy or other positive emotions to the civilians as it did before. The Prince's desire to help his people – what would seem to be a good deed – had caused a shift in the short story that directed the plot towards the deterioration of beauty, which is often associated with a strong moral dimension associated with death.

The Prince would eventually experience death when the Swallow died from the extreme cold and hunger after delivering the gold leaves to the needy. After the Swallow's death, the Prince's lead heart snapped into two. The significance is the Prince's lead heart. During his first encounter with the Swallow, he revealed that his statue was not entirely made of gold due to his heart made of lead, which is a highly malleable metal that does not break or crack when its shape is transformed ("Lead", 2020). This might have emphasised the superficiality of the Prince's beauty, because the lead heart is a revelation that the gold leaves covering the outside

of the Happy Prince statue did not carry through his insides. But in this context, it could be interpreted as a metaphor Wilde had used to describe the Prince's death caused by a severe heartbreak brought upon by the death of the Swallow, who had stayed behind to help the Prince when he was supposed to leave for Egypt. In the end, instead of a conventional fairy tale happy ending, the Prince's statue was eventually taken down because he was deemed no longer useful to the people as he was not beautiful anymore; despite his efforts in aiding the poor civilians which went unnoticed. The statue was then taken to a foundry where they attempted to melt it, only to have the broken lead heart remain as it could not melt in the furnace which they threw it into the dust-heap where the Swallow's body was still laid.

Based on Kant's principle of the Good Will, the actions taken by the Prince were done out of his will to ease the suffering and misery of the people in the city. As previously mentioned, the Prince spent his life within the comforts of his palace and did not know the outside world, as he thought that it was just as beautiful as his. It was only after his passing when he realised the social inequality in his own city. For instance, when the Swallow was on his way to the seamstress's house, he passed by the palace where one of the Queen's maids-of-honour remarked that the seamstresses were so lazy, and hoped that her dress would be ready in time for the ball. But as written in the story, the reality was that the seamstress was tired and/or hungry as her face was 'thin and worn'. She was tired from embroidering the passion-flowers on the dress, while she had to take care of her young son who was down with a fever. She did not have much money to give in to her son's request for oranges and could only provide him river water. When the dress was completed before its deadline, the seamstress could earn some money to tend to her son; regardless of how tired she was and how much she would be paid. The Prince got to know more about the gap between the rich and poor when he requested the Swallow to fly over the city, where he saw 'the rich making merry in their beautiful houses, while the beggars were sitting at the gates' (Wilde, 2008, p. 17).

Thus, the Prince's underlying reason for his actions as previously mentioned was that he wanted to make people happy, like how he lived his life without worrying about necessities. This could be used to determine how it benefits the self and the others or society. In regards to the self, it would bring a sense of reassurance to himself. The Prince believed that humans always thought that gold could make them happy. As depicted in the story, the royal family was fed and sheltered within the comforts of their palace, and the upper class was able to go about their day without worrying about the cold and hunger. Thus, the Prince thought that the gold leaves and fine jewels could make the lower-class civilians happy even if it meant that he would lose all of them, believing that they could live such lives with the wealth they receive. But this definition of happiness is subjective. As noted by Headey et al. (2004), defining a happy person as someone with lots of free time and the money to afford the things they want is 'a rather hedonistic and perhaps shallow view'. To a certain extent, the jewels and/or gold leaves the civilians received could bring them happiness if they put them to good use, such as buying food, clothes, firewood, and other essentials to get by winter. But there is no guarantee that everyone would think the same way as the Prince, and some might even take advantage of the riches they had received.

Nevertheless, as described by Kant, what makes a good person "good" is one's own will that enables them to make decisions on the basis that one finds to be morally worthy. Therefore, in the context of Wilde's fairy tale, the Prince believed that it was his moral duty to bring happiness to his people by helping those in need. He thought that by giving away the fine jewels and/or gold leaves, the civilians could use them to buy the necessities to keep themselves warm and fill their stomachs. For instance, the seamstress could make use of the ruby for her son's treatment or give him the oranges he had been asking for. With the sapphires, the young student could buy food and firewood so he could continue writing the play without feeling hungry and cold, and the little girl would not have to worry about making up for the loss of the

matches she had dropped. The people on the streets, too, could use the gold leaves to buy food. Knowing that the needy could bring joy and contentment to themselves with a bit of wealth, the Prince needed not to worry about the ugliness and misery in his city, and that he could continue looking over the people with happiness and relief, satisfied that he could help those in need.

But according to the principle of the Good Will, ‘there is no conceivable circumstance in which we regard our own moral goodness as worth forfeiting simply in order to obtain some desirable object’ (Johnson & Cureton, 2004). In the case of the Prince, he believed that it would be better to lose his beauty and wealth as the situation required compassion and kindness. His will to make his people happy and content may have benefitted them, but as depicted in the story, there was no happy ending to follow up his actions – his deeds went unnoticed by the people, the Swallow died from hunger and cold which caused his lead heart to break, and his statue was taken down because he was not useful to the city anymore. Based on this observation, the Prince’s will to make his people happy had benefitted the others or society more than himself. But as Kant justified, a good will is still justifiable even though one fails to achieve the intended outcome. Even though the Prince’s will achieved nothing good upon himself and the Swallow, the will’s own proper goodness is not diminished by this failure. Therefore, this justifies the reason for the actions taken by the Prince which was done out of his will that encompasses the good will.

4.2.2 The Swallow

Swallows are not only known to be migratory birds that move in flocks to avoid winter, they also symbolise loyalty due to their tendency to return to their habitats during spring (Nessworthy, 2012; Chapman, 2015). Based on this context, the Swallow in “The Happy Prince” is portrayed as a character who is easily attached to things he regarded as beautiful. At the beginning of the story, the Swallow had left his friends while on their way to Egypt to court

the most beautiful Reed even though they thought this phenomenon was ridiculous. This form of attachment would manifest again when the Swallow decided to rest for the night between the feet of the statue of the Happy Prince, which was where he met the Prince. When he first saw the Prince, he thought that he looked so beautiful that he could not help but feel sorry when the Prince expressed sadness. However, at the same time, the Swallow also had the tendency to make personal remarks or express his thoughts, whether out loud or not. When the Reed refused to travel with him and preferred to stay in her home, the Swallow expressed his disappointment by accusing the Reed of trifling with his emotions before he abruptly left for Egypt. He also expressed annoyance when he felt drops of water dripping on him while he was resting at the feet of the statue, and even questioned its purpose when it could not shelter him from the rain.

The Swallow's personality is reflected through his actions when the Prince took several actions to aid the needy civilians. In the first act, when the Prince asked for the ruby to be delivered to the seamstress, the Swallow said his friends were waiting for him in Egypt, and he did not like boys due to an incident with the miller's sons who would always throw stones at him. But the Prince looked so sad that the Swallow felt pity and did as he was told. This could be interpreted that the Swallow felt guilty that he was the one who made the Prince sad and disappointed because of his excuses to not help him. As such, he felt that it was his responsibility to help the Prince so that he would feel happy. His attachment to the Prince made him loyal to the Prince as he stayed longer when asked to stay for another night and help out the young student who was too hungry and cold to finish the play. Although reluctant to remove one of the sapphires which were the eyes of the Prince, he still did what he was told when the Prince insisted. Winter soon came, and the Swallow was supposed to go to Egypt. But in the end, his loyalty to the Prince made him permanently stay when the Prince commanded to have his other sapphire given to the little match girl, which would cause the Prince to go blind. This

could be found in the excerpt ‘[...] You are blind now [...] so I will stay with you always’ (Wilde, 2008, p. 16). From this point onward, the Swallow no longer had plans to join his friends in Egypt and continued to help the Prince by scouting the city and reporting back to the Prince what he saw. The Swallow’s final action was to deliver the gold leaves from the Happy Prince’s statue to the poor and hungry civilians. In short, the Swallow’s actions were due to his attachment to the Prince whom he befriended in a short amount of time. As narrated in the story, even though the Prince insisted that the Swallow should leave for Egypt, the Swallow had already made his final decision which could be found in the excerpt ‘I will stay with you always [...]’ (Wilde, 2008, p. 16).

