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Humour in the Fairy Tales of Oscar Wilde

Humor v pohádkách Oscara Wildea

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## Anotace

Bakalářská práce se věnuje využití humoru v pohádkách Oscara Wildea, který je v souvislosti s těmito texty většinou opomíjen. Teoretická část práce vycházející ze sekundárních zdrojů představí autora a jeho tvorbu v kontextu žánru (autorské) pohádky a soudobé literární tvorby. Popíše typy humoru a komiky se zřetelem k jejich využití v dětské literatuře a také jejich uplatnění v díle Oscara Wildea. Praktická část se zaměří na Wildeovu pohádkovou tvorbu, kde lokalizuje a popíše použité prvky humoru a komiky a provede analýzu vybraných ukázek textů.

Klíčová slova: Oscar Wilde, pohádky, humor, ironie, satira, komunikační komedie

## Abstract

This bachelor thesis examines the use of humour in the fairy tales of Oscar Wilde, which is usually overlooked in these texts. The theoretical part based on secondary sources introduces the author and his output in the context of the authored fairy tale genre and its contemporary literary works. It describes different kinds of humour and comic with regard to their use in children's literature and their use in the works of Oscar Wilde. The practical part focuses on Wilde's fairy tales, where it localizes and describes the elements of humour and comic used and analyses selected parts of the text.

Key words: Oscar Wilde, fairy tales, humour, irony, satire, wit

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## INTRODUCTION

This bachelor thesis focuses on the analysis of fairy tales by Oscar Wilde in terms of humour. Oscar Wilde is well-known for his dark and depressing tales, but also for his plays, such as *Lady Windemere's Fan* (1892), *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), which include verbal and situational humour. He is also famous for his one and only novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). Humour is usually overlooked in his fairy tales, so this thesis endeavours to examine this aspect and its occurrence.

The theoretical part consists of three main chapters. The first chapter focuses on the fairy tale genre from the point of view of its history, division and purpose. The second chapter examines comic and different types of humour in literature. The last subchapter concerning humour describes humour in additional senses as the word "humour" has more than one meaning in English. And the last chapter focuses on the author, his life, literary work and mainly on his fairy tale books. The last but one subchapter mentions Wilde's contemporaries who also wrote books for children and the last one addresses the question of target audience. It summarizes the pros and cons in respect to Wilde's tales' suitability for children.

The analytical part contains the analysis of two Wilde's fairy tale books intended mainly for children: *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) and *A House of Pomegranates* (1891). It identifies passages containing humour and comic, their types and purposes.

## 1 FAIRY TALES

The first chapter focuses on the fairy tales as a literary genre in terms of history, purpose, types and the penultimate and final subchapters describe fairy tales written by Oscar Wilde and other authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Fairy tale is a literary genre intended mainly for children, which is believed to exist for many centuries. On the other hand, as Hunt (1995, 1) claims, the fairy tale genre as such is quite new since the beginning of the genre is believed to have appeared in the 1740s but it did not become popular and gain many children or adult readers until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As Zipes (2000, 167) mentions, the term fairy tale has its origin in the French word from the 17<sup>th</sup> century *conte de fée*, which meant stories that were orally passed while the term folk tale appeared in English later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as it was translated from the German term *Volkmärchen*. No single definition of fairy tale exists, it varied during centuries. As Zipes (2000, 167) mentions, the first but not very successful and further developed suggestion came from the German writer Jacob Grimm who said that fairy tales were more based on poetry than legends while legends were more focused on history. This statement did not succeed because of the fact that tales were tightly related to magic and the supernatural world. Later on, the German writer Kurt Ranke characterized fairy tales as stories distant from the real world in terms of time, place and causality, which the American folklorist Stith Thompson agreed on as well. So, the tales were described as distant stories in an imaginative world with indefinite characters.

Zipes (2000, 167) points out that there is also a significant difference between folk tale and fairy tale even if these terms seem to have the same meaning but their meanings and etymologies are distinct. Fairy tale is a term which can cause confusion since it can refer not only to a fairy tale as a category of oral tales but also to a whole literary genre, genre of prose literature. On the other hand, folk tale is any tale which belongs to the oral tradition and is also based on it.

According to Zipes (2000, 165 – 167), fairy tale was originally connected with folklore and it was also one of the oral genres besides myth, conveying an unbelievable

experience of supernatural beings far beyond the supernatural beings' existence, and legend, a partly sceptical story of ordinary people experiencing completely extraordinary situations. On the other hand, fairy tales are described in contrast to myth and legend since they show fictional magic and fantasy.

## 1.1 History

According to Zipes (2012, 2), it is unfeasible to find out everything about the history, both time and place, of the fairy tale genre because fairy tales are rooted in oral traditions and were probably told from the time when people started to be able to tell stories, that is from the time people developed speech. Of course, everything which is passed only orally, i.e. not written on a piece of paper, can exist in many versions since nobody tells exactly the same version that they heard and this is the reason why the versions do rarely correspond with the original one. In fact, it can differ in small details because everyone is able to create their own, maybe a more gripping, more interesting, or just a better version of the fairy tale heard from someone else.

Nowadays, fairy tales seem to be intended mainly for children because children are often associated with magic which they are more likely to believe, or with the unreal world because of not having to deal with daily problems as adults do. But in the past, it was different, so a brief outline concerning history of written fairy tales will be provided.

As it has already been mentioned, Hunt (1995, 1 – 17) claims that the origins of the fairy tale and mainly of children's book publishing go back to the 1740s but it gained popularity and a rising number of readers first in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the beginning, writers focused mainly on school books while later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they emphasised the importance of appropriate books for children which could be read in their free time even if the tales contained educational or didactical features. For example, Puritans strictly refused fairy tales for children and neither that time nor in the 19<sup>th</sup> century many people from America agreed that fairy tales should be read by children. Hunt further explains that, only two books written before 1740 were considered to be suitable for children. The first book was the collection of *Fables* (ca. 300 BC) collected by Aesop and the second one was *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) written by



Daniel Defoe. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the importance of parents' interpretation of the tales for small children was visible and parents were aware of the fact that children may not understand tales without their help.

According to Hunt (1995, 28 – 29), fairy tales spread to England in the 18<sup>th</sup> century after Robert Samber (1682 – 1745) translated the tales written by the French writer Charles Perrault (1628 – 1703) and published them as *Histories, or Tales of Past Time-Told by Mother Goose* (1729). John Newbery (1713 – 1767), also called the father of children's literature, played an important role in the history of fairy tales and children's literature as he published several versions of fairy tales adjusted to children. Then it took some time to pervade and reach many young readers but a growth of population simplified it as many children were born and parents read tales to them. Apart from that, education became more important and writers focused on it to make children aware of morals as well.

Hunt (1995, 69 – 71) describes that the authors of tales faced strong criticism mainly in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and also later on since critics found some tales unsuitable for children and intended mostly for young people and adults. On the one hand, the edition of *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood* (c. 1800) contained a difficult and unattractive topic for children in the description of the current state of womanhood, and the song called "Davy and Molly", which followed the tale was also intended for adults rather than children. But on the other hand, Benjamin Tabart prepared the very first suitable format of fairy tales for children in *Cinderella; or The Little Glass Slipper: A Tale for the Nursery* (1804) and then he published Perrault's *Collection of Popular Storie for the Nursery* (1804), later published as *Popular Fairy Tales* (1818). John Harris focused also on the visual appeal of children's tales, for example in his *Cinderella* (1808).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century themes and characters represented by animals were accepted and found useful and attractive for youngest readers. As Hunt (1995, 86 – 91) explains, well-known authors included the brothers Grimm, who published a collection of fairy tales, such as *Snow White* or *Rumpelstiltskin*. Hans Christian Andersen (1805 – 1875) was also a significant personality of that century and his tales were famous mostly in English-speaking countries. Many others published their versions of the well-known tales, such as *Cinderella* or *Little Red Riding Hood*. Later on, Henry Cole (1808 – 1882)

made efforts to change the view of fairy tales. He emphasised not only technical proficiency, the ability to use technical skills in real situations; style, quality of the tale, including the importance of morals and their value to improve the genre and the whole book industry but also amusement as a function of the tale, which led to a new trend in book production with the help of the best artists and printers. Cole's focus on visual attractiveness of books using appealing colourful illustrations contributed to the rising popularity of children's literature and the awareness of this genre.

In addition to that, the fantasy genre rising in the Victorian era did not fit the traditional concept of the fairy tales. Fantasy tales are known for supernatural creatures, magic and fantasy worlds. Book such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1898) written by Lewis Carroll or *The Hobbit* (1937) by J. R. R. Tolkien belong to traditional fantasy literature. The *Harry Potter* (1997 - 2007) by J. K. Rowling and other works of modern fantasy show the contemporary popularity of the fantasy genre.

## 1.2 Types

There is more than one criterion to distinguish among them. The first one is the form of the fairy tale. According to Zipes (2012, 3), we can make a distinction between oral and literary written forms. As a matter of fact, these two forms influence one another, and generally said, they create one complete genre.

The second distinction is made by the folklorists "[...] between wonder folk tales, which originated in oral traditions throughout the world and still exist, and literary fairy tales, which emanated from the oral traditions through the mediation of manuscripts and print, and continue to be created today in various mediated forms around the world" (Zipes, 2012, 2 – 3).

The next criterion is the general division between a folktale and an artificial, or literary, fairy tale. Briefly explained, a folktale is a tale whose author is unknown and only a collector of the tales is known. On the other hand, an artificial fairy tale is the opposite, we know who its author is.

Generally, fairy tales with a happy ending, such as a beautiful wedding at the end of the story or just the usual sentence "and lived happily ever after" are the most

common ones. As will be shown later, the fairy tales written by Oscar Wilde are exactly the opposite of these typical tales. Most of them have sad, almost tragic endings.

