

The Realization of the Bad Impact of Early Capitalism in Oscar Wilde's "The Happy Prince"

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Abstract

Living under feudalism and capitalism seems very good for those who were born from rich people. It is because they do not have to struggle of their life and would get everything as desire. Meanwhile, it is very hard for poor people because their live is worse and if they do not struggle of the life they might die. "The Happy Prince" is the story that shows how the feudalism and early capitalism work in the society. People live contradictory under those systems. Fortunately, since the capitalism applies, the poor people find new hope. Their labor-power is paid so that they are to feed themselves and the family. Besides, they work for the capitalists' happiness. This new term of live is not a big different from feudal system. The payment for the poor who work is a very little difference that makes the poor happy. This research aims to describe how the feudalism and the early capitalism work in the short story. Using the sociological approach as to the evidences of the feudalism and the early capitalism system in the story is chosen to describe the impacts of those systems toward society. The result of this research shows that poor people accept the system of capitalism than the feudalism. It is because their labor-power is paid. This condition is different from previous system (feudalism) that makes poor people are getting worse because they must work freely.

Keywords: Feudalism, Early Capitalism, Contradictory Life.

INTRODUCTION

Critic to the literature is needed to find the social condition of the works' age clearly. According to Schram & Steet through their article (1984) that literature is the portrait of social phenomena. Therefore, reading the literature is way to understand what things happen in the society. Literature records all aspects or elements of the social environment. It is the one of characteristic of literature production that it is the portrayal of tragedy with distinctive intellect of imagery. (Sumbul, 2014). "The Happy Prince" is the short story written by Oscar Wilde in the Queen Victoria reign. By the short story, it is able to get the meaning of the era. It captures the phenomena and social condition because the literature is not something fallen from the

sky. Its process is connected to the background of its creators.

"The Happy Prince" tells about gold statue with jewels and little swallow. The short story serves the controversial and attractive issues. It presents the poverty and the child labor of the luxury Victorian age. When the prince was live, he could not see real situation because all people around him made him busy with the party, playing, and dancing. They built the high wall to separate the prince's life and the low society. Therefore, the prince knew that the condition is good as he get in the palace.

To see the deepest vision of the story that critics to the social phenomenon on the working class against capitalized upper class and the practical of capitalism itself. For

example, the young king or prince who lives happily in the palace with high wall so that he is unable to see the whole condition of his people. Meanwhile, after his death, his people situate the prince's statue above the city so that he is able to see all the aspects of his people's situation like poverty, child labor and slavery caused of capitalism (Wilde, 1909, p. 1).

Meanwhile, "The Happy Prince" short story is the story that captures the social condition of the age when it was written. It conveys information about the whole condition of the age. High contradictory to the aesthetic aspect of the literature, it might be said about the critic of the era. According to Damono (1978) the short story is made for entertaining and understanding about society. Hence, it is able to make the reader understand many aspects by reading it deeply. It is also needed some theories such as psychoanalysis, feminism, capitalism and so on depends on the issues.

The researcher tries to prove the realization of bad impact of early capitalism in "The Happy Prince" by Oscar Wilde. The social condition that becomes to be focused is the early capitalism and feudalism practice to the society. It would be discussed based on the evidences such as the idea that presented in the conversation and symbols in the story.

METHODOLOGY

This research deals with a short story entitled "The Happy Prince" that written by Oscar Wilde during Victorian era. Literature research methodology is applied to this research in order to explain the question based on question research above. The contextual method would be used to this research. The researcher applies the extrinsic element to the story. The method of collecting data is library research where the researcher gains the data from reading the book and the short story itself.

The primary data is from Oscar Wilde's short story entitled "The Happy Prince". The researcher decides the relevant data from the

story through the dialogue and monologue. Those data would be interpreted to find the social condition of the era by applying the extrinsic elements (theories) that have correlation with the research question.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

It is already stated above that certain theory is needed to understand the short story and to read it deeply in order to find the issues. Those theories are based on the problem of the research. "The Happy Prince" is the short story that conveys many ideas of the society. One of the ideas of the story that become the focus of this research is about feudalism and the existence of early capitalism.