The consequences of the actions taken by the Swallow came earlier and was more direct than the Prince. In the story, there was an element of foreshadowing that hinted at the Swallow’s demise. As the days grew colder and the frost took over the city, the Swallow grew colder as there was no proper shelter where he could keep himself warm. He resorted to picking up crumbs outside the bakery as he had not much access to food, and flapped his wings as an attempt to keep himself warm. As shown in the line ‘But at last he knew he was going to die’ (Wilde, 2008, p. 18), the story hinted that the Swallow knew the consequences when he agreed to stay with the Happy Prince, although he could have escaped the cold by joining his friends in Egypt. But his attachment to the Prince – especially when the Prince had gone blind after sacrificing his sapphires – made him stay which only resulted in him suffering from the cold. In the end, the Swallow accepted his faith and had only just enough strength to bid the Prince farewell before falling dead to the ground near the statue’s feet. In short, the Swallow’s death also contradicts the conventional use of death in classic fairy tales, which is often associated with the consequences of the acts committed by evil or bad characters. Besides the unhappy ending, his efforts also went unnoticed by the people who had been receiving aid as his body was left in the dust heap as if he was deemed useless.

The Swallow and the Prince share the same reason behind their actions – to make others happy. While the Prince wanted to make his people happy with what he had, the Swallow believed that his help would make the Prince happy. The Swallow's will was challenged when the Prince asked him to bring the ruby to the seamstress. He had two choices – to stay with the Prince in the cold without proper shelter and food, or to escape the cold by travelling to Egypt where he could join his friends. It was obvious that the Swallow was reluctant to carry out those acts, as he indirectly reminded the Prince the sole purpose of stopping by the city. If he chose to leave the city, the seamstress's son would have gotten sicker due to the lack of money for his treatment, and in turn, the Prince would be sad knowing that the one he thought he could rely on would not help him to make his people happy. This is where the Swallow's will to make the Prince happy takes place as the Prince's expression prompted the Swallow to commit his first act. It could also be deduced that the reason behind his actions was because he loved and cared for the Prince. As written in the story, the Swallow loved the Prince to even leave him even though he was getting colder. This could be explained based on the principle of the Good Will which states that there is no implicit restriction in the qualifications one believes to be worth sacrificing to pursue a desirable result. The Swallow sacrificed his selfishness for kindness towards the Prince; he cancelled his plans of going to Egypt in order to help the Prince even if it meant that he would have to suffer in the cold. The Swallow's actions could be defined as "compassionate love for close others". According to Sprecher and Fehr (2005), it is an altruistic love directed toward others, whereby one is willing to suffer, sacrifice, and endure for the sake of the other.

Before determining if the Swallow's actions are justifiable based on Kant's theory, it is important to clarify whether the Swallow felt pity or sympathy towards the Prince. Sally (2000) stressed that sympathy differs from pity, as it is the interpersonal process of 'perceiving thoughts, feelings, desires, intentions' within another person's mind with the urge to identify

with them in society. On the other hand, the definition of pity had gone through changes over the years. As observed by Geller (2006), the contemporary usage of the word “pity” relates to ‘a condescending, or even contemptuous, form of feeling sorry for another, especially those who have brought misfortune upon themselves’. As “The Happy Prince” was written in the 19th century, Geller (2006) defines pity in this context refers to one’s ability to feel sorrow for another person’s suffering or misfortune. Based on this definition, it could be deduced that the Swallow’s will was to help the Prince because he was the only one who could help since the Prince could not move on his own. Kant stated that a good will is one’s will whose decisions are solely determined by one’s own morality. As such, the Swallow believed it was his moral duty to bring happiness to the Prince by helping him, since this was what made the Prince happy knowing that his people received the jewels and gold leaves.

However, Kantian Ethics would argue that the Swallow’s actions are not morally acceptable because Kant stated that for an action to be considered morally good, the underlying motives should solely be based on one’s own sake. As depicted since the beginning of the story, the Swallow was never diverted from his plans to go to Egypt as he often described its beauty and all the possible adventures he would have experienced if he had left the city. Based on this observation, he indirectly stated that his priority was not to help the civilians; it was only when the Prince requested or expressed disappointment or sadness that the Swallow carried out those acts of kindness. Although the Swallow’s will was motivated purely by reason, the principle of Good Will argues that this reason was not of the Swallow’s own will was motivated by his attachment to the Prince. Therefore, the Swallow’s underlying intention to make the Prince happy by helping him aid the poor does not justify his actions of sacrificing himself until he died from cold and hunger.

4.3 “The Nightingale and the Rose (1888)

This fairy tale begins with a Student lamenting that the Professor’s daughter would not dance with him at the upcoming ball unless he found a red rose for her. The Nightingale thought he was the true lover she often sang about and decided to help him bring a red rose, in hopes that the girl would return his affection. Wilde’s short story touches on the theme of the nature of love. The message that Wilde intended to convey is that it is possible to find true love, but the love that people often associate with materialism is rather shallow and driven by one’s own self-interest.

For this study, the Nightingale was chosen to determine whether her actions which resulted in her death could be justified with Kantian Ethics. With death often used as a just punishment for “evil” characters in classic fairy tales, the story becomes complicated with the Nightingale’s death. Her actions would be regarded as selfless because they were done for the sake of love; not of her own but the Student’s. As Kantian Ethics emphasises the will which determines one’s decisions based on their moral law instead of the consequences, this study has chosen the Nightingale to determine if her sacrifice is justified based on the principle of the Good Will.

4.3.1 The Nightingale

Nightingales are commonly associated with love and beauty due to their songs which are often described as one of the most beautiful sounds in nature that inspired many works of art (Maxwell, 2001, pp. 26–29; Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, n.d.). As such, the Nightingale was depicted in this story as a romantic who believed that true love exists. At the start of the story, the Student painted himself as a quintessential romantic with typical characteristics of a fairy tale hero. Most classic fairy tale heroes or princes are typically described to be handsome and well spoken (Heckel, 2014). When the Nightingale first saw the

Student, she said, ‘Here at last is a true lover, [...] His hair is dark as the hyacinth-blossom, and his lips are red as the rose of his desire; but passion has made his face like pale ivory, [...]’ (Wilde, 2008, pp. 21–22). Moreover, the Nightingale admired his tearful declarations of all the things he would do if he managed to find a red rose for the Professor’s daughter. But because he could not find one, he cried that the girl would ignore him, and his heart would break. The impressed Nightingale said, ‘Here at last is a true lover, [...] What I sing of, he suffers—what is joy to me, to him is pain’ (Wilde, 2008, p. 22). She thought the emotional description indicated that his emotions ran deep, for his “real” love contradicted with the happy songs she sang. As such, the Nightingale believed that the Student was the answer to the song of a true lover whom she had spent her life singing about.

