

CHAPTER I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

1.1. Background of the Study

It is with good reason that Archibald Henderson, official biographer of his subject, entitled his work George Bernard Shaw: Man of the Century. Among the literature, no set of initials were more widely known than G.B.S. A London publishing firm bought space in the times to voice its greetings :

GBS

Hail to thee, blithe spirit !

(James K. Lowers, 1964:5)

George Bernard Shaw is the greatest of many Irishmen who have written fine plays in the English language. Besides a playwright he is also a social critic who charmed and provoked his middle-class audience by his brilliant satirical wit. Most part of his play deal with some real problem or question which might arise in the life of any ordinary person - many of them can also be found in his own day.

Shaw's thinking and writing are influenced by Henrik Ibsen, the revolutionary Norwegian dramatist, in many ways. W.W. Robson in Modern English Literature (1970:2) stated :

But Shaw's master in drama was not primarily a writer of comedy. His chosen medium for enforcing his ideas was the new European theatre of Ibsen. Ibsen's main theme in the tyranny and inhumanity of social convention, which denies to human beings their need to express their unique and peculiar natures.

These kinds of theme can also be found in Shaw's. Therefore some regard that he is an iconoclast or an image-breaker. Iconoclast, as stated in A.S Hornby's Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, is a person who attacks popular beliefs or established customs which he thinks mistaken or unwise (1974:420). Shaw does not like the conventional ideas which exist in society. It can be seen in Shaw, Pygmalion, Notes (1959:10) as follows :

Another most characteristic device is Mr. Shaw's unique capacity for inversion of ideas and inversion of situation. Shaw's romantic characters are comical because he reveals things as they really are, instead of covering them up with romantic and conventional tinsel. The characters express ideas, conventions, and concepts of which they change the customary values and so make absurd and ridiculous that which is usually considered good and just, and vice versa.

As a non-conformist person, Shaw often presents something which is considered as an unconventional idea. For example, in his Caesar and Cleopatra , he presents Cleopatra as a sixteen-year-old girl, innocent, and unexperienced with men, yet, in the society's image (perhaps also in ours) - as raised in Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra - Cleopatra

is well-known as a beautiful queen as well as a seducer.

As a social critic, Shaw used his plays to criticize the society. Yet his plays are humorous. One of his unique characteristics is his habit of using provocative paradox, which he used to provoke the reader's or the audience's thought or feeling. Paradox, as written in A.S. Hornby's Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, is a statement that seems to say something opposite to the common sense or the truth but which may contain a truth (1974:609). This paradox seems to be an irony which makes the readers or the audiences look upon themselves. Therefore the audiences and critics were by turns shocked, delighted, furious, and amused after seeing the play. Ruth Adam in What Shaw Really Said stated that even the king "...came to 'Arms and the Man' and frowned, to 'John Bull's Other Island' and laughed so much that he broke his chair." (1966:17).

Shaw's way of thinking in presenting his plays in which he attacked the conventional concepts and ideas of the people interests me to choose one of his plays as my subject. About the reason why he wrote plays, he said himself :

I'm no ordinary playwright. I am a specialist in immoral and heretical plays. My reputation was gained by my persistent struggle to force the public to reconsider its morals. I write plays with the deliberate object of converting the nation to my opinion on sexual and social

matters. I have no other incentive to write plays, as I am not dependent on it for my livelihood. (Shaw, Arms and the Man, Notes, 1959:19)

In Major Barbara, Shaw shows the disillusionment of an idealist who is - in this case - represented by Barbara, a priestess of a church named the Salvation Army. Through this play, Shaw wants to criticize some concepts of Christianity. According to the Church, the enemy of human being is poverty - an evil that comes from human injustice, not from supernatural mischief. Spoken by Undershaft, the armament millionaire, Shaw states that poverty is the worst of crimes. It becomes a paradoxical situation between Barbara and Undershaft. This kind of problem seems always to exist in human life. In our real life itself, poverty often becomes a problem. We can find poverty everywhere and there is still a big question : How to overcome this problem ? How can poverty be abolished ? Shaw's opinion in this play wants us to reconsider this problem and it becomes the reason why I choose this play as my topic in this research. Moreover, being a Christian, I want to know what concepts of Christianity which are opposed by Shaw.

