
CHURCH'S AUTHORITY AND THE DISAPPEARANCE OF GOD IN GEORGE BERNARD SHAW'S THE MIRACULOUS REVENGE SHORT STORY

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Abstract

This research tries to investigate and elaborate the intention of Shaw in writing such a hypocrite story which one side praise God, church and bible, but another side mostly portrayed the disappearance of God. Late Victorian is considered as the period which the presence of God is a must in every single activity that the Victorian done because of their purpose to back to the nature by considering God as the Holy creation through praising church. However, Shaw shows a big contradiction between the reality on the Victorian era with the elaboration of the short story by questioning the presence of God even though it looks like the story is about praising the church. This research is analyzed using qualitative descriptive method with historical approach and historicism theory. The result of this study indicates that church has the authority which is legitimate by the society even though the society itself has a doubt on the presence of God and even disappearing God in their life in society. Therefore, the power or the authority which is had by the church is not absolute and can be replaced by other beliefs because the reality which is faced by the society cannot always be understood by the church.

Keywords: Victorian age, church authority, disappearance of God, historicism

Introduction

Victorian era is an era refers to the period of times in the reign of Queen Victoria started from 1837 to 1901. The Victorian era or Victorian age can be described as a period of dramatic change that brought England to the highest point of development as a world power. This dramatic change is caused by the dramatic transition from a way of life based on the ownership of land to modern urban economy as the effect of industrial revolution. The Victorian itself has several divisions in each period that are early Victorian period (1830-1848), middle Victorian Period (1848-1870), and late Victorian period (1870-1901). The early Victorian period there are three things that is remarkable such the opening of Britain's first railway, Britain's first Reform Parliament, and economic distress. In the middle Victorian period it was a time of prosperity, optimism, and stability. While in the late Victorian period England was confronted by the growing threats to its military and economic preeminence (The Victorian Age, 2010).

In the late period of Victorian era, there is an influential playwright and novelist named George Bernard Shaw. Shaw was born on 26 of July 1856 in Dublin, Ireland, United Kingdom and passed away on 2 of November 1950 in England. Shaw moved to London on 1876 and on 1879-1881 Shaw wrote five novels, four published serially in magazines. In 1884, Shaw joined the Fabian Society which advocated gradual progress toward socialism. Beside as a playwright and a novelist, Shaw is also an activist of socialism and a critic because he joined in the organization of socialism and also wrote the critique on the art, music, and drama. There are several works of Shaw which are remarkable such as *Widower Houses*, *Man and Superman*, *Major Barbara*, *An Unsocial Socialist*, *Immaturity*, and so on (Laurence, 2003: vii-ix).

The *Miraculous Revenge* is a short story by Bernard Shaw which is written on 1885, but published on 1906 or five years after the Victorian era has been ended because of the

death of Queen Victoria on 1901. This short story tells about the main character Zeno Legge who is sent by his uncle, a Cardinal, to Wicklow, a district area in Dublin, to investigate about the issue of miracle that spread all over the country. The miracle that spread all over the country is about the moving graveyard passing the river and leaving one graveyard that is owned by Wolfe Tone Fitzgerald or known in the Wicklow's community as Brimstone Billy. The characteristic and the behavior of Fitzgerald are same with Zeno that described as a dirty, drunken, and blasphemous blackguard. That is why his uncle sends him to Wicklow to investigate the cause of the moving graveyard and leaving one graveyard that is owned by Fitzgerald which is considered and issued by people by a miracle.

In the end of the story, Zeno is detected as a spy who is sent by a Cardinal from London to Dublin to investigate the case of miracle in the graveyard in Wicklow. In the perspective of priest and church the spy investigating about something in the authority of a certain church is not appropriate. Moreover, the investigation is about a 'bad' thing (about a bad person who has dead). Therefore, before back to the London, Zeno is doing something which can be categorized as a genuine thing because Zeno dug the graveyard of Fitzgerald in order to move this graveyard in another bank of the river which full of the people's graveyard. So, the miracle revenge in this short story is all about a genuine because in the end of the story described that the miracle was a gross imposture. Thus, the elaboration of the Victorian era and the short story by Bernard Shaw entitled *The Miraculous Revenge*.