The Nightingale’s faith in true love was what initiated her actions in this story, which also shows her dedication and perseverance in achieving her goal. After witnessing the Student’s woes, the Nightingale went to each Rose Tree and said, ‘Give me a red rose, [...] and I will sing you my sweetest song’ (Wilde, 2008, pp. 24–25). However, the first two rejected her request because they grew white and yellow roses only. It was when she tried her luck and stopped at the third Tree where she would finally get herself a red rose. This phenomenon could be explained with the concept of “the power of three” commonly found in fairy tales. As elaborated by Matwiejczyk (2020), “the power of three” refers to either the three elements in a plot structure, the three protagonists of the story, or the three trials the main protagonist had to overcome. In the case of Wilde’s fairy tale, the Nightingale was given three chances to find a red rose tree which tested her persistence and dedication in getting what she wanted. Her actions revealed that she was different from the Student, who merely looked around in his garden for the rose instead of taking the initiative to go out on a search. By overcoming these trials, the Nightingale reflected her personality as a romantic whose underlying motivation behind her actions had stemmed from her strong faith in true love. The Nightingale’s third trial

was later revealed to be the most challenging as there is an element of foreshadowing that not only hinted at the Nightingale's death. It also challenged her values and beliefs to test if she was willing to give up everything for the sake of true love. After hearing that she would have to wait for winter to pass, her persistence resurfaced when she begged the tree for one red rose and asked if there was any way by which she could get it. Although the tree hinted that the process was detrimental, she continued to push the tree to tell her and insisted that she was not afraid. She said, 'Tell it to me, [...] I am not afraid' (Wilde, 2008, p. 25).

To the Nightingale, death was a great price to pay for a mere red rose over life. But instead, she added, '[...] Yet Love is better than Life, and what is the heart of a bird compared to the heart of a man?' (Wilde, 2008, p. 26). Up until this point, the Nightingale was still driven by her faith in true love to the point where she was willing to sacrifice her life for the Student to secure the girl's affection. This is an example of self-sacrifice, which is defined by Bélanger et al. (2018) as 'the psychological readiness to suffer and die for a cause' (p. 466). This, however, is not interpreted as the Nightingale wanting to die; rather, she was ready to self-sacrifice because of her belief that the Student would become a true lover if he had the red rose. Her final words to the Student was that she asked him to be a true lover and said that love is ultimately wiser than philosophy or other intellectual pursuits. After the Nightingale's death, the results were unfortunately not as what she hoped for. Not only the Professor's daughter rejected the red rose over the fine jewels sent by Chamberlain's nephew, the Student's true colours turned out to be far different than what the Nightingale thought of him as a true lover. He was quick to call the girl "ungrateful" and discarded the rose; this scene highlights that he had perceived the rose not as a symbol of love but as a way to "buy" the girl he claimed to love, and when it was no longer useful to him he angrily disposed it. On the other hand, the girl retaliated by calling him rude and mocking his poorness before storming into her house, further emphasising the materialism underlying the entire interaction. The Student eventually did not

become the true lover that the Nightingale hoped that he would become. Instead, he concluded that love is a silly thing and not as useful as logic because it does not prove anything, contradicting the Nightingale's values and beliefs.

Throughout the story, the Nightingale made it clear that the reason behind her actions was due to her belief in an ideal form of love. There is a need to understand what this abstract "love" meant in this context. There are many views on what "love" meant to different people. Some of the examples could be derived from Ancient Greeks' words of love as listed by Krznaric (2013) – passion love (*erōs*), friendship love (*philia*), playful love (*ludus*), selfless love (*agape*), longstanding love (*pragma*), self-love (*philautia*). Besides cultural views, there were studies that highlight the varying theories of love, such as Sternberg's (1986) Triangular Theory of Love which underlined the varieties of love people experience – *intimacy, passion, commitment* (Acker & Davis, 1992). In contemporary research, Berscheid (2010) observed that love is often categorised into three varieties – *companionate love, romantic love, and compassionate love*. Thus, the definition of "love" varies from one person to another. In the case of Wilde's short story, the Nightingale is depicted as a selfless character who believed that love is a wonderful thing, because it is priceless and more precious than any fine jewel. She was willing to sacrifice herself to give the Student the red rose he desperately desired. This act of love could be defined as "unconditional love", which refers to love without any limitations or conditions from the other party (Raypole, 2020). Based on this definition, the Nightingale's unconditional love for the Student was evident through her actions which reflect her personality. Rather than expecting the Student to repay her, she committed the acts hoping that he and the Professor's daughter would be happy by experiencing true love.

As suggested by Bélanger et al. (2018), 'self-sacrifice promotes self-effacement for a specific cause' (pp. 468–469). With regard to the benefits, the Nightingale's actions benefitted the self in the sense that she was willing to die for a rose which would represent eternal,

unconditional love. This rose would also mean that love is more important than materialism represented by the Student and the professor's daughter. The intention behind the Nightingale's actions, however, benefitted the Student for a short while. Initially, he was happy he got a red rose that he thought would have a Latin name reflecting its beauty – a foreshadow of his true character – which motivated him to ask for the girl to dance with him in the aristocratic ball. But not long, the Nightingale's efforts were repudiated in the story when the Student chuck the rose to the ground before it was run over by a cartwheel. In short, the actions benefitted the self more than the other. However, the Nightingale's actions are not permissible based on Kant's statements regarding suicide, which could be applied in this context. He argues that self-sacrifice is the desire to end one's own life out of self-love when the predicted future threatens more evil than it promises satisfaction (Kant, 1998, pp. xxi–xxiii). Based on this, the Nightingale's motivation or maxim behind taking her own life to dye the rose with her blood due to her belief that the Student's life was more precious than hers, and love was more important than life. A Kantian would argue that the Nightingale's actions are not morally permissible because by taking her own life, the Nightingale was using herself as a mere means to achieve the ends of providing the Student a red rose for the Professor's daughter. She chose death in hopes that the red rose would secure the affection of the girl towards the Student. Although Kantian theory states that a good will even though it failed to achieve its goal, the Nightingale's will to make the Student happy hoping he would experience true love only brought more damage than what she hoped.

4.4 “The Selfish Giant” (1888)

This fairy tale is about a Giant who was angered at the sight of a group of school children playing in his garden after returning for many years and kept them out of his territory. He eventually learned from his mistake after experiencing a year-long Winter which he brought upon himself. Wilde's fairy tale illustrates the transformation of a selfish Giant to a kind and

generous being, and this sends the message that one could experience happiness if one gives happiness to others. Another significant theme of this short story is linked to Christianity as exemplified at the end, where the Giant peacefully died in his garden covered in white blossoms symbolising that he was rewarded with a place in heaven due to his kindness.

The Giant is chosen for this study to interpret the morality behind his will to commit certain actions based on Kantian Ethics. The turning point for this character is when he realised that his selfishness had driven away the things that could have brought himself happiness – the purity and goodness of the children that brought Spring to his garden. He atoned for his wrongdoings by helping the children, and his actions were acknowledged by God who decided to reward him with a place in “Paradise”. As death is often described as a fair punishment for evil characters in classic fairy tales, the death of Wilde’s main character could be regarded as a redeeming reward for him to undergo a transformation before he could achieve eternal peace. This contrasts the typical connotation of death, and thus, the character is chosen to determine if the underlying will of his actions is permissible based on Kant’s perspective of morality.

4.4.1 The Giant

As the title suggests, readers are introduced to the main character who is depicted as selfish. The Giant had returned to his palace after seven years and wished to relax within the comforts of his territory. But instead, he returned home to see a group of school children playing in his garden without his permission. According to Grenny (2006), asking permission shows that the person respects the other party’s autonomy. The children were drawn to the garden because they thought it was beautiful and spacious for all of them to play, bringing them happiness. They did not know that the garden belonged to the Giant, nor was he around when they stumbled upon it. But when the children did not ask for the Giant’s permission, it showed that they did not respect his property. Moreover, this could be interpreted as trespass because the school children had entered a territory that belonged to someone else. Consequently, the

Giant became angry and chased the children away while saying, ‘My own garden is my own garden, [...] any one can understand that, and I will allow nobody to play in it but myself’ (Wilde, 2008, p. 34). He also rejected their happiness by keeping them out with a wall he built around his garden, and added a sign which read, “TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED.” His actions emphasised his selfishness because he was planning to take legal action against innocent and naive children playing in his garden, even though they were not robbing or causing any damage to his property. But later on in the story, the Giant revealed that he was a character who admits his mistake and is willing to make amends. The sudden change in seasons prompted him to compare himself to the children and reflected upon his shortcomings. It did not take him long to realise that it was his selfishness that had brought misery upon himself. When he drove away the children, he had unknowingly driven away the seasons that would have brought him joy and invited Winter to occupy his garden. Thus, the Giant declared to himself that he would atone for his actions by helping the boy to climb up the tree, and then knock down the wall so that the children could play in his garden whenever they wanted to. Although his reappearance scared off the children which caused Winter to return, the Giant eventually helped the boy to climb up the tree and knocked down the wall after the other children had returned to his garden.