### 1.3 Purpose

According to Zipes (2012, 1), stories are parts of human life and have several purposes. They mainly work with people, for people or on people to influence their lives. Fairy tales describe what can be seen as real and possible, what people should do or rather prevent.

There are many purposes of fairy tales we can mention. The first and probably the main purpose, is to express a moral which can be used in real life to improve quality of life. "Therefore, the focus of fairy tales [...] has always been on finding magical instruments, extraordinary technologies, or powerful people and animals that will enable protagonists to transform themselves along with their environment, making it more suitable for living in peace and contentment" (Zipes, 2012, 2). In those cases, the fairy tales' intent is to adapt people to the world to fit in it better. Then readers should become aware of the fact that according to the fairy tales every evil should be punished but it is not always true about real life.

If we consider fairy tales being mainly for children, the other purpose could be to connect children with the world, and in the case of parents' reading to build a relationship between kids and parents or a relationship between children and literature.

Fairy tales are typically rather uncomplicated stories, with clear distinction between good and evil, with happy endings in which the good wins and evil is defeated or punished. This does not mean that they are always light and easy-going: for example, the first versions of the Grimms' fairy tales contain a lot of violence and sexual elements so we can assume that the original folk tales were actually fairly harsh; the classical fairy tales as we know them went through rather heavy editing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In modern authored fairy tales, with Wilde and Andersen among the first authors, further darker elements were introduced.

## 2 HUMOUR AND THE COMIC

The second chapter does not focus on humour only as a literary device and its most common types, but also as a term which describes the atmosphere of the story.

First, the term comic, which is usually superordinated term to humour, will be discussed. Humour is a form of the comic. Other forms of the comic are irony, absurdity or naivety as Borecký (2000, 25) mentions.

According to Borecký (2000, 27), the word comic comes from the Greek word *komikos* which was originally related solely to Greek comedy, but in the course of time the word was spread further. Into the European languages it came through Latin. The term comic is older than the term humour but on the other hand, it was mentioned earlier than the terms irony and absurdity. The key term for comicality does not always have to be only humour.

Borecký (2000, 25 – 26) describes that humour and the comic are most frequently connected with good mood or with laugh, that is with the visual expression of positive emotions. However, these parts do not unconditionally depend on each other. In some cases, the comic does not lead to laugh at all and in other cases, it leads only to a smile. So, laugh is a probable but not an indispensable component of the comic.

The term humour is not only used in connection with the word comic but also with the term wit. According to Cuddon (1999, 985 – 986), the expression “wit” comes from the Old English term *witan* meaning ability to know something. At the first sight, these terms tend to look similar and often cause confusion in terms of meaning as both expressions are related to positive emotions and laugh. However, there is a significant difference between wit and humour since wit is commonly verbal, unlike humour. The difference between the expressions humour and wit is described by Ian Ousby as follows: “Humour [...] can always be seen to have some relationship – eventually a rather distant one – with its early medical meaning: a bodily fluid. Wit [...] is associated with qualities of mind and manners, humour with qualities of body and mood” (Ousby 1993, 1031).

## 2.1 Humour in Literature

The term humour comes from the Latin word *humour*, as Borecký (2000, 35 – 40) explains, but it was not connected with literature as it is understood today. Its meaning was a description of moisture and humidity. The famous ancient Greek physician and also the founder of medical sciences, Hippocrates (460 BC – 370 BC), changed the meaning of the word and used it for the description of four body fluids (blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile) where every humour belonged to a certain type of temperament (sanguine, phlegmatic, choleric and melancholic). The meaning of the word humour changed also in the reign of Elizabeth I (1558 – 1603). The main shift of the meaning was from the description of moisture to new meanings such as whim, mood or a state of mind in connection with extravagance and freedom of imagination.

Borecký (2000, 39 – 40) explains that the first person who claimed that humour was a part of literature, which linked mainly positive emotions and reading humorous texts and works, and omitted mockery, which made irony a type of humour, was the American writer Max Eastman (1883 – 1969).

The overall answer to the question whether humour should be a part of literature or not varied for many decades depending on culture and its opinions regarding the connection between humour and literature. Differences in superordination and subordination of the terms have also been discussed.

Humour is generally understood as a factor which describes how funny a story is. And as Borecký (2000, 142 – 145) explains, the comic and humour depend on detailed descriptions, the socio-culture context, freedom of emotions and expressions and the ability to release oneself from everyday life. Therefore, it is an important aspect of literature, which tends to be related to emotions. Humour has been a significant part of literature for a long time. It could be said that humour has changed over time so when we compare the humour typical for the past and humour typical for these days, there will be a visible change. Humour of past times sometimes seems milder in comparison with contemporary humour, which is often tough, full of sarcasm, irony or absurdity.

Generally said, humour has been sought after, so it means humour has been a popular part of literature. Books full of humour are searched for not only by children, but also by adults since there has always been demand for amusement and entertainment in literature, hence the market for humoristic literature. At the same time, there is a place for humour in “serious” literature too, where it usually has some additional function, for example aesthetic, critical etc.

It could be said that every author uses a particular kind of humour which could be significant for him or her. Some authors of humorous stories and books have a specific kind of humour.

Oscar Wilde could belong to the group of authors who use humour in their books intended mainly for children. While the humour used in most works designed for children is milder, Wilde uses stronger kind of humour – satire, absurdity or sarcasm. So, humour in the literature written by Oscar Wilde does not fit to any of the expectations for children’s stories nor fairy tales in terms of humour.

### 2.1.1 Types of Humour in Literature

*The Languages of Humour* (2018) recognises three basic types of humour depending on the means of expression: visual, verbal and physical.

Visual humour can be found in pictures, drawings, or photographs, expressing or describing a funny situation and make people laugh or smile.

Verbal humour is most frequent in verbal art, especially in literature. In drama, for instance jokes or funny situations are performed during the play. Verbal humour is also described as humour created by a play with words. Another method which creates verbal humour is the use of paradoxes, which Cuddon (1999, 634) explains as statements which are not easily comprehensible because of the fact that they are used in contrast to each other, so the words have almost nothing in common. It occurs in puns as well. According to Cuddon (1999, 711), a language pun is a play with words using particular words in the sentence which can have two or more possible meanings.

The last type is physical humour, which could be seen in the acting of people which tends to be humorous. In literature, this type follows from the actions of characters described in the story. One method which creates this type of humour is the usage of

parallels where two or more actions are described in different lines and there is a similarity between these actions, as Cuddon (1999, 637) explains.

There are several other types of humour – to be more precise several elements of literature which do not have the same origin, so these terms were appearing over some time. These elements are commonly used for mocking people, animals or things. The most important types, and especially the most common ones which can be found in the fairy tales written by Oscar Wilde are outlined below.

Some kinds of humour are easier to understand and appreciate than others. Elements such as puns, irony or satire may not be recognized by readers unless they are familiar with some extra-literary context. Humour may be for everybody but, we all have a particular sense of humour, we need to choose books with humour we like and are able to appreciate.

#### *2.1.1.1 Irony*

According to Borecký (2000, 29 – 30), the term irony comes from the Greek word *eironeia*, which could be translated as pretence. Generally said, the meaning of the word irony has not changed over time. Borecký explains that irony is a method for expressing a particular meaning without an exact statement so it describes a situation where the original and intended meaning of a particular word or sentence is used completely contrarily. There is a difference between the expectation or assumption and the reality, so irony makes the audience to engage with the issues, to start thinking about the purpose of the irony and forces them to understand the sense of the sentence in the way in which it is meant. Sometimes it might be confusing and not clear. Irony is able to hide contempt, joke or mockery behind seriousness and sharp criticism behind praise.

Borecký (2000, 30) also claims that one of the purposes of irony is to lead to the comic and that it is often related to absurdity, grotesque, satire or naivety, which was known as far back as the ancient time, circa 470 BC, in Socratic irony. Irony is not always humorous. However, it is usually linked with negative sentiments, tragical endings and

it is only seldom used in a positive sense. Under the influence of sarcasm irony becomes sharper.

Irony is a common type of humour which is often used for expressing the author's doubts about a certain way of life or for the criticism of the society that he lives in.

#### *2.1.1.2 Satire*

As Cuddon (1999, 780) describes, the term satire has its origin in the Latin word *satira*, later form *satira*, which meant a miscellany of many components. The original use of this term was to express the name for a mocking poem which was often used to criticise and ridicule society, its imperfections, morals, similarly to irony. Therefore, it is closely related to irony or even sarcasm. The other purpose of satire is to warn against problems and dangers in the world and public. "Thus satire is a kind of protest, a sublimation and refinement of anger and indignation" (Cuddon, 1999, 780).

The history of satire is, according to Cuddon (1999, 781 – 782), connected with Greek authors, including the most famous one, Aristophanes (circa 448 – circa 380 BC). It took a longer time until satire spread into European literatures since it gained popularity from the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

Generally said, satire is dependent on irony because irony is a vital instrument for the creation of satire, so it cannot exist without it in any case. The next element which is usually connected with satire is caricature. Caricature is "in literature (as in art) a portrait which ridicules a person by exaggerating and distorting his most prominent features and characteristics" (Cuddon, 1999, 110). As Cuddon (1999, 110) mentions, caricature is common in English literature.

#### *2.1.1.3 Naivety*

The term naivety comes also from Latin, namely from the word *nativus*. Borecký (2000, 34) explains the naivety as innocence or even simplicity. The term arose in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and was not used in the context with humour at first. Naivety is typical for children and works in fairy tales or stories intended for this group of readers. Children's unsophisticated thoughts, their ability to believe in almost anything and their spontaneity are three main points related to children in terms of naivety.



Surprisingly, the expression naivety is closely related to the term absurdity as the term “nonsense” borders on both naivety and absurdity.

