

**RESEARCH TITLE**

**LOVE AND WAR IN THE MODERN REALISTIC THEATRE BY  
BERNARD SHAW: *ARMS AND THE MAN***

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**Abstract**

The play *Arms and the Man* by Bernard Shaw is considered one of Shaw's plays that did not meet the proper demand for it, despite being a play with a deep dramatic dimension, as well as supporting modern ideas and principles comparable to brilliant theatrical works, because Shaw was one of the most important and famous playwrights in the modern realistic theater and is one of the most important playwrights of satirical literature (comedy), as he presented works commensurate with a targeted social situation with a critical literary dimension, those works perform wonderful human, social and literary goals.

Bernard Shaw works in his play (*Arms and the Man*) on two main elements: the realistic dimension and the emotional dimension (romantic), as this play is a process of transformation from the romantic state to the real state, and this can be discovered in the first chapter for the romantic side, and the second and third parts for the realistic side.

The aim of this study is to explore the basic elements and scenes that depend objectivity in the play on both sides: anti-war and anti-romance, so the scenes presented can be inferred to identify the scene of war as well as the scene of love and how to infer each side according to realism and modern realistic theater, as well as studying the characters and measuring their literary and realistic dimensions and assigning each character to the themes of the play dealt with in this study in terms of anti-war and anti-romance and vice versa.

**Key Words:** Realism, Anti-War, Anti-Love, Romanticism, Bernard Shaw

**Aims:** This paper aims to highlight the anti-war and anti-love aspect of Bernard Shaw's play *Arms and the Man*.

**Scope:** This paper contributes to the study of the social situation in a satirical and realistic way through the hierarchy of modern realistic theater.

### **Methodology (Analytical Method)**

George Bernard Shaw (G.B. Shaw), who is undisputedly the second most celebrated playwright in English language, and 'England's second Shakespeare'. (Wilson, C. 1996) Is a literary figure who has been diversely interpreted, criticized and appreciated. Perhaps Nehru of India was quite right to say that Shaw was not only the greatest figures of the age but one who influenced the thought of vast number of human beings during two generations. (Suleiman, A. 2010) Shaw's own popular critical comment like, "we get from his plays only what we bring to them". (Elsie. B. 1971) Have always encouraged literary critics to stretch their imagination and give innovative meanings to his plays. His plays are predominantly evaluated as the plays of ideas due to the fact that ideas reign supreme in them.

The play of *Arms and the Man* is a satirical play by the Irish writer George Bernard Shaw, first produced on April 21, 1894 and published in 1898, it is a satirical play that shows anti-war and deals with the characters and roles in a comical way to detract from the hypocrisy of humanity and their duplicitous nature, where the nature of Commander Petkoff, his ignorance, and Sergius brags about himself as a famous officer with his reputation and reputation, and on the other hand, shows us the romantic nature of our opinion, its behaviors, and the way in order to create a simulation of the modern realistic theatre to mock the nature of the war and his discontent with it.

We find a lot of bragging in the male characters of the play, such as those we find in Sergius, Petkoff and even Nicola, despite being a servant, we find him very boastful towards the rest of the servants, unlike what we find in the female character such as Raina and Catherine, it also follows that societies undergoing political or social change are likely to undergo a re-evaluation of masculinity. Tosh (1991) demonstrates, using the Benson family, how middle class views of masculinity in the late Victorian era changed in a generation, so that instead of asserting one's masculinity in the domestic environment, more and more the home became associated with the feminine and masculinity was affirmed away from the family. (Alston, R. 1998).

This nature was characterized by aristocratic society, which shone its star during the Serbian - Bulgarian war, which was accompanied by a large set of political and social concepts and changes, so we find that the change that took place in society was formed by a set of issues, including the issue of boasting, condescension, classism and the like, and since Bernard Shaw is an agitator of classism and social differentiation, his play *Arms and the Man* came as a reaction to the lived social nature and here we have the role of realistic theater to convey, investigate and criticize the social nature.

Shaw was an iconoclast who attacked the romantic notions of war and love. Toward the middle of the nineteenth century, there can be traced a significant development from romantic and historical themes to more realistic themes, and this movement toward realism received considerable impetus from the work of TW Robertson, (1829-71), who introduced in his plays the idea of a serious theme underlying the humor, characters and dialogue of a more natural kind. This play is a satire on the foolishness of glorifying war, as well as on basing affections on idealistic notions of love. These themes brought reality and a timeless lesson to the comic stage of the time.