The consequences of the Giant’s actions were revealed at the end of the story, when the-now old and feeble Giant met the little boy again. The boy stood beneath a tree covered with white blossoms, and it had golden branches with a silver fruit hanging down from them which resembled an ornate crucifix. The boy said to the Giant, ‘You let me play once in your garden, to-day you shall come with me to my garden, which is Paradise’ (Wilde, 2008, p. 40). The connotation behind heaven or paradise is commonly linked to positive emotions, such as peace, love, and happiness. It is regarded as ‘the presence of God, in the company of others who have responded to God’s call in their own lives’ (Pierce, 2018). As such, Paradise justifies

the Giant's kind actions towards the children. Moreover, in this scene, the child refers to Paradise as his garden which makes reference to the Garden of Eden. Also known as the "Garden of God", it is a place unique from the rest of God's creation that signifies the beauty, perfection, and peace of nature to mankind (Laie, 2018). This reveals that the little boy was the Child Christ who acknowledged the Giant's kind actions towards him many years back, and now he had returned to reward him with an invitation to join him in Paradise. At the end of the story, the Giant died under the tree covered in white blossoms. This could be interpreted that God had accepted the Giant who passed away peacefully at the foot of the cross, dressed in white which is a sign of joy and merriment (Ahinful, 2015). The usage of white as a symbolism of death contradicts the conventional dark and gloomy colours that represent death as an ominous phenomenon (Violetta-Irene & Anastasia, 2015).

To determine if the underlying will behind the Giant's actions is morally permissible, Kant suggests determining whether the action was done from duty or motivated by other ends. The underlying reason behind the Giant's actions stemmed from his desire to experience joy. The children in this story represent joy due to their pure intention to play in the beautiful garden. Consequently, the Giant chased them away and kept them out of his garden out of anger that they had trespassed his territory. This could be interpreted that he was frightened when he first experienced joy as he was accustomed to solitude and loneliness within his own castle. But eventually, he understood that it was the children who brought livelihood and happiness to his garden. Their joy attracted a lot of good and natural things to them, as written in the story that the trees were happy to see the children return to the garden and covered their branches with flowers which then attracted the birds. The Giant regretted his past actions, admitting that he had been selfish for rejecting the children's happiness. He hoped that by helping the little boy to climb up the tree, the children would see that he posed no threat to them and return to the garden. From the perspective of Kantian theory, in order for him to experience joy again, it

was his moral duty to take responsibility for his past actions. This includes acknowledging his own shortcomings and overcoming his pride, which was the main cause of his selfish behaviour. His underlying maxim was to give himself a chance to experience joy through the innocence and joy of the school children.

Based on this observation, the underlying reason behind his actions could be used to determine how they benefit the self and the others or society. As shown in the story, it benefitted the Giant in the sense that he could make peace with himself. He believed that if he could make amends by helping the boy and letting the children in, his actions would make up for his past actions and invite the pleasant things into his garden that brought happiness to the children. Kantian Ethics suggests that certain circumstances would prompt one to regard their own moral goodness as worth forfeiting to obtain some desirable outcome. In the line ‘He saw a most wonderful sight’ (Wilde, 2008, p. 36), the “wonderful sight” refers to the joy and liveliness that the children brought to the garden. He also said, ‘How selfish I have been! [...] now I know why the Spring would not come here’ (Wilde, 2008, p. 37). Based on these observations, the Giant promptly compared himself to the children and concluded that he would have to lose his selfishness and anger if he truly wanted to experience joy again. This meant that the situation required selflessness and forgiveness if he truly wanted to overcome his guilt and make the children happy. As a result, the Giant’s will has shown to benefit the others which are the children. After he helped the boy to climb up the tree, the children took this as a sign that he was no longer the selfish and scary Giant who chased them away during their first encounter. This is because they could determine that the Giant had good intentions behind his actions, and according to Piaget (1948), children are able to determine if one’s intentions are good depending on the severity of the consequences that they observe (pp. 171–192). This is exemplified when the Giant knocked down the wall and declared, ‘It is your garden now, little children [...]’ (Wilde, 2008, p. 37). From the children’s observation, the consequences of the

Giant's actions were deemed to be good – the boy could play on the tree, and the children were allowed to enter. As a result, they returned to the garden without hesitation and it soon returned to its natural state, indicating that the children had forgiven the Giant.

As written in the story, his will to make peace with himself has consequently benefitted both the self and the others. Classic fairy tale characters who did good deeds are generally rewarded with the typical happy endings, but in the case of Wilde's fairy tale, the ending that followed up the main character's actions was bittersweet. The story ended with the Giant passing away peacefully in his garden after reuniting with the child he grew fond of. According to Démuthová (2016), death is frequently linked with the negative connotations of grief, sorrow, suffering, despair, and so on. But there are also a few positive ones in relation to the concept of death, such as relief, beginning, and redemption. In this case, the Giant had become old and weak to even play with the children in his garden. The Child Christ decided that it was time to relieve him from his pain and bring him to a new beginning in heaven, justifying it with the Giant's kind actions. This could be viewed as a reward for the Giant who would no longer have to suffer in old age, contradicting the negative view of death as a punishment or doomy phenomena. Therefore, the Giant's will to absolve his guilt from his shortcomings justifies the reasons for his actions that were done out of his intentions encompassing the good will.

4.5 "The Devoted Friend" (1888)

This fairy tale is told by a Linnet in response to a Water-rat's belief that his friends should be wholeheartedly devoted to him and he did not need to return the favour. It centers around an innocent peasant named Hans who was often manipulated by the rich Miller. Wilde's fairy tale takes a satirical approach on class exploitation. It criticises the society that believes charity is not about charity and generosity, but more of ensuring that the wealthy class gains the maximum benefit without reciprocating.

Throughout the story, Hans was not aware that he was being exploited by his friend and had been kind and grateful to him. but ironically his good intentions were unable to allow him to experience the conventional happily-ever-after ending. Additionally, his efforts were immediately diminished and went unacknowledged by the Miller who was clearly not affected by the death of his friend. While death is often used as a punishment for evil characters, Hans's death contrasts this aspect as his personality would categorise him as a good character in classic fairy tales. Thus, this main character is chosen for this study to determine if the will or reason behind his actions justifies his death based on Kant's principle of the Good Will.

4.5.1 Hans

The Linnet described Hans as an honest and kind gardener who had many friends, but he also portrayed himself as gullible and naïve. Gullible people are easy targets of being manipulated into believing whatever the other person says (Forgas, 2017). Throughout the story, the Miller continually said that true friendship was unselfishness but his actions had shown to be the opposite of what he preached, as written in the excerpt 'Real friends should have everything in common' (Wilde, 2008, p. 44) when he had been taking flowers and fruits from Hans's garden every time he visits. Hans admired the Miller for having such – what he thought was – noble ideas on friendship, and eventually believed that this was the standard of what true friendship meant. He did a lot of things for the Miller out of kindness and believed that he was doing it to strengthen their bond.