#### 2.1.1.4 *Absurdity*

The word absurdity comes from the Latin word *absurdus*. Absurdity is similar to irony as it is related to opposites. But as Borecký (2000, 35) explains, absurdity differs from irony by means of naivety or nonsense. Comic absurdity is related to recklessness and playfulness while seriousness and responsibility belong to philosophical absurdity. The heydays of absurdity are placed at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the works of Alfred Jarry, and later in Cubo-Futurism, Dadaism, and the post-WWII absurd drama by S. Beckett or E. Ionesco.

Absurd humour shows not only the pointlessness of things or situations but also their possible oppositions.

#### 2.1.1.5 *Parody*

Parody is “the imitative use of the words, style, attitude, tone and ideas of an author in such a way as to make them ridiculous. This is usually achieved by exaggerating certain traits, using more or less the same technique as the cartoon caricaturist” (Cuddon, 1999, 640).

As Cuddon (1999, 640 – 641) further explains, parody is tightly tied to satire and difficult to be created as parody should contain a certain balance between the original and the new form, which criticises the original one. In view of the fact that parody is not easily created, only creative and gifted authors tend to create high-quality parodies. The history of this type of humour is long, the first work with the signs of parody arose in the 5<sup>th</sup> BC. One of the first successful English parodies was written by Geoffrey Chaucer, the English poet, called *Tale of Sir Thopas*.

## 2.2 Humour in Other Sense

The term humour has more than one meaning. On the one hand, the first and probably the most important and best-known meaning is the quality of being funny and witty as already mentioned. But on the other hand, the second but also significant meaning is

the description of a mood, different feelings or the atmosphere of the story.

As already indicated, Wilde's fairy tales are rather specific and easily distinguishable among the tales written by other authors. This is not only because of the choice of the type of humour, which is mainly irony or satire to express his dissatisfaction with the society, but also because of the whole atmosphere of the tales and the mood which Wilde's tales can incite in readers. The ugliness of many characters or the frequent death of the main character (the main character dies at the end of the fairy tale in seven out of his nine fairy tales) could have a negative effect on readers and their mood too. If the mood of a story or a tale is destructive or sad, readers usually tend to be influenced by this and tend to have at least a similar mood in some way.

A sombre mood, violence and the whole atmosphere of the fairy tale or a tragic ending with the death of the main character instead of the ending of "living happily ever after" is quite uncommon in this genre.

## 3 OSCAR WILDE

### 3.1 The Life of Oscar Wilde

*“Where there is no extravagance there is no love, and where there is no love there is no understanding” (Ellman, 1988, 9).*

Oscar Fingal O’Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in Dublin on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1854 as the second son of Dr (later Sir) William Robert Wills Wilde and Jane Francesca Elgee. He came from a successful and well-educated family of intellectuals. His father William, the owner of many properties near the city of Dublin, worked not only as a leading ear surgeon but also as an oculist. On the other hand, Wilde’s mother Jane was a nationalist, and what is more important, she was interested in literature, thus she worked as a translator and a poet writing for Young Ireland. According to Sloan (2009, 1), Wilde’s family was not united in terms of thoughts and opinions. This Protestant family was based on not only nationalist sentiment but also establishment values.

Wilde had a common childhood and was raised by both parents. However, he was quite an eccentric boy, both in terms of appearance and his behaviour compared with other children. He attended Portora Royal School and in 1874, he finished his studies at Trinity College in his home town Dublin where he also won the Berkley Gold Medal in Greek, which was the highest award of the university. At Trinity College he met two critics John Ruskin and Walter Pater, who strongly influenced the way in which Wilde began to see the world and society.

According to Sloan (2009, 5), he had to change his date of birth during his studies in order to take an examination for a scholarship in classics since applicants had to be younger than 20 and Wilde was worried about turning 20 in two months’ time. So, Wilde declared himself being 18 years old to avoid any administrative complications. This situation caused a confusion from that time on.

After that, at the age of eighteen, he went on studying at Magdalen College in the well-known university town of Oxford. Wilde successfully finished his studies in 1878, which was not common with literary authors. They usually started studying at high

schools or universities but failed to complete their studies successfully or just had to leave the school because of some issues, so Wilde was one of the exceptions.

His name is usually connected with two main aspects of his life. The first one is his literary output, as a result of which he became a well-known Irish writer, prose writer, and journalist. According to Holland (1988, 8 – 9), both Wilde's parents collected Irish folklore, and perhaps that influenced his attitude to literature. The parents' impact on their son is visible not only in his literary work but also in his interesting and personal life. Wilde is remembered for his extravagant and extraordinary lifestyle full of scandals. As H. M. Hyde (1973, 23 – 27) delineates in his book, Wilde's father was known not only for being a great doctor of the Victorian era but also for several affairs involving his patients. On the opposite hand, his mother could have influenced the young Wilde with her desire for a daughter. Jane was extremely longing for a baby girl so Oscar Wilde was dressed like a girl soon after his birth and their relationship was strong. "The mother [...] was no ordinary person. Lady Wilde has a sense of being destined for greatness and imparted it. Her son subscribed to her view, and treated her with the utmost consideration and respect, almost as though he were her precursor rather than she his" (Ellmann, 1988, 5).

Apart from literature, Wilde was devoted to fashion and aesthetics, which was quite a new branch of study at that time. Wilde was successful in this area and because of his success he had many opportunities. In 1882, he travelled to Canada or to the USA to give lectures, mainly on Renaissance in England. Two years later, Wilde married Constance Lloyd, who gave birth to their two sons Cyril and Vyvyan Holland (Ellmann, 1988, 266).

In spite of the fact that he had two sons, he had a relationship with a man later on and was accused of homosexuality, which was unacceptable in the Victorian era. Wilde's time was sometimes called "the era of conservatism", because the main emphasis was put on morality. Wilde was found guilty, and was sent to prison for two years. His wife Constance changed her and their children's surname to Holland. In 1897 Wilde moved to Paris and published works under the name Sebastian Melmoth, his new artistic name. On 30<sup>th</sup> October 1900, Wilde died as a broken man, alone in the streets of Paris and the cause of his death has remained unknown.

### 3.2 Literary Work

Oscar Wilde was a famous Irish writer, prose writer and playwright. He was the author of many plays, poems, short stories, and fairy tales and all his works are recognizable from other authors' works because of his writing style or themes. Wilde expressed his personal life, thinking or his attitudes in his fiction. His writing career began in 1878 when he published his first work at the age of 24, a poem called *Ravenna*, which received the Newdigate Prize, a prize given at Oxford for the best composition in English verse. Three years later, Wilde published his second book of poetry called *Poems*. Then he wrote his play *The Duchess of Padua* (1883). The first book which seemed to be mainly for children was *The Canterville Ghost* (1887). In fact, it is a short story which could also appeal to adults. A year later, Wilde officially published his first book of fairy tales, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888), examined in this paper.

Later, after he had finished regular book reviewing in 1890, he was active in writing and published mainly plays, such as *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892) or *A Woman of No Importance* (1893). *Lady Windermere's Fan* (1892) was Wilde's first comic masterpiece which became widely popular and discussed. He also wrote his one and only novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891). The first version was published in 1890 but due to the complications with censorship, many words, and even some passages had to be omitted because they were considered too scandalous and shocking. All that led to the second and last, version of his novel. In 1891, he wrote his second book of fairy tales addressed to children called *A House of Pomegranates* (1891), also discussed in this paper. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) was not the only work of Oscar Wilde criticized as unsuitable in respect of censorship. *Salome* (1893) in the French version was found inconvenient at that time too. The main problem was that the play was inspired by the story of the New Testament and biblical characters were not allowed to be shown on the stage at that time. In 1895, Wilde published the play *An Ideal Husband* (1895) and in addition, his second comic masterpiece came out, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) which won recognition and gained public popularity easily.

His works are well-known all over the world and have been translated into numerous languages.

### 3.3 Wilde's Tales

Wilde's fairy tales are specific and easily distinguishable among fairy tales written by other authors. Wilde's tales have the features of a fairy tale but they are highly influenced by the literary and cultural movements called aestheticism and decadence. Aestheticism was a cultural movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which put the main emphasis on aesthetic qualities, such as the beauty of literature or any kind of art, and not morality. The only purpose of literature was to appeal to readers because, as Marshall (2007, 38) explains, literature emphasises perfection and artistic ideals. As Cuddon (1999, 11) claims, the roots of the movement were laid first in the Romantic period in the work of German writers, like Kant, Goethe or Schiller because of their focus on the aesthetic quality of literature and desire for the independence of the art form and its authors as well. It all helped to understand why authors of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ended to be independent of social customs and morals, why they built their self-confidence and led Bohemian lives.

On the other hand, the second movement of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which influenced Wilde, decadence, started to spread from France to other European countries. Decadence was more pessimistic and fuller of scepticism. In addition to this, Cuddon (1999, 208) describes the movement as focused on autonomy of literature, the need of sensationalism and a decline of society, culture and important morals. Furthermore, decadents longed for a significant change in social life as they were bored by the present standards and way of live; they behaved unexpectedly, were critical and often led unrestrained personal and sexual lives.

Typically, fairy tales contain an important feature, which is beauty, not only a physically beautiful character but also good and beautiful in the way of character and behaviour, such as beautiful princesses, brave princes or magic fairies. On the other hand, not only beautiful characters, but also ugly ones are present in many fairy tales, such as bad witches or wizards, giants, devils, demons, trolls or animals such as spiders, snakes, foxes or wolves, for instance the wolf in *Little Red Riding Hood*. Wilde exceeds the boundaries and breaks some typical conventions which determine this genre, so his tales are different from most others.

“In Wilde’s unorthodox tales, ugliness frequently accompanies the brutal moral instruction of his most beautiful characters. This ugliness is not always manifested physically, but whenever it occurs, it disrupts the fairy-tale-world aesthetic completely, causing either the death of the main character or a shift in the tale’s fundamental concept of beauty” (Jones, 2011, 883).