There are several researches about the works of George Bernard Shaw such as a research done by Lindaa Haapala in 2018 from Karlstad University which discussed about the medical science from the works of Shaw entitled *Frankenstein*. However, the research which discusses about *Miraculous Revenge* by Shaw is never done before. The only one research which has correlation with *Miraculous Revenge* is a dissertation entitled "George Bernard Shaw and European Theatre" which is written by Hayrullah Yanik in 2008 from Azerbaijan University of Language. The dissertation talks about the works of Shaw's literary works in general which one of them is *Miraculous Revenge*. The dissertation mostly discusses about the works of Shaw which is portraying the reality of Victorian era which is not always in term of positive but in negative aspect. In addition, in term of plays or drama and even theatre all of the plot of the story which is presented is about the greatness of the kingdom. However, this is not the reality which is faced by the society and then Bernard Shaw appears with the works which is mostly portraying the reality of society in Victorian era.

Therefore, based on the previous study above, this research can be categorized as new research in term of Shaw's works which is related to *Miraculous Revenge* short story. Moreover, the reason of choosing this short story appears because of the curiosity of the writer in knowing the reason why Shaw is showing this kind of story which is in short looks like praise the church and bible. However, in the other hand, the story also shown the contradiction of the reality in the Late Victoria and the disappearing of God and church but focus on the logic. So, this paper tries to investigate the reason of the author writing this kind of short story in the late Victorian era.

In addition, this paper also use the theory of historicism to elaborate the analysis of the *Miraculous Revenge* short story by investigating the history of Victorian era and the church. The analysis will focus on the reason church can be categorized as the powerful institution and the doubt or disappearing of God in society in Victorian era despite the portraying of the Victorian era the Holy of God is a must in every aspect of society's life.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As the elaboration above, this paper's analysis will be in the form of historical analysis by using the historical approach and using the theory of Historicism in elaborating the analysis. Historical analysis can be described as a method of the examination of

evidence in coming to an understanding of the past and it is particularly applied to evidence contained in documents (Historical Analysis, 2011). So, by seeing this definition can be shortly understood that historical analysis is an analysis of the past or understanding the past by seeing the document as evidence. However, in the context of literary studies historical analysis has different definition even though the fundamental understanding and meaning is same with the historical analysis in general.

In the literary studies, there is disparity among historical approach with literature history, historical literature, and historical novel. Historical approach mostly appropriate to be used to analyzed historical literature and historical novel. However, literary works that are not having dominant historical context also can be analyzed using this approach because the point of historical analysis is about finding the indications that are hidden. Therefore, historical approach is considering the relevance of the literary works as social documents because by an imagination literary works is a representation of an era and the reflection of an era. In the historical approach, literary works can be used as medium to understand the wider cultural aspects because historical approach is related to the historical competency in general such as traditional literature with the great kingdoms, modern literature with the movement of social, politics, economy, and culture in general. (Ratna, 2015: 65-66).

In another explanation of historical approach or historicism approach can be described as follows. Historicism is often encountered in discussions on the method of the social sciences and even often used without critical reflection or even taken for granted. In fact, historicism is an approach to the social sciences which assumes that historical prediction is their principal purpose by discovering the 'rhythms' or the 'patterns', the 'laws' or the 'trends' that underlie the evolution of history (Popper, 1957: 3). So, in short, historicism approach tries to investigate the characteristic of something and relate to the history by the underlying events of history.

Historicism firstly developed from the end of the eighteenth century as the reaction against the philosophy of rationalism. In addition, historicism also appears to reforms and policies advocated by various author of the Enlightenment and it opposed a program of preservation of existing institution and even return to extinct institution. This kind of condition is caused by the reason that they appealed to the authority of tradition and the wisdom of ages. Furthermore, the main purpose of historicism is the ideas which inspired by the American and French Revolutions and kindred movements in other countries and historicism champions proudly called themselves as antirevolutionary and emphasized the rigid conservatism (Mises, 2007: 198).