Due to his devotion to their friendship, Hans committed several actions which required him to make some sacrifices. The first example was when he gave away the wooden plank that he needed to repair the wheelbarrow. When Hans mentioned the wooden plank, the Miller was quick to say that he needed it to repair his barn roof. He then took advantage of their friendship to justify this as shown in the excerpt '[...] the wheelbarrow is worth far more than the plank, but true, friendship never notices things like that' (Wilde, 2008, p. 50). The Miller

used the same reasoning which prompted Hans to commit his second act, which was to pluck all the primroses in his garden and fill up the Miller's basket. It was obvious that Hans was hesitant because he would have no flowers left in the garden. But the Miller persisted by saying, '[...] as I have given you my wheelbarrow, I don't think that it is much to ask you for a few flowers' (Wilde, 2008, p. 51). By using this justification, the Miller manipulated Hans into doing things for him for his own personal gains. He also sent Hans off on long and tedious errands or got him to help at the mill – carrying a sack of flour to the market, mending the Miller's barn roof, and driving the herds of sheep to the mountain, and calling the doctor in the middle of the night after the Miller's son had fallen from the ladder. In each act, the Miller was taking advantage of their friendship to guilt-trip Hans by consistently reminding Hans about the wheelbarrow and using it against him to make him do something for his own personal gains. This form of manipulation resulted in Hans believing that it was merely fair for him to give something in return since the Miller was kind enough to give him the wheelbarrow. But upon comparison, Hans had been more giving than the Miller. And regardless of how tired Hans was, he still believed that he was doing his friend a favour and that was what friends were for.

However, Hans's gullibility led him to a few unfavourable consequences. The first consequence involved his garden. After filling up the Miller's basket, the gardener was left with no flowers for him to sell in the market so he could use the money to buy his silver buttons. He would need to grow new batches of flowers, but as shown in the story, he had no time to do so. He was exhausted at the end of the day, but could not have proper rest because the Miller consistently assigned one task after another. Eventually, Hans was not able to grow any new flowers for the market and his garden suffered, which could also affect his income as he needed the money to buy the necessities after selling most of his possessions for bread during winter. Furthermore, Hans's decision to take certain actions for the sake of his friendship with the

Miller had led him to his death at the end of the story. Although the Miller was the one who needed to call the doctor after his son had fallen from the ladder, he insisted that Hans should go because the weather was bad that night and merely said that it was “much better” if Hans went. He also added, ‘You know I am going to give you my wheelbarrow, and so it is only fair that you should do something for me in return’ (Wilde, 2008, p. 58). This, again, shows that the Miller was exploiting Hans’s loyalty to him by manipulating him into going in his place, treating his own friend as the sacrificial lamb. Even though it was dangerous for Hans to travel in the dark, he refused to lend his lantern because it was brand new and it would be a great loss to him if anything bad happened to it. Rather than questioning his reasoning or persuading him to lend him the lantern, Hans went off to look for the doctor in the dark. Although he succeeded, he met his demise while on his way back home.

To determine if Hans’s actions are justifiable, the Kantian theory suggests determining if his actions were motivated by moral duty or other underlying reasons. Based on the story, Hans chose to help his friend out of kindness and gratitude for the Miller. Such an example could be found in the excerpt ‘[...] he is going to give me his wheelbarrow, and that is an act of pure generosity’ (Wilde, 2008, p. 57). Hans’s principle was that he should always be grateful to the people who had helped him. Because the Miller was going to give him a wheelbarrow, he should show his gratitude through his actions. Although the other villagers saw that the Miller was mistreating his friend, the gardener had always thought good about the Miller and never questioned his actual intentions or purpose of continuously reminding him about the wheelbarrow whenever he assigned a task. This emphasised Hans’s genuineness towards his friendship with the Miller, believing that one should never think bad about their own friend and that there was no need for his own friend to prove anything. Hans’s perspective on true friendship shares the same opinion as Sokolowski (2001), who asserted that friendship does not need justice because it encompasses all the moral virtues, including justice. Being his

friend was more than enough, and thus, he never once thought that the Miller was taking advantage of him, nor questioned or confronted him about his insincerity in their friendship. Hence, Hans's motivations stemmed from this obligation towards his friend.

This observation could be used to determine how Hans's underlying reason for his actions benefits the self and the others or society. With regard to the self, it made him feel content and happy that he was doing generous deeds for his friend. This could be found in the excerpt '[...] but I am glad I did not refuse the Miller, for he is my best friend, and, besides, he is going to give me his wheelbarrow' (Wilde, 2008, p. 53). He was glad to help because he believed this would flourish his friendship with the Miller and strengthen their bond. Based on this observation, the Kantian theory suggests that Hans's reasons for his actions were determined by his friendship with the Miller as well as his perception towards the gardener. This is because Kant suggests for one's actions to be express the good will, their actions should be freely governed by their moral law. However, as previously mentioned, he failed to realise that this was a manipulative friendship. In reference to an article written by Ni (2015) on the signs of psychological and emotional manipulation, some of the behaviours exhibited by the Miller as shown in the story were guilt-baiting Hans with the wheelbarrow and their friendship, and criticising Hans for being lazy when the gardener was tired to make him feel inadequate. But based on Kant's principle of the Good Will, one's good will determines if their actions are regarded as good. Hans's will to express his gratefulness towards the Miller prompted him to fulfill the role of a selfless friend. If he did not help his friend, it would be a sign that he was ungrateful to the Miller who offered to give him the wheelbarrow he needed. Therefore, Hans's underlying reason to help his friend out of gratitude and kindness benefitted the Miller who was able to get a lot of chores done in his mill. Kantian Ethics highlighted that in order for one to express their good will, they would sacrifice one circumstance over another to obtain their desired object. In this case, Hans did not mind sacrificing his garden to help the Miller,

as the situation required kindness and selflessness to be able to prioritise a friend over one's own plans. This is because he wanted to reciprocate the Miller's generosity for giving him the wheelbarrow and hoped that his actions could express his gratitude.

Although Hans's will behind his actions had benefitted the Miller, the Kantian theory argues that Hans's actions are not morally permissible. Although they exhibited his kind and honest nature, his will was determined solely by his friendship with the Miller. Generally, all the acts mentioned above were committed only when requested by the Miller. In the story, there were a few instances that revealed Hans's reluctance in doing what he was told. For example, Hans hesitated to fill up the Miller's basket because it was a very large one, 'and he knew that if he filled it he would have no flowers left for the market and he was very anxious to get his silver buttons back' (Wilde, 2008, p. 51). Another instance is as shown in the excerpt 'Poor like Hans was afraid to say anything to this [...]' (Wilde, 2008, p. 56), when the Miller assigned him another task for the following day. In this situation, the story narrated that Hans was hesitant to tell the Miller that he was tired and/or needed to tend his garden. This is because he feared that he would hurt the Miller's feelings, eventually making the one at fault for not helping a friend in need. Kant's idea of a good will is that one is committed to making decisions that they believe to be morally worthy. In this case, Hans's will benefitted the Miller more than himself. The events that led up to his demise was due to his obligation towards his friend. Kant stated that for one's will to be regarded as a good will, the maxim must derive solely from his own will and not out of obligation towards others. Based on this, it could be deduced that it was Hans's friendship with the Miller that became the deciding factor to commit his acts. Hence, this does not justify the reason for Hans's actions which were done out of his obligation and devotion to their friendship.

4.6 “The Birthday of the Infanta” (1891)

This short story is about a Dwarf who was sold as entertainment for the Infanta’s birthday celebration by his own father after he was found in the woods by the nobles. Inside the Spanish Court, the Dwarf happily danced for the Princess and her guests while completely unaware that they were mocking his appearance. The Dwarf would find out the ugly truth in the end which led to severe consequences. Wilde’s fairy tale delves into how society defines beauty and ugliness. Through the characters, readers could interpret that the story highlights the superficiality of beauty and how people are treated based on the beauty standards set by society.