THEORY OF FEUDALISM

Feudalism is kind of abstraction which is derived from some facts of early European history. The term of feudalism is invented in eighteen century. It primarily is not only about the economic system or social system but the government method. Therefore, feudalism is caused of the power of economic of the land owners and this term is not talking about the state and the citizen but the lord and vassals. Basically, feudal is the conceptual of basic sovereignty and social contrast and political military arrangement between lords of the Middle Ages and the vassals.

THE CONCEPT OF FEUDALISM

Feudalism is the dominance structure that is controlled by the monarch or other lords to maintain their power toward the society of their claimed region. It was usually done by making political affair with the local leaders. It is a way of structuring society around and relationships derive from holding of land in exchange for service or labor. The lords would grant the vassals for various services. Those services provide protection to the lord in maintaining their power or in other word the vassals protect the domination of the lord. The important of this protection would stem from the way in which feudalism develop. Therefore, the feudalism system creates problem to the slavery because they

who were in high position of the society were able to take and throw the slave or labor at will. During this system, the international trade slave was common and it made the lower people even more at the bottom. (Davis, 2008, p. 46).

King was the leader of feudal system because the king owned all the land and the country so that he was able to decide to whom the land would be leased. He would allow and trust tenants to lease land for him after they swear an oath of fealty to the King at all the times. They then known as Barons and they had powerful and complete control of the land they leased from the King and automatically wealthy. Meanwhile, the Barons who were also known as manors became the executor of the feudal system. As the Lord, they were completely able to control of the land and to establish their own system of justice and minted their own money and set their own taxes as well. The land that had been leased, the Barons had to serve the royal council, pay rent and provide the King with Knights for military service to save them (Okey, 1986, pp. 21-22). Barons also had to provide lodging and food when the King and other royal council travelled around his realm.

Based on the article entitled *Medieval Life-Feudalism and the Feudal System* that edited by Scott Michel Rank and uploaded on history website, The Knights that provided by the Barons as for military service also had to protect the Barons and their families from everything that threaten them. The position and the power of the King and the Barons were absolutely saved and become rise because the Knights would be loyal to protect them. The Knights also able kept as much of the land as they wished for their own personal use and distributed to the villains or serfs. Even they could get as much as they wished, they were not as rich as the Barons. Meanwhile, the Serfs were given land by the Knights because they belonged to poor people. They had to serve and provide the Knights' needs such as food and other

services with free labor. They had no right to speak and were not allowed to leave Manors. Even for getting married, they had to ask their Lord's permission.

THE BAD IMPACT OF FEUDAL SYSTEM

The feudalism as the dominant of political practices brought the stability power among lords. Serfs forced to support the infrastructure by providing essential goods and services. This was the combination of with a system that organized to protect and to maintain a steady balance of the people in high position. The true advantages of this system were felt by the lords and their associates. Feudalism as the instrumental for social order provided some unity and security in local areas but there was no strong central government to enforce laws fairly. Therefore, the King would accede to the Barons to have power (Davis, 2008, p. 57).

It was because there was no central power that controlled the system, it was easy to use force, violence and lies to get one's way. According to the article that written by Campbell Community School entitled *You Decide... Feudalism: Good or Bad?*, It was probably the war happen among lords because the different interests. Hence, the feudalism often did not treat people equally or let them move up in society. Special treatment would only be received by them who were born from lord or royal families without effort or earning it and people born as serf were supposed to remain serf. Therefore, serfs were not allowed to leave lord's lands. They had to work a whole life. They worked for three or four days a week as a payment to the lords or vassals for allowing them to farm for themselves on other days. Their movement and daily activities were restricted because they could not leave the land without permission.

THE EARLY OF CAPITALISM

The concept of capitalism started to change the feudal system around nineteenth century in Europe. It is believed that the renaissance impact to the system cause this

period created great revival of art, science, literature and human freedom. Other aspect that that plays a role to the transition from feudalism to capitalism was the new trade option of the modern economic system. The internal war happened because there was no central role of the system.