Then, the fundamental aim of historicism theory is the proposition that apart from the natural science, mathematics, and logic, because historicism believes that there is no knowledge but provided by history (Mises, 2007: 199). In addition, Hayden White as a theorist of history and historiography explicitly refutes that the charge of textualism itself is ahistorical because he argues that all of history is textual in some level (Blackwell, 2013: 123). Moreover, historical understanding in term of historicism requires the contextualization even if the latter is problematized in certain ways and seen as necessary rather than sufficient condition of a self-critical historiography that acknowledged the importance of self-understanding in attempt to make an assumption to work critically through a relation to the past (Blackwell, 2013: 124). So, the main point of historicism is a theory which is focusing the elaboration of the analysis on the relation between the texts of the literary work to the text of history.

Research Method

This research will be conducted and elaborated by using qualitative descriptive because the aim of this research is investigating, describing and elaborating all the data in

the form of descriptive form. In descriptive qualitative research there is no purpose to test the certain hypothesis but it just describe some variable and condition based on the data naturally (Arikunto, 2007:234). Therefore, this research will be analyzed and elaborated in the form of description of the data which is found in the *Miraculous Revenge* short story based on the approach and theory which is used in this research in accordance to the research method.

Research method itself can be described as a way to gain knowledge about particular object so that it must be in accordance with the nature of object's existence as stated by the theory (Faruk, 2012:55). The research method of this research consist of two steps which are data collection and data analysis. Then, the data which is used in this research is in the form of word, clause, sentence, condition and situation from the *Miraculous Revenge* short story which tell about the church as powerful institution in society and also about the doubt of the God's presence or the disappearing of God.

The method and technique of data collection is basically a set of methods or techniques which are an extension of the human senses because the aim is to collect empirical facts related to the research (Faruk, 2012: 25). The first step is data collection which is begun by reading more than once *Miraculous Revenge* short story. Then, the data is collected based on two types of the problem in this research that are the church as powerful institution in society and also the doubt of the God's presence or the disappearing of God in the short story. Beside the short story, the data of this research also taken from other source like books, journals and articles which is related with the problem of this research.

The second step is data analysis which can be described as a set of methods or research techniques which are an extension of the human mind because its function is not to collect data but to look for relationships between data that will never be expressed by data themselves (Faruk, 2012:25). In data analysis, the data will be analyzed in the form of qualitative descriptive by using historical approach and using historicism theory based on the background and the problem of this research which is related with the church authority and the doubt of God or God's disappearance of *Miraculous Revenge* short story.

Result and Discussion

In this discussion will be elaborated about the finding of the data that related to the church or anything that related to the church from the short story by Bernard Shaw entitled *The Miraculous Revenge*. There are several data that are found in this story that have a relation with church and Victorian era. Then, those data will be analyzed and elaborated as by seeing the historical context as the main point of the historicism theory which is emphasized the relation of the text in a work with the textual history or with history. Therefore, in this discussion the data will be related to the historical context of Victorian era as the representation of the theme that is found in this short story. The first analysis of this paper is showing the analysis of the church's authority in the Shaw's short story.

The first data about the authority of church is as follow:

An unpleasant smell of salt fish made ask her what dinner consisted of. She assured me that she had cooked all that could be permitted in His Holiness/s house on a Friday. On my asking her further why on a Friday, she replied that Friday was a fast day. (Shaw, 1906: 1).

On the quotation above can be seen that the dogma of Church in the term of Christianity cannot be faded because it is like a partially lifestyle as human in the Christianity context. In addition, the quotation above along with the Victorian era's society concerning on Church or religion that even in the single aspect of our life it is necessary to follow the church. Furthermore, the traditional culture and morality in England are based

on the patriarchal village family of all degrees who have a conception that the father worked, the mother aware to the house, the food, and the clothes, and from the parents the children learn the crafts and industries necessary for their livelihood and on Sundays they went together great and small to the worship in the village church (Young, 1954: 39).