The Dwarf was shunned by most characters throughout the story due to his appearance even though it does not reflect his personality. Although he was unaware of the real reason for the children’s laughter, he still enjoyed performing for them at the Infanta’s birthday party because it brought him joy. Ironically, he was the character who faced death at the end of the story even though readers would perceive him as a good character. This is where it contradicts the aspect of death in conventional fairy tales. The Dwarf experienced death despite his personality which categorises him as a good character in classic fairy tales that generally follow the “good versus evil” rule; the good is rewarded with justice while the evil is granted with punishment (Churchwell, 2009). As death is often used as a form of punishment, this main character is chosen for the study to determine if the reason behind his actions could justify his death based on Kant’s perspective of morality.

4.6.1 The Dwarf

The Dwarf is depicted as a genuine character who enjoyed the simple things in life. Prior to the main events of the story, he spent most of his life in the forest with his father who did not love him and cared more about money. This could be shown in the excerpt ‘[...] his

father, [...] being but too well pleased to get rid of so ugly and useless a child' (Wilde, 2019, p. 22). In this example, the charcoal-burner agreed to sell his son away as a surprise for the Infanta, because he felt shameful for having a son with monstrous appearances who often ran around in the forest. But there was no indication that the Dwarf was aware of how his father perceived him before the revelation. He still went on with his life running around the forest and appreciating the things that he found joy in. More of the Dwarf's personality was revealed by the Birds who liked him for his kindness. According to them, they often saw him sharing nuts with the squirrels; and when they had no food during winter, '[...] he had never once forgotten them, but had always given them crumbs out of his little hunch of black bread, and divided with them whatever poor breakfast he had' (Wilde, 2017, p. 24).

The Dwarf's personality is reflected in his actions during the main events of the story. The first act occurred at the arena where he bowed, smiled, and nodded at the Infanta and the other children. As written in the story, the Dwarf was depicted as the most entertaining act in the party as the Princess and the children laughed the hardest when they saw him. Sreenivasan and Weinberger (2017) highlighted that some people laugh with the purpose of mocking or humiliating the other person with the intention of hurting them. Although, they might not have the intention of mocking his appearance out of malice. They were displaying ignorance and a lack of understanding or exposure to people who are born with disabilities, as they had never seen anyone like him. They thought the Dwarf looked and danced funny even though their humour might be cruel; or naive. However, he was unaware of this and thought they were truly delighted or happy to see him. Seeing them laughing made him happy as he laughed along with them. His interpretation of their laughter is associated with positive emotions because, as highlighted by Sreenivasan and Weinberger (2017), laughter not only helps people to relax and cope with negative or painful situations, it is also beneficial in reducing interpersonal tensions. Hence, this encouraged him to approach them as the story depicted that it made him

think he was one of them, and not ‘a little misshapen thing that Nature, in some humorous mood, had fashioned for others to mock at’ (Wilde, 2019, p. 22). The second act, on the other hand, focuses on the Dwarf’s love towards the Infanta which could be interpreted as his genuine feelings towards her. She fascinated him when he first saw her and ever since she gave him the white rose, he fell in love with her and wanted to invite her to the forest as his playmate. When everyone in the Palace was on a break, the Dwarf became impatient because he wanted to see the Infanta again. His impatience eventually prompted him to wander inside the Palace, where his actions revealed more of his genuineness to see the Princess hoping that he could dance for her and make her laugh again. His feelings towards the Princess were genuine to the extent where he was not swayed by the King’s throne, ornate and other riches.

The Dwarf’s genuineness consequently brought upon himself a devastating revelation that would lead to his demise. When he passed into another room, he was shocked to see a monstrous being watching him and mocking all his gestures. To him, this being was the most grotesque monster he had ever seen. At this point, the Dwarf was still oblivious that he was looking at his own reflection. This could be because spent his entire life surrounded by nature where there was a lack of mirrors or surfaces that show a very clear reflection of himself. When he realised that he was looking at his own reflection, the story depicted that he had a very hard time swallowing the truth as ‘he gave a wild cry of despair, and fell sobbing to the ground’ (Wilde, 2019, p. 30). He finally understood why the children were laughing at him; they laughed at him not because they enjoyed his performance, it was because of his misshapen appearance and hunchback. This could be interpreted as how much a standardised definition of beauty could shatter one’s self-esteem. Most characters in this story evaluate beauty based on the outer appearance and not the inner beauty, like how the Birds and the Lizards liked the Dwarf for his kindness and did not mind his appearance. As an example, the story narrates that the Birds ‘did not mind his being ugly’ because ‘he had been kind to them’ (Wilde, 2019, p.

24). Their perception towards the Dwarf could also be found in this excerpt which showed that they approached him without hesitation despite his appearance, ‘So they flew round and round him, just touching his cheek with their wings as they passed, and chattered to each other [...]’ (Wilde, 2019, p. 24). With regard to the Lizards, they said ‘Every one cannot be as beautiful as a lizard, [...] he is really not so ugly after all, provided, of course, that one shuts one’s eyes, and does not look at him’ (Wilde, 2019, p. 25). However, during the Dwarf’s final moments, his definition of beauty was the same as the other characters because he saw himself as an ugly and grotesque monster too foul to look despite his good personality. It did not take long for the Dwarf to meet his demise, where he died of a broken heart.

Based on the Kantian theory, the main character committed the acts as mentioned earlier out of pure intentions of befriending the Infanta and/or the other children. As mentioned earlier, the children laughed at the Dwarf’s appearance and the Infanta gave the white rose to tease him. But the Dwarf still interpreted these instances as an opportunity to establish new friendships with them since he did not have human friends in the forest. His actions were based on the response of the children and the Infanta, which further establishes his genuine and simple nature. If the children and the Infanta showed disgust and were hostile towards him, the reverse would have happened whereby the truth would dawn upon him earlier in the story. He would have been sad and humiliated that he was in the center of attention, and confused because he would not know why they dislike him so much. Therefore, it could be deduced that the Dwarf’s actions are based on the response of the children and the Infanta which he interpreted positively, and this highlights his genuine and simple nature further.

With regard to the benefits, the Dwarf’s actions benefitted the self by bringing content and a sense of belonging to himself. Not only was he satisfied that he could bring joy to the children and the Infanta, he believed that he could make new friends after being isolated in the forest where he mostly interacted with the animals; especially now that he was brought to a

foreign place. He felt accomplished that he made the Infanta and the other children laugh which, in turn, brought joy to the Dwarf himself who thought that they were enjoying his performance. This act brought joy and satisfaction to him because he thought he was able to make the children laugh. On the other hand, the intention behind the Dwarf's actions benefitted the children. As depicted in the story, his appearance alone made the children laugh. Although it was out of mockery, it still made the children happy to see someone as strange as the Dwarf. Even when he wept on the ground, the children still laughed because they thought he was performing for them again. But this repudiates the Dwarf's attempts in befriending them. In short, the intention behind the Dwarf's actions benefitted the others more than himself.

Although a Kantian would deduce that the Dwarf was acting for the sake of other ends, his actions are morally permissible. From Kant's perspective on morality, the Dwarf's actions express a will wholly determined by his own moral law that the kind and happy people make good friends. This is explained further through his interpretation on the white rose the Infanta gave him. While the Infanta viewed her own actions as a sign of mockery, he interpreted the rose as a kind gesture due to the positive connotation of flowers. As Firth (2018) suggests, flowers are generally linked to a person's happiness because it uplifts their spirit and relieves negative emotions, such as stress, anxiety, and depression. As such, the Dwarf perceived the rose as a token to creating a new friendship with her as he had no human friends when he was still living in the forest. His second action as highlighted earlier was driven by his genuine feelings towards the Infanta. Based on the Kantian theory, if the Dwarf wanted to befriend someone as kind as her, he would have to take the initiative to approach her. He eventually made it his moral duty to look for the Princess and invite her to play with him in the forest.