Wilde focuses mainly on morals and moral lessons which he found crucial. The Victorian era he lived and wrote in, the era of strong conservatism which did not respect people’s uniqueness, might have had an influence on his attention to morality too. To summarize it briefly, Wilde pointed out the contrast between beauty and contemporary morality and criticised the society for hypocrisy.

His tales are similar in terms of meaning and structure to the fairy tales of the Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen (1805 – 1875), who achieved great popularity in English-speaking countries. Both authors are preoccupied with the same key motifs such as love, selfishness, friendship, death and motifs connected to religion, for instance in the tale of “The Selfish Giant”. Wilde’s tales also deal with social principles. “Unlike the stories of the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen, Wilde’s tales do not uphold the hypocritical social mores of the middle and upper classes. Instead, Wilde includes elements of those lessons to make a point about the relationship between morality and art” (Jones, 2011, 884).

Some of Wilde’s fairy tales, mainly from his very first published book of prose *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* seem to be rich in autobiographical features because characters experience tough lives as he did and witness injustice. He tried to be objective, unconventional and to show the reality of life. He might have had a feeling that it had not been shown enough so he decided to include it in his children’s tales to make readers aware of it from their early childhood. That was an extraordinary method, so possibly, he made efforts to change the perspective in order to highlight the reality of life and to make people aware of the fact that his tragic endings show that the good does not always win. Much of his writing contains social criticism to show what is wrong in society.

While Wilde's fairy tales are well-known, there is also criticism of their content and structure. Some critics find the tales inappropriate for children because of sexual subtext, death of the main character or just because of its pessimistic undertones.

### 3.3.1 The Happy Prince and Other Tales

*The Happy Prince and Other Tales* published in 1888 was Wilde's first book of tales intended for children, consisting of five fairy tales.

*The Happy Prince*

*The Nightingale and the Rose*

*The Selfish Giant*

*The Devoted Friend*

*The Remarkable Rocket*

### 3.3.2 A House of Pomegranates

The book *A House of Pomegranates* (1891) was the second work intended for children, another book of fairy tales. The book contains only four stories.

*The Young King*

*The Birthday of the Infanta*

*The Fisherman and His Soul*

*The Star-Child*

## 3.4 Other Authors of Fairy Tales in the Second Half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

Wilde's fairy tales are influenced by his own life, which was tough. The British author Charles Dickens (1812 – 1870) might have had some influence on him in the way of writing about his own life because some autobiographical features appear in the work of both authors. In his book *Oliver Twist* (1838), Dickens describes tough conditions children had to face, such as working conditions or lack of food and money. On the other hand, Wilde expresses his dissatisfaction with the strict social principles which did not allow him to be homosexual.



The German brothers Grimm were collectors of classical folktales. Their fairy tales, such as *Hansel and Gretel*, *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Sleeping Beauty*, or *Snow White* are known all over the world in spite of the fact that they were not the authors of these tales. The stories were inspired by the tales collected by the French author Charles Perrault (1628 – 1703). These tales had been shared across cultures and centuries and brothers Grimm only collected them and wrote them down.

The main influential tale-teller for Oscar Wilde was the well-known writer Hans Christian Andersen (1805 – 1875). It is obvious not only because of very similar motifs but also because of the atmosphere and humour of tales. Andersen's tales are full of sadness, hate, references to God, etc.

### 3.5 The Question of Target Audience

Fairy tales are usually addressed to the youngest members of society, i.e. infants and children. At first sight, Wilde's first collection of fairy tales *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) seems to be for children as there are words such as "Prince" and "Tales", which refer to one of the most favourite heroes of children's literature and the name of the genre which children love and look for. But when reading the book, the idea of its suitability for children could disappear. Judging by the name, children and adults may expect something different.

In terms of types of humour used in these tales, children may not be able to understand them very well since they include irony or satire used mainly for the criticism of society. Younger children and perhaps some older children would probably fail to comprehend these types of humour as they are usually hidden in the text and readers need to have the life experience and they also should be aware of social conventions and morality. On the other hand, these types of humour could be understood by teenagers since they are able to discover and think about more difficult expressions with hidden meanings. The second difficulty for contemporary readers would be the lack of knowledge about the Victorian era, its strict conservatism and society. The third complication could be with the sexual undertone of these tales. There remains the question whether it is appropriate to children to read such tales or not. Many adults may disagree. Finally, children seem to prefer fairy tales with happy

endings which appeal to them. Nevertheless, there are also plenty of dark stories for children containing dark or sad elements.

On the other hand, Wilde's second book for children called *The House of Pomegranates* (1891) does not pretend to be explicitly addressed to children judging by its title, and reading it would not probably change the readers' mind. This book is more likely for teenagers or adults because of its form and content.

Possibly, Wilde's point of view on how children should be educated in terms of moral lessons was different from the mainstream and he might have had an opinion that they should face the reality of tough life from an early age. It is generally accepted that children can be influenced, persuaded or hurt easily. The traditional conception of the fairy tale is to have a gripping beginning, and a happy ending is usually expected at the end of the tale. In this respect, Wilde's tales are different. Most of his tales contain dark or sad elements, including tragic endings with the death of the main character.

We could believe that parents should read his tales first and then they should be able to explain the moral from the tales to them appropriately to make them aware of Wilde's intended message.

## 4 THE ANALYSIS OF OSCAR WILDE'S TALES

This chapter of the bachelor thesis focuses on the analysis of both fairy tale books. First, the book *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888) will be analysed and then the focus will turn to the second of Wilde's books of tales, *A House of Pomegranates* (1891). First, the plot of each tale will be summarised, then the main message will be described. Some tales include moral lessons, some of them incorporate criticism.

Humour is usually overlooked in these fairy tales as Wilde's tales seem to be rather tragic and full of sombre mood. As it has been mentioned, there are certain types of humour classified according to the means of expression, and types of literary humour used not for amusement but to criticise or mock people, animals or things. Some of the tales are based rather on tragic elements and contain only few humorous passages. This group includes tales such as "The Happy Prince", "The Nightingale and the Rose" or "The Selfish Giant" from the book *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* and "The Young King" or "The Fisherman and His Soul" from the book *A House of Pomegranates*.

### 4.1 *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* (1888)

#### 4.1.1 The Happy Prince

The tale tells the story of a Happy Prince who never cries for anything and cares for anybody except himself. All people respect him and after he dies, they build a statue covered in gold and jewels. As a statue, the Happy Prince is unpleasantly surprised to see poverty in his town. A Swallow lands during migration time near the statue and sees the Prince crying. The Prince tells him about his life and his change of mind after he gets to know poverty. The Prince requests the Swallow to help some destitute people. He tells him for example about a mother and her ill son as she is able to give him only river water. The Swallow brings a red jewel from the Prince's statue to this family to buy food as the Prince wishes. The next day, the Swallow brings a blue jewel to a poor writer suffering from cold and hunger. After that, the Swallow wants to fly to Egypt, but he knows he would miss the Prince. All valuable metals from the statue, including gold, are given to the poor. At the end of the story, the Swallow dies of cold

and the statue has to be demolished. People also try to melt the Prince's heart but without any success. Finally, God request his servants to bring the bird and the heart to him.

This fairy tale includes a little amount of humour and comic. At the beginning of the tale, Wilde uses sentences containing anthropomorphism, i.e. attributing human characteristics, behaviour etc., to things or animals, to create humour and comic. Both statements below focus on the Reed which the Swallow falls in love with. "It is a ridiculous attachment,' twittered the other Swallows; ,she has no money, and far too many relations'; and indeed the river was quite full of Reeds." The first sentence expresses criticism of gossiping and pretence as the other Swallows gossip about the Reed.

Later, the Swallow thinks about his prospective wife: "She has no conversation,' he said, ,and I am afraid that she is a coquette, for she is always flirting with the wind.' And certainly, whenever the wind blew, the Reed made the most graceful curtseys" (both Wilde, 1997, n. p.). This scene about the Swallow contains mild humour with the use of metaphors. Wilde sees the purpose of using these sentences in mocking human vanity as the Reed is flirting with the wind. He admits that his wife should like the same things and should not be a coquette.

The sentence "Every one quoted it, it was full of so many words that they could not understand." (Wilde, 1997, n. p.) criticises not only people quoting texts, letters or articles which they do not understand due to unknown words, but also the authors of those texts who are not aware of the readers' possible difficulties in understanding their works. Towards the end of the first tale there are a few examples of literary humour. Irony is found in the claim that "It certainly was a dreadfully hard frost." (Wilde, 1997, n. p.), which supposedly caused the split of Prince's leaden heart into two halves. In fact, the cause of this crack was not caused by a frost but by grief for his dead friend. The next example is found in the sentence "'We must really issue a proclamation that birds are not allowed to die here'" (Wilde, 1997, n. p.). Not only the proclamation itself but also the whole situation that people want to control where birds die contain absurdity. Wilde also criticizes behaviour and opinions of some people. For example, there is a paradox with signs of irony in the passage: "So they

pulled down the statue of the Happy Prince. 'As he is no longer beautiful he is no longer useful,' said the Art Professor at the University." (Wilde, 1997, n. p.) because the Art Professor should appreciate inner beauty as much as physical beauty of the statue. There is also a possible interpretation in relation to aestheticism which emphasises visible beauty of the statue and overshadows moral or philosophical aspects.

Although there is a little amount of humour and the tale is rather sad with a tragical ending, the main function of this tale is to express certain moral lesson and hope. The Swallow dies and the Prince's statue is pulled down but at the end of the tale, there is hope that every good action is eventually rewarded because God takes the Prince and the Swallow to heaven.

#### 4.1.2 The Nightingale and the Rose

The story tells about a young Student who falls in love with a girl and wants to dance with her at ball. She imposes a condition that she will dance with him if he brings her a red rose but there are no red roses in his garden. A Nightingale hears it and decides to help as she knows what true love means. She asks some Rose-trees which refer her to the one with red roses under the Student's window. The Rose-tree has frozen flower buds so only one way to produce a new rose exists. Provided that the Nightingale will sing a song with a thorn pierced in her heart by moonlight, the Rose-tree can be able to create a red rose with the bird's blood. The Nightingale sacrifices her life for true love. The next morning, the Student discovers and picks the rose, goes to the house where the girl lives and is disappointed since she refuses him and prefers the jewels from the Chamberlain's nephew instead. The Student rejects love and turns his focus on more practical things, such as Philosophy and Logic.