1.2. Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to find the concepts and ideas which are opposed by Bernard Shaw in one of his

plays entitle Major Barbara. Those things opposed by Shaw are all related to the main theme of the play i.e. poverty.

In this research, I will deal with Shaw's ideas in opposing some concepts of Christianity and capitalism. I will discuss them through the theory of expression and imitation and through the biographical approach.

1.3. Significance of the Study

This thesis is hoped to give a contribution to the body of knowledge and can serve as a valuable introduction for the further research especially in Bernard Shaw's works.

Through this research, I also hope that the readers will get a clear description about how miserable the condition of poverty is - the main theme of this play. Hence, they might have further opinion on how to handle this problem. They might also see whether Shaw's opinion in handling such problem by presenting his unconventional ideas can be considered as good or not.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

Literary works can be regarded as the expressions of the writer's thoughts and ideas. Bernard Shaw also uses his plays to express his ideas. One of the characteristics of his plays is the drama of ideas instead of the drama of

action. This model is influenced by Henrik Ibsen as stated by A.M. Gibbs in Shaw (1979:7) as follows :

"Shaw's plays are often associated with the term that he himself applied to the plays of Ibsen, the drama of ideas."

G.C.Thornley in An Outline of English Literature (1966:152) also strengthens the statement by saying :

Shaw (and H.G. Wells too) took a front place in these arguments, and his plays contain ideas which were then new. They are also full of wit, but the characters are rather shallow. They say the things that are necessary to support the battles of ideas in the plays.

Hence, in this thesis I will use the theory of expression since Shaw mainly expresses his ideas through his plays. Wellek and Warren in their book Theory of Literature (1956:23) stated :

Moreover, literary language is far from merely referential. It has its expressive side; it conveys the tone and attitude of the speaker or writer. And it does not merely state and express what it says; it also wants to influence the attitude of the reader, persuade him, and ultimately change him.

The creation of literary works cannot be separated from the reality of human life. The Literary works themselves describe the human life which is actually the social reality. In Major Barbara, Shaw raised poverty

as his main theme. Poverty is a reality which can be found in our life. Wellek and Warren stated further :

Literature 'represents' 'life', and 'life' is, in large measure, a social reality, eventhough the natural world and the inner or subjective world of the individual have also been object of literary 'imitation'. (1956:94)

Since it is said that literature is an imitation of the real life, this thesis will also use the theory of imitation which is often called as the mimetic theory. Abrams in The Mirror and the Lamp stated that mimetic orientation is the explanation of art as essentially an imitation of aspects of the universe. It is apparent however that the mimetic concept is the reference of a work to the subject matter which it imitates. Their characters as an imitation of human action is what defines the arts in general, but the kind of action imitated serves as one important differentia of an artistic species.

Literary works are closely related to the author's life. Very often we find an author expresses his own life experiences in his works. The background of Major Barbara also has a close relationship with Shaw's life in which he used to be taken by his nursemaid to the slums area. The poverty of the area inspired him to write the play. Therefore I will take biographical approach in this thesis to get closer to Shaw's ideas. Studying the biography of an

author will help us in evaluating a literary work.

The importance of biographical study is stated by David Daiches in his Critical Approach to literature as follows :

The poet's works may be a mask, a dramatized conventionalization, but it is frequently a conventionalization of his own experiences, his own life. If used with a sense of these distinctions, there is used in biographical study. First, no doubt, it has exegetical value: it may explain a great many allusions or even words in an author's work. The biographical framework will also help us in studying the most obvious of all strictly developmental problem in the history of literature - the growth, maturing, and possible decline as an author's art. (1981:317)

1.5. Method of Research

In literary study, the method generally used in the research is qualitative method in which the description of the data is taken from the quotation of statements found in the text. The steps systematically conducted are as follows :

1. Research, reading, and understanding the text and relating it with other relevant references.
2. Analysis, by describing Major Barbara using three approaches namely expression, imitation, and biography - in order to find the concepts and ideas opposed by Shaw.
3. Academic report by constructing the analysis in

the form of academic report.

1.6. Presentation

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter I is the introduction which includes the background of the study, the objective of the study, the significance of the study, the theoretical framework, the method of research, and the presentation itself.

While in the second chapter, I am talking about the author himself regarded from the biographical approach. The expressive and mimetic theories will be used in Chapter III to analyze the concepts and ideas opposed by Shaw. Finally, the conclusion will be given in Chapter IV.