The concept of capitalism emerged as key concepts designed to European since the feudal system ended. The term of capitalism is the option of social action in order to structural imperative. Capitalism is defined as a stock of resources or production factors that controlled by individual capitalist combines with other factors such as labors. As in Marxist, political economy formulated social relationship between capitalists who have properties over the means of production and wage-labors who only have labor-power to sell in the market. Therefore, this concept of 'capital' is not the factor of production but it describes the component of social relationship (Holton, 1985, p. 15).

It remains the question whether the capitalism view as a system of exchange relation or system of production relations. In fact, the capitalism do not deny those term it requires both exchange and production as the social activities and it might be seen as of primary casual significance. The implication of those options is to consider the place of the market and market relations within the economy and society. Capitalism is seen as the system of exchange which relies on market exchange of communities through the price for those who centralized the exchange or distribution to the constitution of society hence, it appears as free market transection between private interests of capitalism term (Holton, 1985, p. 16).

The relationship between society and the market principle can be seen by the alternative way that the capitalism is not only as the market for the product but also for its labor-force. The concept of slavery exists in different form as wage-labor. The wage-labor is not seen as optional to capitalism but it is a fundamental component of it. This is the

transformation of the Western world from the last system to the wage-labor capital relation. *"This turn shifts historical analysis away from a concern for market exchange and commerce towards change in the relationship between labors and social organization of production"* (Holton, 1985, p. 16).

ANALYSIS

"The Happy Prince" was written by the author of Victorian era, Oscar Wilde. The story tells about the gold statue of the prince and the swallow. The swallow helps the prince to spread the value things over his body to poor people. In the end of the story, the swallow die and the statue becomes worthless so people get it down and burn it. "The Happy Prince" is about the sacrifice of two there are the prince who give away all his value things and the swallow that stay and behind to carry out the prince's wishes and forget its journey to stay with. As has been mentioned above that the literature as the media for recording the social phenomena, "The Happy Prince" describes social condition of the Victorian era. The story is able to convey the about the luxury life, prosperity, slavery, and poverty. The analysis would try to describe two questions below:

The Practices of Feudalism and Early Capitalism in Oscar Wilde's "The Happy Prince" Short Story

This part is going to explain the evidences of feudal system and capitalism in the story. Feudalism is the system is the dominance structure that is controlled by the monarch or other lords to maintain their power toward the society of their claimed region and the labors work for them without paying. Meanwhile, the capitalism is defined as a stock of resources or production factors that controlled by individual capitalist combines with other factors such as labors. The labors of the system get payment based on their work. In other word, the labors only have their labor-power to sell to capitalists. Here some evidences of the system in story.

I lived in palace where there were no sadness. In the daytime I played with my friends in the garden, and in the evening I danced. There was a high wall round the garden. But I did not know what lay on the other side (Wilde, 1909: 5).

The statement above is told by the prince. He seems regretted of the past that he could not able to see the real social life of his environment. He used to play and dance and his life was always happy because he lived in the place in the highest class. People who were born from the noble class get happiness by enjoying everything automatically without any effort or earning. "Play" and "dance" are the described as the enjoyment and happiest activities and those were done by the prince every day. It means, prince as the lord do not need to work or everything to get his life better.

The high wall means the line to separate between high class and low class. The prince was unable to see outside the palace when he was life because there is high wall so that the prince only knew the beautiful life. This fact is the way how feudal works in the society. Those who live in high social class seem do not what to know the problem of low society. All they want is happiness and everything they want without earning.

In the next paragraph the story, Wilde described that the poor people become the free labor or they work for the lord without payment. The labors work for lord's pleasure and they could not leave the lords. "*She is making a dress for one of the queen's ladies, for dance in the palace*" (Wilde, 1909, p. 6). High social class is identically with glamour and luxury life. They do not have to make an effort or hard work because the labor feudal system they were born to satisfy their desire. Living in the system, the lords also do not let the slaves or labors leave from them. In the next lines, the prince tells the swallow that the woman sad because her son is sick and she could not give him the food but she still does to make the dress. The rule, applied in feudal system, the slaves or labors are not

allowed to leave the lord even they do not pay in cash but the live itself as the payment. The woman could not stop making dress because she lives inside the system as a poor.