As it has been mentioned, this fairy tale contains a mildly humorous moment but otherwise, it is rather sad and tragic. Mockery is found in the part containing anthropomorphism where a Lizard cynically appraises the Student's weeping for the red rose. Wilde uses the character of the Lizard having cold behaviour and pessimistic opinions. The Lizard which does not feel love and tries to hurt the Student's feelings, represents qualities typical for cynics.

This tale results in the tragic death of the main character and includes two moral lessons. The first one is that true love may need some sacrifice as the Nightingale sacrifices his own life for love and happiness of the Student. The second one is that we should appreciate every good action which somebody does for us. The Student rejects love completely after being unsuccessful and forgets to be grateful for the beautiful rose which cost the Nightingale's life.

#### 4.1.3 The Selfish Giant

The story is situated in the Giant's garden where children usually play. But when a Giant comes back from a visit after few years, he decides to allow nobody to play in his own garden. For this reason, the Giant builds a high wall all around the garden and puts up a notice-board prohibiting entry. After a while he notices that something weird happens in his garden as Spring does not arrive in it and Winter stays there for a long time. The main reason for this unusual situation is the Giant's selfishness. The Giant becomes older and lonely. One day, after he wakes up, he sees children playing in his garden full of colours and blossom because children bring life to this place. Every tree is covered in blossom, except one in the corner as a small crying boy standing under the tree is not tall enough to climb it. Although the Giant is grateful for the children entering his garden, all children are afraid of him until he tries to help the boy to reach the tree to show them how he has changed his behaviour. The Giant falls in love with the boy as he kisses and hugs him, after that, the boy is not seen again for a long time. The boy who is Jesus Christ, as readers discover at the end of the story, appears only once more when the Giant is very old and takes him to the Paradise. So next day, children find the Giant lying dead under the tree covered in blossom.

This tale is suspenseful and surprising as well when the Giant realizes his selfishness and changes his behaviour to be good to children. The tale contains fewer tragic elements and on the other hand, it contains some comical moments. They are included in the following passage:

The only people who were pleased were the Snow and the Frost. 'Spring has forgotten this garden,' they cried, 'so we will live here all the year round.' The Snow covered up the grass with her great white cloak, and the Frost painted all the trees silver. Then they invited the North Wind to stay with them, and he came. He was wrapped in furs,

and he roared all day about the garden, and blew the chimney-pots down. 'This is a delightful spot,' he said, 'we must ask the Hail on a visit.' So the Hail came. Every day for three hours he rattled on the roof of the castle till he broke most of the slates, and then he ran round and round the garden as fast as he could go. He was dressed in grey, and his breath was like ice. (Wilde, 1997, n. p.)

The comic effect is created by the use of anthropomorphism: the Snow and the Frost not only behave like people but also, they are exactly called "the only people" in the text despite being inanimate characters. There is irony too when the Snow and the Frost cry when the Spring forgets to come to the Giant's garden in order to hide their happiness of occupying the place. They settle down quickly and act like humans, invite the North Wind covered in furs and the Hail to join them.

This tale also has a moral lesson showing that true love and happiness are more important and powerful than selfishness. In the end, Giant's changed behaviour is rewarded as Jesus Christ takes the Giant to paradise. In comparison to the first tale, "The Selfish Giant" ends with a visible reward, which everybody can see, because the children find the Giant lying dead covered in blossom, and in "The Happy Prince" the God also takes the Prince and the Swallow to the heaven. In contrast to these tales, the Nightingale from "The Nightingale and the Rose" is not explicitly rewarded for his effort to support the Student's love to the girl.

Generally said, the first and the third tale are connected by the moral and religious lesson. It is that hope that people are not able to find among human beings could be found in their religious belief. Everyone should believe in themselves and in God. Because good actions and behaviour are eventually rewarded.

#### 4.1.4 The Devoted Friend

The tale begins with a story of animals when the old Water-rat sees the little ducks with their mother on the pond which teaches them to stand on their heads to become members of better society. The Water-rat has no family and finds devoted friendship more important than love. A Green Linner and the Duck disagree with the Water-rat's thoughts and opinions about devoted friendship, so the Linnet tells a story about two men, the poor little Hans and the rich Hugh the Miller. They should be friends but the

Miller and his Wife only profit from Hans's good behaviour and his kindness because the Miller wants his help and takes everything from him, such as flowers, food or materials. The only indication of friendship on the Miller's side is when he promises to give Hans his old broken wheelbarrow, which in fact Hans never gets. Hans thinks that it is a point of true friendship and appreciates the Miller's nice words about him. He does not miss help from Miller and he is completely devoted to him despite neglecting his own life and hobbies. At the end of this story, the Miller asks Hans to fetch a doctor for his hurt son and on the way home, Hans drowns in the moor during the storm which is a great loss to the Miller and his Wife. The tale ends with the Water-rat's disappointment as he does not understand the moral lesson of the story.

This tale consists of two stories, a frame and an interior one. The frame story is a conversation between the Duck, the Water-rat and the Green Linnet. The interior story describes the devoted friendship of the poor little Hans towards the Hugh the Miller. Both stories contain some humorous parts, including criticism of society or human behaviour, and also there is a moral lesson in the interior story that the true friendship should not be dependent on manipulation.

The opening section of this tale contains satirical overtones. Wilde uses anthropomorphism again, so animals act like human beings, and criticises human silliness and behaviour when people are able to accept absurd conventions to become members of better society.

In the frame story, the following passage in which the Duck tries to teach her children to stand on their heads includes absurdity and satire:

'You will never be in the best society unless you can stand on your heads,' she kept saying to them; and every now and then she showed them how it was done. But the little ducks paid no attention to her. They were so young that they did not know what an advantage it is to be in society at all. (Wilde, 1997, n. p.)

It shows that acquiring a place in the best society requires fulfilling certain requirements. People try to fit in, accept absurd conventions and are willing to do anything to get prestigious positions in the society, which is here the object of criticism and mockery. The satirical tone is supported by exaggeration when the Water-rat



exclaims “‘What disobedient children!’ [...], ,they really deserve to be drowned” (Wilde, 1997, n. p.).

An example of irony is found in the Duck’s speech. The Water-rat and the Green Linnet begin to discuss the nature of devoted friendship. The Duck says: “‘Yes, that is just what I want to know,’ said the Duck; and she swam away to the end of the pond, and stood upon her head, in order to give her children a good example” (Wilde, 1997, n. p.). She does not take it seriously as she is not interested in the Water-rat’s answer, pays no attention to the animals’ conversation and leaves them alone. She continues in her strange teaching.

The satire continues with the animals sharing their opinions about the qualities of devoted friendship. The Water-rat says:

‘I should expect my devoted friend to be devoted to me, of course.’

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

‘I don’t understand you,’ answered the Water-rat.

‘Let me tell you a story on the subject,’ said the Linnet. ‘Is the story about me?’ asked the Water-rat.

‘If so, I will listen to it, for I am extremely fond of fiction.’

(Wilde, 1997, n. p.)

The passage shows selfishness, self-centeredness and egoism of the Water-rat. In fact, the Water-rat neither knows nor understands the real point of devoted friendship, and, as he says, he cares only about himself. He thinks that friendship is based on one-way devotion and that there is no need to do anything in return for his friend.

The comic is supported also by the use of caricature, as a satirical technique, in the interior story revealing the Miller’s twisted thoughts about his supposedly devoted friendship with Hans. He claims that “‘[...] when people are in trouble they should be left alone, and not be bothered by visitors [...].’” or that “‘[...] he will be able to give me a large basket of primroses and that will make him so happy.’” (both Wilde, 1997, n. p.), which seems completely illogical. Commonly, people want to help their relatives and friends to be happy and they like spending time with them not only in good times but also in bad times. These are signs of true friendship. In this story, the Miller does

not care about his devoted friend Hans, offers no help and leaves him alone in hard times, and he appreciates Hans being his friend only because of profits he has from their friendship. The Miller tells Hans that he appreciates their friendship, Hans's devotion and his kind behaviour. Hans is pleased at hearing such compliments and has no idea that the Miller only lies to him when he says that the Miller and his Wife are always curious about his personal life and think of him during terrible winter.

The next satirical elements, as part of the caricature of the Miller couple, are found in would-be clever speeches of the Miller's Wife:

'You are certainly very thoughtful about others,' answered the Wife, as she sat in her comfortable armchair by the big pinewood fire; 'very thoughtful indeed. It is quite a treat to hear you talk about friendship. I am sure the clergyman himself could not say such beautiful things as you do, though he does live in a three-storied house, and wear a gold ring on his little finger.' (Wilde, 1997, n. p.)

The Miller's Wife completely sympathises with her husband and encourages him to keep in touch with Hans as usual because this friendship makes them richer and they can afford having the luxury life they prefer. She also judges the quality of the clergyman by his fortune which uncovers her silly attitude to wisdom and wealth.

Despite illogical and twisted thoughts of the Miller and his Wife, the only one member of the Millers' family who sees this friendship differently is their small son. The son does not share his parents' opinions at all and suggests to invite little Hans to their house in the winter and offers to share his porridge with Hans to help him in trouble. The boy's suggestion is refused and his parents become angry with him. They tell him that he is a stupid boy as they are afraid of Hans, who could become envious of their fortune and luxury life. The following "clever" speech of Miller's Wife contains satire as well, and reveals the personality of the Miller and his Wife:

'Lots of people act well,' answered the Miller; 'but very few people talk well, which shows that talking is much the more difficult thing of the two, and much the finer thing also'; and he looked sternly across the table at his little son, who felt so ashamed of himself that he hung his head down, and grew quite scarlet, and began to cry into his tea. However, he was so young that you must excuse him. (Wilde, 1997, n. p.)