Based on the quotation of Young itself can be correlated with the quotation of the short story that the aspects of life is lead by Church in order to get the true happiness in the society and in God's side. In simple analysis, this quotation shown that in every aspect of life even in the single thing such as preparing a food for dinner will be run by the dogmatic church in order to be a good parish. In addition, those kind of attitude is also a kind of ideology which is had by the society based on the dogmatic of the church and bible. Ideology itself can be understood as a theory or set of beliefs or principles especially one on which a political system, party or organization based (Walter, 2008). Therefore, the dogma of church and bible which is manifested such in the elaboration on the first data above also becomes an ideology because it is a set of beliefs which is based on religion in the Christianity context.

The second data will be shown as follows:

"But what you have done, you cannot undo. Kindly inform the night porter that I am gone to visit my uncle, the Cardinal Archbishop. Adieu." I strode past them, and left them whispering among themselves. (Shaw, 1906: 2).

Based on the quotation above can be concluded that the church's authority also makes some people take an advantages of it. Like in the quotation above the main character used his uncle who has an authority in church in making the people who judged him badly move away from him. Moreover, in 1846, the educational system in England is amazing because the children are under the monitorial system. The British and foreign school society backed Lancaster and simple Bible reading and also the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the principles of the Established Church stood for Bell and the Catechism (Young, 1954: 93). By seeing the quotation of Young itself can be concluded that the understanding of the church's authority is started from the early age of the children and this kind of condition makes them believe that the reality of their environment will be lead by the church. Moreover, education can be considered as the root of the understanding of an ideology. So, this kind of condition which is described in the second data that explicitly can be seen that the education about the church and the bible as the basis of the children in having an understanding of church which leads them in the future to have an ideology directly without any other conception.

The third data can be seen as follow:

"I need not tell you that even a miracle may do more harm than good in this country, unless it can be proved so thoroughly that her powerful and jealous enemies are silenced by the testimony of followers of their heresy. Therefore, when I saw in a Wexford newspaper last week a description of strange manifestation of the Divine Power which was said to have taken place at Four Mile Water, I was troubled in my mind about it. So I wrote to Father Hickey, bidding him give me an account of the matter if it were true and if not to denounce from the altar the author of the report, and to contradict it in the paper at once. This is his reply. He says well, the first part is about Church matters: I need not trouble you with it." (Shaw, 1906: 4).

The quotation above showed the reality of the society in Victorian era that in every aspect of life will be seen by the society from the church's perspective. This condition can be seen as along with the condition of the parish itself who claimed themselves as the part of church in everything. In addition, in the evangelical theology rests on a profound apprehension of the contrary states that are of Nature and of Grace, one meriting eternal wrath, and the other intended for eternal happiness. Naked and helpless, the soul

acknowledges its worthlessness before God and the justice of God's infinite displeasure, and taking hold of salvation in Christ, passes from the darkness into light which makes more fearful the destiny of those unhappy beings that remain without (Young, 1954: 12). By seeing those two quotations above from the short story and the concept of evangelical which is related to the church can be seen that everyone in Victorian beside placed themselves as human also as ardent Christianity in order to get the acknowledged from the society of their presence in the society.

The following data can be seen below:

"And Zeno, in Heaven's name be discreet. Try to act like a man of sense. Do not dispute with Hickey on matters of religion. Since you are my nephew, you had better not disgrace me." (Shaw, 1906: 6).

Based on the quotation above, can be seen that a good man in the perspective of church in the Victorian era is a man has a sense and does not act ridiculous which makes the people around him disgrace or even disgusting because it is appropriate to be seen. In addition, Sunday services without any form of prayer or worship are to be preserved, the parish would attend, in its best clothes, to hear a lecture of something such as botany or economic, and receive prizes for virtuous behavior. Moreover, the day of rest and gladness would be ended by dance expressive of the social and fraternal emotions, and only soft drink would be served (Young, 1954: 105). So, by seeing the quotation above about Sunday service can be seen that the act that is shown in the church's perspective is normal while for the people who are abnormal will be excluded from the community by seeing them as harm on church's Holiness. This condition along with the case of Fitzgerald and Zeno which is considered by people around them as abnormal because they do what they want without thinking of the church's dogmatic.