Therefore, with reference to Kant's perspective on morality, the Dwarf's actions showed his efforts in wanting to bring happiness to the children, as well as befriending the Infanta so he could show her the wonderful things that he experienced outside of the Palace.

These were done out of his genuine intention of making people happy. However, his will to make new friends led him to the devastating truth – he was a monster who was mocked by the people he thought he could be friends with. His efforts to make the children happy and befriend the Infanta was immediately diminished by this revelation, and he was quickly overwhelmed by the dejection that never existed in the first place and he had been deceived due to his ignorance to his appearance. Death in classic fairy tales often acts as a fair punishment for evil characters, but in the case of Wilde’s fairy tale, the Dwarf experienced death despite the genuineness in his actions. Although the Dwarf was unable to experience a happy ending, the Kantian theory justifies that a good will often fails to achieve the good ends at which it aims, as long as his actions were done out of the good itself. This meant that even though the Dwarf failed to fulfil his intentions of making new friends at the end, his will was able to justify his actions that were done out of his will that encompasses the good will.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the analysis of Wilde’s selected short stories on the main characters’ personalities and actions which resulted in certain consequences, and how the underlying maxims or motivations of those actions could be justified based on Kant’s perspective of morality. Based on the personalities highlighted in the first part of the analysis in each short story, the main characters chosen for this study are deemed as morally good in accordance with the conventional categories of fairy tale characters that follow the “good versus evil” rule. One common theme that is highlighted in the second part of the analysis is that all the characters experience death as a consequence of their actions. But as shown in the third part of the analysis, these reasons are evaluated with the application of the principle of the Good Will which reveals that some of the characters do not possess the good will that would justify their deaths.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The study aimed to discuss the theme of morality in Oscar Wilde's fairy tales which contradict the general happily-ever-after concept of classic fairy tales through the theory of deontological ethics. This chapter includes a discussion of major findings as related to how the personalities of Wilde's main characters affect their actions in the selected short stories, how these actions result in the consequences involving physical disfigurement and/or deaths of the characters, and the perspective on the underlying reasons behind their actions from Kant's theory of morality. Moreover, this chapter includes a discussion on connections to this study and Kantian Ethics' principle of the Good Will. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, recommendations for future studies, and a summary of this study.

5.2 The relation between the personalities and actions of Wilde's main characters

In general, personalities reflect the way one thinks and acts in certain situations. This includes how they relate to the others around them, and how their values and beliefs prompt them to act accordingly. With regard to how Kant defines personality, it is the 'freedom and independence from the mechanism of the whole of nature, regarded nevertheless as also a capacity of a being subject to special laws—namely pure practical laws given by his own reason' (Kant, 2015, p. 71). This meant that one is truly free when their actions are governed by their own free will as a result of their desires.

Based on the analysis, the characters whose actions and personalities adhere to Kant's definition of personality are the Prince, the Giant, and the Dwarf. These characters have demonstrated that they acted freely based on what they believe to be their moral duties. For instance, the Prince was portrayed to be compassionate towards his people suffering from poverty. He believed that his people deserve to experience a bit of comfort in their lives; not

starving and feeling cold either in their own homes or on the streets. This principle prompted him to commit the acts of compassion as discussed in the previous chapter. On the other hand, the Giant went through a transformation from a selfish Giant into a kind being who wanted to experience joy. His actions also showed his willingness to admit his mistakes and make amends for his selfishness, and these became the moral law that prompted him to do so. Furthermore, the Dwarf committed the actions mentioned in the previous chapter out of pure intentions which became his own moral law. His actions reflected his genuineness and kindness towards the children and the Infanta, whereby he had to approach them if he truly wanted to establish new friendships with them.

In contrast, the characters whose actions and personalities oppose Kant's definition of personality are the Swallow, the Nightingale, and Hans. Kant stated that one can only be free when that reason is independent of the rest of the agent, which would allow them to choose in accordance with their moral law (Eddon & Singer, 2018). Based on this statement, these characters did not act freely based on their own moral law. For instance, Wilde depicted the Swallow as a loyal character who stayed with the Prince to help him carry out his acts of kindness. He only took action when the Prince showed disappointment or sadness because he felt guilty or regretted making him that way. The Nightingale's actions for the Student were linked to her belief that true love exists. She searched for the rose in response to the Student who demonstrated the typical characteristics of a romantic fairy tale hero which matched her idea of a true lover. Moreover, Hans possessed the personality of a kind and honest person who was also gullible when it involved his friend. Hans committed the acts highlighted in Chapter 4 because he felt it was his way of showing his gratitude towards the Miller. He put a higher priority on his friend over his own garden because of his belief that friends are meant to help each other.

5.3 The consequences of the actions taken by Wilde's main characters

The study also addresses the consequences faced by Wilde's main characters; all of them experienced death as a result of their actions. Each of them contradicts the use of death in fairy tales commonly used for evil characters, whose main intentions are typically to harm or kill the protagonist or to interrupt their journey in achieving their goals ("Fairy tale characters", n.d.). But as shown in the findings, none of Wilde's selected main characters had such intentions. As Kantian Ethics suggests, the permissibility of one's morality does not necessarily depend on "right and wrong" and that one should consider how their intention or underlying maxim enables them to fulfill their moral duties.

Some of the actions done by Wilde's selected main characters involve them doing things for others in hopes that their actions benefit the others. While the actions of the main characters were done out of good intention, they were unable to avoid the consequences which involved their demise. The Swallow and Hans are examples of characters who died of such a cause. In the Swallow's case, his commitment to the Prince made him stay in the city during winter when he was supposed to join his friends to escape the cold. However, he did not have sufficient food and proper shelter that would help him endure winter; this eventually became the cause of his death at the end of the story. Hans, too, was committed to his friend to the extent where he was willing to leave in the middle of the night to do his friend a favour. He could not avoid death as he drowned in the end while wandering in the dark. Both of Wilde's characters demonstrated good intentions through their actions, but they were unable to avoid the consequences that led to their deaths.

Furthermore, the deaths of evil fairy tale characters are often narrated with grisly descriptions to educate readers about the consequences of actions that are deemed morally wrong. But based on the analysis, there are instances where characters died of heartbreak based on the given situation. In the case of Wilde's selected short stories, the Prince and the Dwarf

went through such experiences. The Prince died of a broken heart because of the death of his friend, while the Dwarf had to swallow the bitter truth which ultimately led to a severe heartbreak. These observations highlight that fairy tale characters could die as a result of a broken heart due to a sad or traumatic event. Although they demonstrated good intentions through their actions, their own maxims could lead them to their own demise. Kantian Ethics states that a good will is still expressible as long as the will is good in itself, even though the agent fails to achieve their desired object. This also contradicts the typical aspect of death in classic fairy tales that are not only associated with evil characters but are not common in classic fairy tales.

In some cases, fairy tale characters chose to sacrifice their lives to achieve a greater goal. The Nightingale self-sacrificed out of her own will. As previously mentioned, the events that led up to her death was a result of her idea on true love. Her death could be interpreted as the highest form of love is compassionate and altruistic love; true love is when one is willing to endure or sacrifice for the happiness of the other. Self-sacrifice also contradicts the typical connotation of death with evil characters and punishment. The Nightingale does not carry any malicious intentions nor committed acts that would be regarded as punishable. But as highlighted in the previous chapter, Kant argues that suicide is not morally permissible due to the idea that such action means to escape the natural law of life as means of avoiding a more painful end.