The Wife flatters her husband's behaviour, encourages his profitable friendship with Hans because the Miller only speaks and Hans acts as the Miller wants. At the end of the passage, she also tries to excuse her son's ideas but never admits that her son could be right. Probably, she could be afraid of losing the benefits from Hans's service.

There are other satirical parts in the frame story that interrupt the plot of the interior story. The Water-rat says:

'Every good story-teller nowadays starts with the end, and then goes on to the beginning, and concludes with the middle. That is the new method. I heard all about it the other day from a critic who was walking round the pond with a young man. He spoke of the matter at great length, and I am sure he must have been right, for he had blue spectacles and a bald head, and whenever the young man made any remark, he always answered 'Pooh!' But pray go on with your story. I like the Miller immensely. I have all kinds of beautiful sentiments myself, so there is a great sympathy between us.' (Wilde, 1997, n. p.)

It affirms the Water-rat's illogical thoughts and his attitude to the Miller who he sympathises with. This clever speech also contains criticism of society. The Water-rat puts the main emphasis on the appearance of the man having blue spectacles and bald head, which in his opinion signals his intelligence. The Water-rat's remark is also a metafictional comment. It refers to the supposedly new, innovative writing technique used by story-tellers.

All the passages where the Miller uses his calculation show his real personality and criticise his behaviour, using satire and caricature. He only promises Hans his old broken wheelbarrow to seem kinder and helpful and in fact, he never gives it to Hans. All the time, the Miller asks Hans for help, service or some material presents, such as flowers or a plank of wood. At the end of the interior story, the Miller says:

'Dear little Hans,' cried the Miller, 'I am in great trouble. My little boy has fallen off a ladder and hurt himself, and I am going for the Doctor. But he lives so far away, and it is such a bad night, that it has just occurred to me that it would be much better if you went instead of me. 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, 1997, n. p.)

In this and the following passages Hans makes a request to hire the Miller's lantern, which the Miller refuses, and his selfishness is shown. He does not mind Hans disappearing in the ditch and not until Hans' death does the Miller realize the point of true friendship because this is a great loss for his family.

The frame story is closed with a comic passage. The Water-rat says angrily: "I think you should have told me that before you began. If you had done so, I certainly would not have listened to you; in fact, I should have said 'Pooh,' like the critic. However, I can say it now' [...]" (Wilde, 1997, n. p.). He feels annoyed and does not appreciate the moral of the story as the story ends differently than he has expected. From this reason, the animals think that it could be dangerous to tell stories with a moral lesson.

#### 4.1.5 The Remarkable Rocket

The story begins with a big beautiful wedding of a King's son and a Russian Princess, who is surprised by the planned fireworks which she has never seen before. The firework should be the final part of a magnificent ceremony to celebrate their marriage. The characters of this tale include not only the married couple but also parts of the fireworks, such as a Rocket, a Catherine Wheel, a Roman Candle or a Cracker. They act like humans and discuss the wedding and the upcoming fireworks. The outstanding character is the Rocket which behaves arrogantly and thinks only of himself. The Remarkable Rocket believes that he is the most perfect Rocket in the world as his parents are extraordinary and well-known. The Rocket despises other fireworks. Other fireworks are aware of Rocket's selfishness which he shows in every simple speech he makes and try to calm him down. The Rocket wants to prove his sensitivity, so he bursts into tears before midnight. The fireworks advise him not to cry to be able to be lit and amaze people at the ceremony. As he is incapable of being lit by the pyrotechnic, the servants throw him over the walls of the castle and the Remarkable Rocket lands in a ditch. He naively thinks that the servants and the pyrotechnic are saving him for a more prestigious moment and giving him time for getting dry. The Rocket does not still lose his arrogant behaviour and speaks angrily to a Dragonfly, a Frog and a Duck, who do not believe in the Rocket's magnificent explosion. In the end of the story, two young boys find the Rocket in the ditch, bring him near the fire to let him dry off and try to light him. The Rocket finally explodes but

in the day light nobody sees him. On the other hand, the Rocket thinks he makes a beautiful explosion which everyone admires.

This final tale does not include a strong moral lesson but Wilde uses a variety of humour types to express his dissatisfaction with the society and warns against numerous common negative human characteristics, such as selfishness, pride, arrogance or self-centeredness.

The Remarkable Rocket is the richest tale in terms of humour and comic. Satire as well as criticism of social standards are found for example in the passage concerning the Page's salary: "The King gave orders that the Page's salary was to be doubled. As he received no salary at all this was not of much use to him, but it was considered a great honour, and was dully in the Court Gazette" (Wilde 1997, n. p.). This passage is comic because the Page is said to be given no salary and the King wants to double it. On the other hand, nor fame in the newspaper will help the Page as he does not receive money from the King.

Satire appears also in the speech of the Page, when he talks about true love between the royal couple and the courtiers. The King wants to double a Page's salary. Despite the fact that the courtiers probably know that the Page does not have a salary at all, they say "What an honour!" (Wilde, 1997, n. p.) to behave conventionally. Their conventional behaviour continues in the response of the courtiers to the King's music skills as the King plays very badly but they always praise his playing. (Wilde, 1997, n. p.) These situations are full of pretence as the courtiers must dissimulate respecting all social standards even though they may not agree with them. Wilde criticises twisted society standards and people behaving that way.

With the use of mockery, Wilde satirically describes the King as a stupid but also conceited and self-centered person. He emphasises his thoughtlessness and pride:

"They are like the Aurora Borealis," said the King, who always answered questions that were addressed to other people, "only much more natural. I prefer them to stars myself, as you always know when they are going to appear, and they are as delightful as my own flute-playing. You must certainly see them" (Wilde, 1997, n. p.).

The following passage of four paragraphs combines comedy, satire and verbal humour:

‘The world is certainly very beautiful,’ cried a little Squib. ‘Just look at those yellow tulips. Why! If they were real crackers they could not be lovelier. I am very glad I have travelled. Travel improves the mind wonderfully, and does away with all one’s prejudices.’

‘The King’s garden is not the world, you foolish squib,’ said a big Roman Candle; ‘the world is an enormous place, and it would take you three days to see it thoroughly.’

‘Any place you love is the world to you,’ exclaimed a pensive Catherine Wheel, who had been attached to an old deal box in early life, and prided herself on her broken heart; ‘but love is not fashionable any more, the poets have killed it. They wrote so much about it that nobody believed them, and I am not surprised. True love suffers, and is silent. I remember myself once—But it is no matter now. Romance is a thing of the past.’

‘Nonsense!’ said the Roman Candle, ‘Romance never dies. It is like the moon, and lives for ever. The bride and bridegroom, for instance, love each other very dearly. I heard all about them this morning from a brown-paper cartridge, who happened to be staying in the same drawer as myself, and knew the latest Court news.’

(Wilde, 1997, n. p.)

The comic is visible in the first and second paragraphs. The Rocket describes a beautiful world, which is for him only the King’s garden, but a big Roman Candle disagrees, and by looking at tulips he combines standard expressions in the whole sentence with a colloquial one “creak” and observes his travels. Surprisingly, he mentions divestiture of all prejudices during travelling but in fact, he never does it. The Roman Candle addresses the Rocket “you foolish squib” which is really a comic address with signs of mockery as the word “squib” has more than one meaning. Possible meanings are a little firework, a sparkler, short satire or a fiasco. On the other hand, Wilde uses a play on words to create verbal humour in this comic address as well. First, the word “Squib” stands for the little firework but, with the low-case “s”, the meaning of the word “squib” changes into a mocking one. The same method of verbal humour is used later in the Rocket’s speech not only when he says Pylotechnic instead of Pyrotechnic but also when he emphasises his incorrect opinion to act haughtily.

The third paragraph includes satire based on a comic statement that all authors, mainly poets, destroy love. The reason for this destruction is their focus on the feeling as they frequently write about it which leads to its annihilation.

The last paragraph contains situational humour that mocks narrow-mindedness and lack of intelligence. The Roman Candle collects wisdoms and opinions about the world and love from other fireworks, for example from a brown-paper cartridge, which only learns things from gossip.

Wilde (1997, n. p.) again supports the comic with the use of anthropomorphism. The Rocket, like all other firework pieces, acts like a human being in this passage where he always coughs to make others pay attention before starting speaking. Additionally, in the ironic description of a sensitive person, a “person who, because he has corns himself, always treads on other toes” (Wilde, 1997, n. p.), the Roman Candle shows the Rocket’s insensitivity and heartlessness. Later on, the Rocket demonstrates his selfishness – he forbids anyone to be happy and make others think only about him as he normally does.

Wilde (1997, n. p.) uses also sarcasm when he describes the Roman Candle’s attempt to calm the Rocket. In this case, the Candle makes fun of the Rocket and advises him not to be angry to stay dry. The Rocket is always described as an unkind character, which insults other characters, and there is irony in his speculations about the royal family life and their future, as in “It is a very dangerous thing to know one’s friends” (Wilde, 1997, n. p.).

The next type of humour, naivety, is first used in the Rocket’s speech and later in the Frog’s speech. The Rocket does not accept that he could not be perfect. When a workman says that he is a bad Rocket before throwing him over the wall, the Rocket insists that he is a grand one. The Rocket naively thinks that people are saving him for a more special occasion or just give him more time to dry to be better firework. Naivety appears also when the Rocket have a conversation with a small Frog. The Frog tells the Rocket that a farmer’s wife could not sleep last night because of Frog’s beautiful croaking in the night. In fact, the farmer’s wife was not able to sleep as the Frog was too loud and annoying which the Frog finds unbelievable.