Prince tells the little swallow about the young writer who tries to finish his work in the next day. The young writer is forced to write a story but he does not have spirit because he is weak and hungry. He also could not set the fire to make his body warm in the winter because he does not have wood. The occurrence describes the situation of poor people who have to struggle for their life. This is a vivid description of contradictory situation of living under the system. It is very hard for people but lords to survive even to fulfill their basic need such as food and comfort place.

This part tells that someone has to produce or create thing to maintain their life as well. The poor people live with limit facility so their production is being stuck. Production is the part of capitalist activities. But still in this condition, the young is represented as poor people whose skill and ability seem not to be appreciated. It is such a fate that they have to give good services and satisfy people's desire who live above their class.

The situation of the young writer implies that the production activity become absolute condition in living. They have to create things in order to sell it to save their life. "Someone likes my stories!" he cried happily. "*This is a gift from someone who has read my books. Now I can finish writing this story*" (Wilde, 1909, p. 11). Living under capitalist system, they have to be able to produce things as commodities. "Book" is defined as their product to sell in market place. The book should be able to compete among others so they would get the feedback. Reciprocal is the concept of market place where people should have property or power to be sold.

Still, the case of the capitalism of the story could understand from the little girl who sells the eggs. The little girl sells the eggs for his father. She does not get money because

the eggs felt and when she goes home, her father would hit her because she comes without money. Hence, in the story, the father is represented as the person who has private property or capitalist. It is because he has property, he manages how the girl work and pay her when he thinks the girl does right way.

The working class is represented by the girl. She does not have anything but her wage-labor power to sell in order to save her life. She would follow the rules, made by her masters and she always spends her time for working to get money for them as represented by her father in the story. "*Her eggs have fallen on the ground and they are broken. She has no money to take home. Her father will hit her.*" (Wilde, 1909, p. 12). It seems very clear the exploitation labors of capitalism system for profit purpose at the regulation of market-price apparently as independence of such exploitation in the story. The workers must do and avoid what their masters' desire. They would have reward when they give the masters advantages and they would get punishment for their mistakes.

The situation of the poor people under capitalism is also described from the little swallow's story. It tells the prince about the condition over the country. In capitalism, the condition of the rich people and poor people are sharply contradictive. The rich people are shown as people who always happy with full of food and comfort house. Meanwhile, it would be very hard to get the bread for people of low class.

He saw the rich eating and drinking in their beautiful houses. He saw the poor people sitting at the gate. He flew into the dark street and saw the white faces of hungry children with sad eyes. Under a bridge, two little boys were lying close together to keep warm. 'We are so hungry!' they said. 'You cannot lie there!' shouted a guard. (Wilde, 1909, p. 14).

The cases give the reader clue regarding the general situation of different social classes though this story. Wilde describes the main

phenomenon of the society under capitalism. The riches are able to have many things as they want. Besides, for those who live in low society class, they only able to sell their power to work for the rich and for those who does not have anything even the power for working, they would get anything like having bread to eat.

Moreover, Wilde shows the fact of real capitalist in this story. They respect to other rich people because the rich could be colleague in order to get profit. In the end of the story, Wilde describes that the prince statue turns to be uninteresting. It does not have the value things anymore and it is not as important as in previous to the capitalist. Hence, the statue is pulled down by them because the statue has no bargaining value anymore.

Meanwhile, it is the description how the system works. They would change the position of the prince because the prince could not make the system work well. The point is that the leader should be able to support the capitalism. In this situation, the trading system is the way to live or survive. Prince gives his all wealth to them (the poor) freely or without returning back so he dies and his position is replaced by someone else who is able to control the system well.