The Giant's death shows that deaths in classic fairy tales are not necessarily ominous or associated with evil characters. Death could also be interpreted as a happily-ever-after for characters whose actions are acknowledged as morally permissible. For example, as a result of the Giant's actions towards the children, the Child Christ invited him to join him in Paradise. Within the Christian framework, Wilde seemed to have set heaven or paradise as the highest form of reward for his actions. This is due to the common connotation that heaven is the final

resting place for those who do good deeds. Thus, the Giant's death is an example that the aspect of death could be used as a reward for characters whose actions are categorised as good based on the conventional rules of fairy tales. This is supported by the Kantian theory which states that for the Giant's underlying intentions to be regarded as the good will, his will must encompass the good itself. Hence, his actions would be able to be acknowledged as morally permissible.

5.4 The reasons behind the actions of Wilde's main characters based on Kantian Ethics

The underlying reasons behind the actions of Wilde's main characters are categorised into "for duty" and "for other means". As mentioned in Chapter 1, Kantian Ethics interpret the morality of an action based on the agent's maxims or motivations which should be free from expectations or obligations. Based on the analysis, the characters whose actions were committed out of their own good will for their own duties are the Prince, the Giant, and the Dwarf. According to the Kantian theory, the idea of a good will is ideally the will one possesses when making decisions solely based on their moral law. This meant that a good will requires two conditions – first, certain circumstances should be relinquished when they aim to achieve the desired outcome; second, the agent's decisions should solely be based on their own moral principles. For instance, the Prince's actions were motivated by his desire to ease the suffering and misery of his people. In order to do so, he would have to sacrifice his beauty which was the fine jewels and gold leaves adorning his statue. On the other hand, the Giant decided to forgo his selfishness if he wanted to convince the children to play in the garden again. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the motivation underlying his actions was to take responsibility for his own mistakes if he wanted to experience joy again after being accustomed to solitude and loneliness. The Dwarf's actions were motivated by his excitement to make new friends with the Infanta. This requires him to manifest his genuineness in approaching the Infanta with pure intentions of wanting to meet her. The three main characters demonstrated that their decisions

were wholly determined by their own moral values, and even though the consequences were their deaths, their actions are still morally permissible as they express their good will which justifies their moral duties.

In contrast, the reasons underlying the actions of the Swallow, the Nightingale, and Hans were done for the other means. As Kantian theory suggests, for the will underlying one's actions to express the good will, the will must encompass the good itself and not motivated by other circumstances. This is because such obligations do not have any natural inclination as the agent feels constraint to carry out an act. This is exemplified in the three characters mentioned earlier. Although the Swallow the reason behind his actions was to make the Prince happy, his actions do not express the good will they were done upon request or command by the Prince. Besides, the maxim behind the Nightingale's self-sacrifice stemmed from her faith in true love, but this does not express good will because she was using her life for the sake of the Student. With regard to Hans, his actions throughout the story were motivated by his friendship with the Miller which highlights his obligation towards his friend. In short, the actions of these characters are motivated by other means which constrains them to act in certain ways. When that moral duty is not present, the characters themselves might not act at their own will with the thought that their morality requires them to do so. This, however, does not mean that the Kantian theory denies the characters' good intentions. For their will underlying their actions to be regarded as the good will, the characters need to have the desire to adhere to their moral law whereby their decisions are freely based on their own reasons.

5.5 Recommendations

As highlighted in Chapter 1, the main characters chosen for this study are the agents of the actions who experience death at the end of the story. Kant (1997) stated that a good will is still able to be expressed through the actions of the characters even though it is powerless to manifest the desired outcome (pp. 7–17). In the chosen short stories, some of the characters'

efforts were diminished and not acknowledged by the ones who receive the actions. Hence, there is a question of how the actions of Wilde's fairy tale characters affect the evaluation of their morality with regard to the receiver of those actions. To address this, future studies could investigate how the actions of the agents are morally permissible based on the theory of Utilitarianism. As highlighted in Chapter 2, this ethical theory states that morality is evaluated based on the consequences of one's actions. The theory suggests that the agent's actions should maximise happiness or pleasure and reduce unhappiness or sufferings (Bentham, 1781, pp. 14–15). Thus, future studies could evaluate how the consequences affect the receiver based on Utilitarianism's perspective of morality.

Besides, the study excluded the readers' interpretation and the underlying meaning conveyed by the author in the chosen fairy tales, because such information is irrelevant to the theory of Kant's moral philosophy. However, Carter (2012) argues that text alone does not express any meaning because it is the readers who provide meaning based on their personal experiences with language. This includes 'the language system' and 'the social connotations of communication' which aid in the making of meaning (Carter, 2012). Each reader has their own moral value and beliefs which may affect their evaluation of morality based on Kant's moral philosophy. As such, future studies could consider how the readers' interpretation affects the deontological approach in analysing the theme of morality in Wilde's fairy tales.

Furthermore, Kant states that the fundamental principle of one's moral duties is a categorical imperative that commands their morality. As such, the study has yet to address the moral permissibility of the characters' actions based on how the two formulations as stated by Kant in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics Morals* (1997) – firstly, the agent should act according to the maxim that should be able to be a universal law; and secondly, the act must demonstrate the agent's humanity as a rational being (pp. 24–40). While this study has addressed the maxims or underlying motivations behind the main characters' actions based on the principle

of the Good Will, it is also necessary to consider the categorical implicatives that determine the morality behind the characters' actions. This includes whether those underlying motivations could be universalised for all agents without reference to any other desire or end.

5.6 Conclusion

Fairy tales are often used as moral lessons by authors to convey their own values and beliefs. They integrate the theme of morality with their work through the consequences of the actions taken by their main characters. One of the common aspects used to educate readers on morality is death. This includes providing readers with grimly describing the death of the main characters, especially the antagonists or ones who had committed actions deemed morally wrong. But in the case of Wilde's fairy tales, most of the characters experienced death despite their actions regarded as morally permissible according to the rules of classic fairy tales. To understand this, the study has addressed the relationship between the personalities and actions of the main characters in Wilde's selected fairy tales. The study has also integrated Kantian Ethics to evaluate their maxims or underlying motivations after investigating the consequences of their actions.

The findings indicated that the personalities of Wilde's main characters in the selected fairy tales affect their actions as depicted in the stories. The Kantian theory states that the actions of Wilde's main characters are driven by their desires which reflect their personalities. Based on this, some of the characters' actions were driven by their principles and beliefs which allows them to in accordance with their moral laws. The study has also addressed the consequences of the characters' actions that contradict the typical usage of death in classic fairy tales. These include inevitable deaths after committing altruistic acts, a broken heart as a result of a traumatic event, self-sacrifice, and peaceful death. Through the analysis of the intentions underlying their actions, the deaths of Wilde's selected main characters highlight death is not necessarily experienced by evil characters or acts as a just punishment. Moreover, the findings

of the study suggested that the reasons underlying the actions of Wilde's main characters could be categorised into "for duty" and "for other means". The actions of the Prince, the Giant, and the Dwarf are regarded as morally permissible because their actions were done for their own moral duty which expresses the good will. Meanwhile, the acts committed by the Swallow, the Nightingale, and Hans were for other means instead of the good will due to underlying obligations constraining to act for the sake of other ends.

Thus, the study provides readers with a deontological approach to understanding the main characters of Wilde's selected short stories. Through the first part of the analysis, readers could take into consideration the characters' personalities and how their own principles influence the way they think and act when analysing or understanding the characters in a story. With regard to death in fairy tales, readers would be able to understand that the conventional portrayal of death is not necessarily grim or gruesome. Through the analysis, readers would learn that death manifests in various contexts and is inevitable to even characters deemed morally good. Furthermore, the study suggests that there are different approaches to understanding or analysing a character. The deontological analysis applied in this study could provide readers with a different understanding of moral theories that are more than the typical rule of "right and wrong". By highlighting the maxims or underlying motivations of the acts committed by Wilde's main characters, this could educate readers on the principle of the Good Will which could also be applied in their own lives. They would understand that for their own actions to be morally permissible, their will must express the good will in which they do something for the good itself; not out of obligation or expectations.

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Appendix A

Conceptual Framework