Surprisingly, the Rocket and the Frog have something in common, not only are both opposite but also, they are very selfish and love mainly themselves. The Frog likes talking about itself as well as the Rocket. Both like arguing and the Frog says: “Somebody must [...] listen’ [...] ‘and I like to do all the talking myself. It saves time

and prevents arguments.” And then he adds: “Arguments are extremely vulgar, for everybody in good society holds exactly the same opinions” (both Wilde, 1997, n. p.). Comedy is created by anthropomorphism and the Frog’s remark that all people in good society share the same opinion. In fact, it is not true and people have different opinions and thoughts.

In the following passage close to the end of the tale, where Wilde (1997, n. p.) satirically describes the Rocket’s irritating and selfish behaviour in the conversation with a Dragon-fly after the Duck has left them alone, the Rocket says: “I am not going to stop talking to him merely because he pays no attention. I like hearing myself talk. It is one of my greatest pleasures. I often have long conversations all by myself, and I am so clever that sometimes I don’t understand a single word of what I am saying” (Wilde, 1997, n. p.). The Dragon-fly’s answer sounds mocking as he advises the Rocket to become a Philosophy professor. The Rocket’s following reaction that “[...] ‘Genius like mine is sure to be appreciated some day’” (Wilde, 1997, n. p.) is a part of the situational comedy. It shows the fact that the Rocket neither learns anything from others nor changes his behaviour.

This tale is also closely related to the comedy of manners. Cuddon (1999, 158 – 159) describes this genre as one which “[...] has for its main subjects and themes the behaviour and deportment of men and women living under specific social codes. It tends to be preoccupied with the codes of the middle and upper classes and is often marked by elegance, wit and sophistication.” The fairy tale contains situational comedy as well as satirical passages criticising higher society and their conventions.

## 4.2 *A House of Pomegranates* (1891)

### 4.2.1 The Young King

The story begins the night before the King’s coronation. Even though the Young King was brought up in the poor family of a goatherd and his wife, he comes from a royal family and his mother was a princess. Under some circumstances, the true Young King’s identity is revealed and the dying King acknowledges the boy as his heir. The boy immediately forgets his previous life and his step-parents and is fascinated by the beauty of the wealth and luxury life. The Young King requires opulent clothes for his



coronation but he does not realize how servants suffer during preparation of beautiful clothes which he desires. The night before his coronation, the Young King has three dreams about the servants. It is almost impossible for him to understand the reality he has never thought about. The two main characters in his dreams are Death and Avarice which represent the King's behaviour. The first dream is about the poor and tired people who have to suffer and work hard to prepare everything for the King's coronation. The Young King realizes that these people almost become slaves for the rich ones. The second dream focuses on the youngest slave who dives into the deep sea to find the most beautiful pearl for the coronation. As he does it, he is very pale, cannot speak and later he dies. The other slaves throw his dead body into the sea. His last dream is about the death of many innocent people who suffer because of Avarice's meanness in giving no grain of corn to Death. When the King in the dream talks to a man seeking rubies to his crown, he realizes that he has to change everything. In the morning he refuses all beautiful clothes and crown jewels on the grounds of his dreams and wears only his old clothes from his step-parents and a spray of briar, which seems funny and inappropriate to the servants. The old Bishop refuses to make him King. The Young King is lit up with a ray of God who gives him the most beautiful clothes and nobody says anything because the King now looks like an angel.

The first tale includes a moral that one should not change their behaviour because of others, as it is important to be oneself and people should accept you as such. One should not judge others by their appearance because it may not correspond with their personal qualities. God rewards the Young King for his kind heart.

Wilde also expresses criticism of the society in this tale. He criticizes people's behaviour, their judging others by their appearance and their thoughts. He also points out social differences between the rich and the poor. For example, in the passage "Our master!" cried the weaver, bitterly. 'He is a man like myself. Indeed, there is but this difference between us—that he wears fine clothes while I go in rags, and that while I am weak from hunger he suffers not a little from overfeeding.'" (Wilde, 1997, n. p.), a poor man speaks to the Young King and tells him what the practical differences between them are. Both are humans who should be equal, but the only differences between them are wealth and social status. On the other hand, Wilde rarely uses

humour or the comic for criticism or mocking the society in this tale. Only at the beginning of the tale there is a short passage containing an ironic remark about the rules for court manners. "His courtiers had all take their leave of him, bowing their heads to the ground, according to the ceremonious usage of the day, and had retired to the Great Hall of the Palace, to receive a few last lessons from the Professor of Etiquette; there being some of them who had still quite natural manners, which in a courtier is, I need hardly say, a very grave offence" (Wilde, 1997, n. p.). Moral principles prescribe the ways how the courtiers should behave. According to these strict and silly rules it is unacceptable to behave naturally.

#### 4.2.2 The Birthday of the Infanta

The Spanish King has been a widower for many years because his wife died after the birth of their daughter, the Infanta. The Infanta celebrates her birthday and she is allowed to play with anyone, including poorer children, on that day. There are many entertaining activities and performances prepared for this celebration. The funniest one is a dancing show of a little ugly Dwarf. The Dwarf looks like a monster so everyone makes fun of him. He had a tough childhood as his poor father wanted to sell him. After his show, the Infanta throws a flower to the Dwarf meant for a jest as she finds his performance funny. Everyone condemns him for his appearance and later for his desire for the Princess. Later he is accused of the theft of that rose. The Infanta requires one more performance by the Dwarf, which makes him happy. The Dwarf is fascinated by her and thinks that she has fallen in love with him. He immediately imagines their future in the forest and himself introducing the Infanta to the beauty of nature. When he enters the palace again, he looks for the Infanta in many rooms. Instead of the Princess, he finds a mirror and sees his ugly face. He realizes why everybody laughs, destroys the rose and starts crying. While he is crying, the servants and the Infanta come into the room. They start laughing because they think that it is a part of his performance. But it is not. The Dwarf will never dance again as he dies when his heart breaks. For the future, the Infanta enjoins servants to invite only people without hearts.

This fairy tale contains a moral as well as a strong criticism. The moral sounds that the qualities of people are more important for life than the appearance.

This second tale contains strong criticism of the society like the first one, without using humour or comic. He focuses on hierarchy in society, bribery or mockery. The passage “The Dwarf, however, was really quite irresistible, and even at the Spanish Court, always noted for its cultivated passion for the horrible, so fantastic a little monster had never been seen.” (Wilde, 1997, n. p.), uses of irony to criticise high society tastes. He uses an oxymoron for the Court’s description of the Dwarf, combining the ideas of cultivation and passion for horrible things.

The following passage contains a subtle social satire, using anthropomorphism for the description of flowers:

Even the red Geraniums, who did not usually give themselves airs, and were known to have a great many poor relations themselves, curled up in disgust when they saw him, and when the Violets meekly remarked that though he was certainly extremely plain, still he could not help it, they retorted with a good deal of justice that that was his chief defect, and that there was no reason why one should admire a person because he was incurable; and, indeed, some of the Violets themselves felt that the ugliness of the little Dwarf was almost ostentatious, and that he would have shown much better taste if he had looked sad, or at least pensive, instead of jumping about merrily, and throwing himself into such grotesque and silly attitudes. (Wilde, 1997, n. p.)

The red Geraniums put the main emphasis on the Dwarf’s appearance and despise his good and kind heart. Some Violets that show some compassion and partly defend the Dwarf are strongly criticised. Other Violets are strict and condemn him for his ugliness. They are also in denial of the Dwarf’s right to have a happy life.

Later, the confident Lizards’ speech contains comedy:

‘Every one cannot be as beautiful as a lizard,’ they cried; ‘that would be too much to expect. And, though it sounds absurd to say so, he is really not so ugly after all, provided, of course, that one shuts one’s eyes, and does not look at him.’ The Lizards were extremely philosophical by nature, and often sat thinking for hours and hours together, when there was nothing else to do, or when the weather was too rainy for them to go out. (Wilde, 1997, n. p.)

The Lizards consider themselves to be the most perfect creatures in the world, so they advise looking at the Dwarf with closed eyes to see him not so ugly. This is understandable because they will not see him at all. In addition, they are compared to

philosophers due to spending long hours thinking during inconvenient weather. In fact, lizards belong to the groups of amphibians which should not mind rainy weather. This is also an allusion to philosophers for whom it is typical to only sit and think for long hours.

The following paragraph contains comedy which as a part of the satirical depiction of human society. Wilde again uses anthropomorphism to express his dissatisfaction with the society through the speech of flowers which irk other animals' behaviour:

'[...] what a vulgarising effect this incessant rushing and flying about has. Well-bred people always stay exactly in the same place, as we do. [...] When we do want change of air, we send for the gardener, and he carries us to another bed. This is dignified, and as it should be. But birds and lizards have no sense of repose, and indeed birds have not even a permanent address.' (Wilde, 1997, n. p.)

The flowers are irritated by the birds' behaviour, upbringing and their changing places. The reason for that is that they consider their ways of life to be superior to the birds' and they are duly proud of it. That is the way how some people think of it in the real-life which Wilde wants to emphasize.

At the end of the tale, the Infanta makes an absurd command: "For the future let those who come to play with me have no hearts" (Wilde, 1997, n. p.). She holds the Dwarf in scorn as he did not live up to her expectations. The Dwarf does not perform for her for the last time.