The Bad Impacts of Feudalism and Early Capitalism to the Low People in Oscar Wilde's "The Happy Prince" Short Story

The feudal system or capitalism that applies in society would have negative impacts for those who were born as the poor. The happy prince statue is the iconic condition of the society. The statue is an iconic of prosper situation of the society. Therefore, when the statue does not have beauty thing it is replaced. This phenomenon tells about the system's impact in the society. The happy prince is like the utopia that tries to hide the reality of the country. Other impacts of those systems in the story would be discussed below.

Feudalism is the system that regulates people and considers the social class to determine the position and portion in acting. When people live as the poor, they have to work for the lord freely and it assumes as their fate. There is no big different from capitalism. The poor people experience the same things but in this system their work is paid. Therefore, inequality is always experienced by them as poor people.

The first inequality is described when the prince talks about the real condition of his people to the swallow for the first time. Implicitly, the prince says that all people were born as the same and they should be equal. *"But even that poor heart can feel, and so I cry"* (Wilde, 1909, p. 5). In feudalism, this thing does not happen. Wealth and lands are the consideration of people they should belong to be.

The poor people under feudal system must work for the lord as without being paid as a form of reciprocity because the lords give them permission for them to live in certain area. The poor people are still able to live in the country but even though they work very hard they could not welfare their own life. As the prince's story about the society that the one of poor woman makes dress for the queen's ladies but she could give her son good food. She is only able to have the lowest quality from the nature or the country. Her life is representing to other poor's life of the country. They face a very hard situation and there is no choice. They must work very hard without getting cash or such food but they still do that because the system is not allowed them leave from the lords. The sadness and starving are not having attention from the riches or the lords.

In the situation that described by the prince in the story is about the little girl as the labor of his father. This part situation is clearly shows how the capitalism works. Capitalist build the system based on trading. They who have money or property would compete with other I the market place for the profit. The poor people who have nothing but

power for being labor are only able to sell their power to the capitalist. This description has no much difference from the feudal system. The different is that the poor people are paid for their working.

The transition from feudalism to capitalism creates new hope to the poor people. It seems as fresh air because they are paid under the capitalism. As has been shown of the little girl story, she is very happy when she have worth stone. She would bring it home and her father would not hit her of the broken eggs. The girl as a labor would try to make her father (a man who has properties) happy because when her father happy she would she would have reward. It is exactly how the capitalism works over the society. The labors would be happy if they are able to fulfill the capitalists' desire. Working for the capitalist means they have to do what the capitalists' desire. The capitalists' goal is getting profit. Hence, the poor believe that working for the capitalists and help them in realizing their goal is not that bad.

Other impact of both feudalism and capitalism is constitution or the rules of living. Unfortunately, the executors stand for the rich people because the rich people are able to pay them. The constitution of course would help them to accommodate their interests. In the end of the story, Wilde shows that the lords and other rich people always try to make their life happy without considering the poor's life. *"We must make an order that birds cannot die here"* (Wilde, 1909, p. 16). The statement shows the power of rich people help them to make their life well. They could support and maintain their position by the regulation as desire. As the result, the contradictory life between rich and poor is getting clearly. The more powerful rich people, the more weak of poor people.

CONCLUSION

"The Happy Prince" is the story that tells about the effort of the rich people to hide the social facts. They put the happy prince statue

above the city as icon of prosperity and happiness. They would show that there is nothing happening in the city but the happiness. In fact, "The Happy Prince" describes the true reality in the society. There are many people who live in poverty around the city and their life is being denied by those who drive the system. The result is the ironic of the statue as the icon of the city because the people live contradictory of the city.

The feudalism creates the poverty and makes it worse. The rich leader of the city and other lords would not let their labors to leave

them. The labors work freely for the rich and it is very common because they let the poor people live in the city. Moreover, capitalism shows as the replacement system in the city. The condition of people during the transition seem good than before. Their labor-power are appreciated and paid. This condition makes the poor people happy and they assume that they should make the rich people happy to have payment. They happily sell their power to fulfill capitalists' desire. In other word, the concept of capitalism is accepted by them.

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