Thus, those two quotation above are the result of the dogma of the church which becomes an ideology in leading the people who believe in the dogma of church and the power of church seeing the existence of people around them by using the rules of the church because it is like an automatic attitude which had by them in seeing the people in their environment. Furthermore, as the description of Young in the Victorian era about church in those two quotation above also emphasize that the perspective in seeing people is based on the perspective of church because its power.

The last data can be seen as follow:

"I am indeed the Cardinal spy, and I have already reported to him that the miracle is a genuine one. A committee will wait on you tomorrow to verify it."

.....

"Let me tell you before you leave my house for good," said father Hickey, who seemed to have become unreasonably angry, "that you should never have crossed my threshold if I had known you were a spy, no, not if your uncle were his Holiness the Pope himself." (Shaw, 1906: 12).

Based on the quotation above can be seen clearly that the respect of other people toward someone beside seen from their attitude also from their genetic and environment. Moreover, when the genetic of the people is a man who has an authority in church in highest position, they will be respected by other definitely. This condition can be caused by the Bible that becomes their directive because in the history of Church also along with the pledged of Bible who dominate the life of Christianity. The view of the state about pledged by the Bible was also furthered by clergymen in all the leading churches because the late Victorian period was a time when traditional religious beliefs were being transformed by Biblical criticism and Darwinian science. Therefore, there were several people who choose to reject the Christianity or being an atheism. In addition, Bishop Durham named Brooke Westcott stated the term about the social aspects of Christianity which in this term they

emphasized that the particular church had not only a spiritual but a social mission that is pledged by every page of the Testament, Old and New, to fight the battle of the poor (Ausubel, n.d.: 56-57). So, by this kind of pledging Bible the people will be more careful in doing an act because they are related with the church as the Holy institution in Christianity's life.

The second thing of the analysis in this paper is the reason which is had by the author in creating this kind of short story which describes about the power of church, but another side also implicitly put the contradiction of a man in seeing the power of church by act based on his logic. Zeno as the main character in short story is implicitly doing what he wants which is based on his logic without any hesitation and caring about his environment which is praising the church because of its authority. This kind of condition can be seen as the representation that the presence of God is being neglected. Based on the history of Victorian era, there is a period in Victorian literature that neglected the God and considering the God is not exist and they focus on the logic thinking in everything that they done. This condition is like a contradictory between the presence of God and the disappearance of the God if it is seen from the historical context of late Victorian because the intellectual interests of the late Victorian also can be described as the traditional conception of man's nature and place in the world (Shrimpton, 2018). In short, the late Victorian invites the Victorians to back to the nature or praise the nature by considering the nature as the source of idealism in every single step that they passed. Then, the Victorians also try to considering the presence of God as the reflection of their claim about back to the nature because they know from the dogma of the Church and Bible that the universe as the symbol of nature is a kind of God's creation.

Moreover, by seeing the historicism theory which emphasize the conservative thing and the tradition as the valuable thing and as the main idea of this theory also it is like a contradictory because in the short story described because the main character is neglected the conservative idea and the tradition of the era that is praising the church and God. Therefore, this short story is created can be categorized as a warning of Shaw that there is no power of church which is absolute because in any time the authority of church can be replaced by the authority of other ideas or beliefs which appears from the logic perspective and do not in the form of dogmatic.

Conclusion

Based on the elaboration above started from the background into the finding and discussion, can be concluded that this short story is a reflection of society from the author's imagination and experience. In addition, this short story also emphasize the authority of church in the Victorian era's society because based on the data that are found and analyzed tells about the reality that is faced by people in the Victorian era when facing the problem related with the church as portrayed in the short story from the perspective of narrator or main character. Then, the short story also emphasize that the reality in the Victorian era that the society and the church cannot be broken because these two things is related each other in supporting the continuing life in society based on the authority's church and the people's intention. Last, this short story also a warning from Shaw which is delivered through his work that the power and the authority of church is not absolute because in any time it can be replaced with other ideas or beliefs which is based on the logical thinking.

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