#### 4.2.3 The Fisherman and His Soul

The tale begins with a Fisherman who catches a Mermaid instead of fish to his fishing net. He promises to let her go providing that she always sings to fish to fill his nets. But later the Fisherman falls in love with the Mermaid and wants to marry her. She tells him that they could be together if he sends away his Soul. He does not see the meaning and value of his Soul, so he agrees to do that. He visits a Priest who is against his decision and tries to persuade him to appreciate having human soul. The Fisherman disagrees and, tries to sell his Soul at the market but nobody wants it so goes to the young Witch. She promises to take his Soul on condition that he will dance with her. At the full moon he comes to the meadow where he dances with the Witch till the person

in black appears. Before touching the person, he makes a sign of the cross which interrupts the process and all Witches and the black person disappear. The Fisherman only catches the young Witch and requires fulfilment of her promise. She gives him a knife and sends him to the coast. He cuts out his shadow which represents his Soul and becomes a cruel person who is influenced by his bad Soul. His Soul behaves cruelly because of having no heart. The Soul visits the Fisherman for three years to tell him everything that was seen during a year. The Soul tries to persuade the man to leave the Mermaid alone and to allow to be the part of his body again. For this reason, the Soul promises the Fisherman to show him a magic mirror, which knows everything, and a young dancer with white feet because the Mermaid has no legs. The Fisherman allows the Soul to do that and they travel to many cities to find the mirror and the dancer. During their journey the Soul does terrible things to show the Fisherman that it is important to have a heart. They steal or hurt a child. The Fisherman wants to cut out the Soul twice but it is not possible. The Soul is powerful but true love is more. During a stormy day, the dead Mermaid's body is washed up and the Fisherman is killed by a huge wave. The next day the Priest finds both bodies and orders to bury them to an inappropriate place. The most beautiful flowers grow on their grave and make the Priest apologize to the sea and its creatures.

This fairy tale contains a moral that the humans are not grateful for having their own souls because they are not aware of their value. Wilde does not use the comic or humour to express the criticism of human society.

#### 4.2.4 The Star-Child

One day two poor Woodcutters see a falling star during their conversation about unfair lives. They look for the star and see a small child in a cloak having a gold necklace. One of them wants to leave the child there, but the other one takes the boy into his house despite being poor and having many children already. The handsome Star-Child grows up with other children and everybody looks up to him except adults who usually argue with him as he is rude and despises people from lower society. He throws stones at a beggar woman. The Child's parents take the woman to their house and tell her a story about the Star-Child. The woman finds out that the boy is her son but he does not believe her and behaves cruelly to her. He tells her that he would never kiss her

because to kiss an adder or a toad would be much better. After that the woman leaves the house and the Star-Child's face changes into a toad's one and his skin looks like an adder because of a curse. The Star-Child sets out for a journey to find his mother and plead for her forgiveness. He is on the way for three years, looks like a beggar and is sold to a Magician by the soldiers. The old Magician requires three tasks from the Star-Child. He must bring three pieces of gold, otherwise the Magician would beat him. Every day the Star-Child does good deeds as he gives each day a piece of gold to a leper and is beaten by the Magician. On the third day, after the Star-Child gives the last piece of gold to the leper, he is changed back to his previous appearance and allowed to see his beggar mother. The Star-Child cries at his mother's feet and she turns into the Queen and the leper turns into the King. All people celebrate their new King but their happiness lasts only for three years. After the Star-Child's death, a cruel King starts to reign.

This tale contains a moral. People are able to change their behaviour but it requires self-determination. Wilde expresses criticism of the society with the use of comedy or humour. Wilde criticises the Star-Child's behaviour as he mocks and despises his mother. At the beginning of the tale, the Star-Child is very proud of his beautiful appearance but in the end, he appreciates his personal qualities.

There are several passages that use comedy to mock some human qualities and attitudes. The passage "'Ugh!' snarled the Wolf, as he limped through the brushwood with his tail between his legs, 'this is perfectly monstrous weather. Why doesn't the Government look to it?'" (Wilde, 1997, n. p.) contains a satirical overtone. Wilde uses anthropomorphism to describe the society and strange behaviour of the Wolf which thinks that government could change the weather. The whole situation is comical because it portrays unrealistic expectations of people towards government.

Later, the Wolf's following speech "'Nonsense!' growled the Wolf. 'I tell you that it is all the fault of the Government, and if you don't believe me I shall eat you.' The Wolf had a thoroughly practical mind, and was never at a loss for a good argument." (Wilde, 1997, n. p.) uses comedy as a means of satire to mock silliness of this idea. Wilde uses anthropomorphism again, and the Wolf acts like a human being, he speaks, thinks practically about things and is able to argue.

Comedy as a mean of satire follows also in the Woodpecker's reaction: "'Well, for my own part,' said the Woodpecker, who was a born philosopher, 'I don't care an atomic theory for explanations. If a thing is so, it is so, and at present it is terribly cold'" (Wilde, 1997, n. p.). The Woodpecker probably likes simple and straightforward arguments according to his response. In fact, philosophers are people who think precisely and deeply about things and their thoughts are expected to be based on evidence or logic.

Wilde further uses anthropomorphism in the sentence: "The only people who seemed to enjoy it were the great horned Owls" (Wilde, 1997, n. p.). The statement sounds comical, even if it is in a fairy tale. Owls are only animals but in this part of the text, Wilde describes them as people enjoying the terribly cold weather.

The last type of humour which is found in the tale is sarcasm. It is used when the Woodpecker's wife does not want to admit a new child in their family. Then she says: "'Wilt thou not close the door? There cometh a bitter wind into the house, and I am cold'" (Wilde, 1997, n. p.). Her husband responds with a question "'Into a house where a heart is hard cometh there not always a bitter wind?' [...]" (Wilde, 1997, n. p.), which contains a metaphor. The Wife's heart is cold and is not open to accepting a new family member. The Woodpecker is bitterly disappointed with his wife's reaction since he expects a completely opposite response to the found child's situation.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this bachelor thesis was the analysis of fairy tales written by Oscar Wilde focused on the use of humour, which is not usually mentioned in relation to these tales.

Wilde uses humour mainly for mockery and criticism of human society or some forms of human thinking and behaviour. There are also numerous passages which do not contain humour but express only criticism. Although Wilde had a common childhood and both parents were well-educated, he grew into an eccentric man, both in terms of appearance and his behaviour. His desire for the independence and the individuality could be influenced by his fairly progressive parents. As he lived in the conservative Victorian era, which laid stress on morality, he did not agree with all the morals which people had to respect. During his time, homosexuality was not allowed and Wilde was found guilty of a homosexual relationship with a man, which led to his imprisonment. In his literary work, Wilde tried to protest against conservatism, false morality and contemporary society with the use of humour and the comic.

In general, both fairy tales books contained several types of humour. The first book *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* contains more humour and comedy than *A House of Pomegranates*. Some tales, such as "The Happy Prince", "The Nightingale and the Rose" or "The Selfish Giant" include only very few humorous moments in comparison with the tales "The Devoted Friend" and "The Remarkable Rocket". The "The Happy Prince" uses anthropomorphism (birds behaving like people), absurdity (in the proposition when people want to forbid birds to die in certain places), and irony in the paradoxical statement at the end of the tale. In the second tale, "Nightingale and the Rose", only the Lizard's derisive speech creates some comic. Comic signs with the use of anthropomorphism can be found in the tale "The Selfish Giant" where the Snow or the Frost act like people after they settle down in the Giant's garden.

The last two tales are rich in humour and comic. The tale "The Devoted Friend", consisting of the frame story featuring animals and the interior one about the devoted friendship between the Hans and Miller, contains satire, absurdity, irony as well as comedy. Absurdity is included at the beginning when the Duck teaches the little ducks



standing on their heads to become members of higher society. Irony is expressed in the Duck's lack of interest in the story. Satire is also found in the Water-rat's vision of the devoted friendship. The interior story contains satirical passages as well. It is visible in the caricature of the Miller, his wife and her clever speeches. The frame story ends with the comic situation where the Water-rat dislikes the story because of its moral. The last tale of this book, "The Remarkable Rocket", is rich in satire too. It first appears with the increase of the Page's salary, who gets no money at all. The proposition that the writers destroy love with excessive writing about it as well as the Court's behaviour towards the King are parts of the satire. They honour their King on the grounds of conventions despite finding him stupid and ungifted. The fireworks dispute over the beauty of the garden continues satirical comedy. Wilde also uses verbal humour and situational humour in the tale. Another type of humour present in this tale is sarcasm. Other fireworks do not like the Rocket because of his behaviour and usually make fun of him. For example, they advised him to calm down to stay dry. Irony marks the conversation between the Rocket and the Frog. Both are naive: the Rocket is not able to accept himself not being perfect and the Frog thinks that the farmer's wife was pleased when she heard the Frog's croaking in the middle of the night.

On the other hand, the second fairy tale book *A House of Pomegranates* includes little humour and comic. In "The Young King", there is only one humorous moment, an ironic remark about unnatural behaviour rules at court.

The tale "The Birthday of the Infanta" contains irony, satire and comedy. Irony is present in the passage about the Dwarf's position at the Court. They always mock him for his horrible appearance and never note his kind heart. Satire and comedy appear with the use of anthropomorphism in the passages where flowers stress their own perfect lives, criticise others and think that everybody has to live in the same way as they do. The second passage containing depicts the Lizard, which says that not everybody could be as nice as they are. The Lizard mocks the Dwarf for his appearance and advises everybody to look at him with closed eyes to avoid his ugliness. The whole tale is concluded with naivety as the Infanta tells the court that she would require only people without heart to play with her after the Dwarf dies unexpectedly.

In the last tale "The Star-Child", Wilde uses satire to mock people's reliance on government. It is also used in the description of the Woodpecker as a born philosopher. Anthropomorphism is often used in Wilde's fairy tales to criticise human behaviour and character as well as contemporary society and its conventions. He uses animals which are more suitable for fairy tales and which allow him to obliquely express mockery and criticism of the society. In most of his tales animals act like people but are never called people. The owls were described as people only in "The Star-Child". Sarcasm is used more rarely, for example in the conversation between the Woodpecker and his wife. The man was bitterly disappointed with his wife's reaction to the new child as he had probably expected opposite reaction.

In conclusion, these texts contain numerous examples of humour. The most common type is satire. Satirical passages in both books differ in their structures. On the one hand, *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* contains a greater amount of noticeable satire, especially satire using caricature and situational comedy. On the other hand, the book *A House of Pomegranates* includes more subtle satire, using mainly comedy and anthropomorphism.

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