Therefore, comedy literature is one of the pillars of literature and one of the most important aspects in political, social, economic, and even romantic and psychological criticism, as Shaw did in presenting his play and making it anti-war (this is the socio-political aspect) and anti-love (this is the romantic aspect), so this anti followed by Shaw is a socio-political romantic literary anti, the goal of which is to renounce war and the characters who follow this policy, because at that period the world came out of a grinding war, so the world began to look for a real outlet to move away from politics. Therefore, the play *Arms and the Man* came in conjunction with the political and social situation of that period and here it is possible to show the side of realism in this theatrical work. Shaw's words invite a reading of *Arms and the Man's* Bulgarian setting as nothing more than an off to the ends of the characters' names. Most critics seem to agree with Shaw, for the play's setting is rarely the focus of their attention. Whether the play succeeds or fails as an attack on romanticism is the question they typically favor. As a result, three major readings have dominated the scholarship about the play: that its characters "vindicate romanticism," that the play "expresses the interlocking relationship and mutual dependence of romanticism and realism," and that it sets up romantic ideals as "clay pigeons for the express purpose of shooting them down." To strip *Arms and the Man* of its geography at Shaw's word, however, is to work within the confines of "an economy [that] obviously implies a theme of authority: the author, it is believed, has certain rights over the reader, he constrains him to a certain meaning of the work, and this meaning is of course the right one, the real meaning. "Such an approach to the play, moreover, cuts it down in size by deleting the significance and implications of its setting." (Tchapravov, S. 2011)

Therefore, this layout, which Shaw draws in his criticism of romance here, was taken by some critics as strengthening the position of romance and supporting it in one way or another to show romance out of the predicament of criticism and enter the field of acceptance in the play, in fact, Shaw did not oppose romance directly or significantly as he opposed the war, in fact, at the beginning he showed (Raina) as a romantic character and then he changed the nature of the character to more realistic, so he considered this change or this behavior is anti-romance, either for anti-war, we may find it in several places, for example, when Bluntschli is shown carrying a chocolate candy in his pocket instead of ammunition and this is evidence of two important things: either Bluntschli is a stupid person or a lover of life, he is against the war with chocolate, but with the tracking of the play we find that Bluntschli is a smart character and he is not just a soldier, but he is able to run businesses in the city, this means that the message that Bernard Shaw wanted to convey is that Bluntschli is a smart character when he used chocolate in the goal of anti-war and away from it.

**Bluntschli:** I have no ammunition. What is the use of shots during the battle. I used to carry pieces of Choco instead of shots and I finished the last piece I had an hour ago

**Raina:** you are surprised by his behavior as a chocolate man! Would you stuff your pockets : with sweets.. Like schoolchildren... Even on the battlefield .

**Bluntschli:** [grimacing] yes .Isn't that contemptible?' [Greedily] I wish I had more chocolate now . (Shaw, B. 1894)

So we find out how Raina detracts from the Swiss soldier who shows great cowardice towards the war and behaves (as Raina described) as school students, in fact this is the ironic aspect of the play, which can be called (anti-war in the comedic concept) so we find that Raina's irony and the way the Swiss soldier's propensities to chocolate as children in it convey the love of life and renounce intolerance and wars in the way of underestimating the war and its ferocity. Because this requires minimizing the severity of the war or its cruelty, so it required the introduction of the ironic side in the theatrical work, as well as to reduce the size of the

realism of the subject or idea, of course, it is a strict material that cannot be treated as absolute realism because it will be difficult to understand and cannot be opposed in a way that:

European Revolution in 1848 is “known as Spring of Notions, Spring Time of the people, and the year of revolution”. After this revolution, the realistic authors and researchers did not accept Romanticism that dominated in French Literature and this revolution showed the need for political reform, Social reform as well as Economic reform because of the need of the time. In 1850, realism started as an artistic or painting movement that was led by Gustave Courbet in France. (Safder, S. 2022)

On the other hand, as for the anti-war, which is the most obvious aspect in the play *Arms and the Man*, this aspect can be clearly seen through the supporters of the war, when watching the character of Petkoff, the military commander and his stupid mentality, we conclude that wars are supported by idiots, as described by Bernard Shaw, and those who carry out these wars is a person who he follows her and follows her way. A minor theme dealing with the relationship between the upper and lower classes are represented by Petkoff who is somewhat frivolous and incompetent and his servants, Nicola and Louka who are intelligent, practical and focused on clear goals. Shaw chose what seemed like an insignificant little conflict between minor countries as the starting point for his anti-war play. His warnings were prophetic, however, since the conflict in the Balkans during the late 19th century eventually led to the first world war of 1914-1918. It was only through the senseless horror of this conflict that the British People and the rest of the world came to realize the folly of their romantic vision of war. (Singh, R., & Arjun, D. 2013)

So it can be concluded that those who support the war are a person who has his Dimension and mentality, as well as his audience, His servants, his family, the people he deals with, as well as characters who do not support the war and think in a rational way and a level of intelligence accompanied by realism, in *Arms and the Man*, class struggle is shown by introducing of play different characters. Captain Bluntschli represents middle-class. Captain Bluntschli is about thirty four years old. He is a realistic person. He is a professional soldier who is trained in leading the war in best manner. He sees nothing romantic about the violent behavior of human beings during the war. He knows that a dead professional soldier has no value for people therefore; he saved himself by hiding in a lady's bedchamber. He chooses to eat rather than to kill therefore; he carries chocolates rather than guns. He has some features that lead Raina to exchange Sergius with him. His kind and capability endears him to others especially to Petkoff family that was high and noble class of society. (Azizmohammadi, F., & Zohreh, T. 2014)

Therefore, the ironic aspect of this play is that society accepts the state of war and living with it as if it were a necessary aspect of life, so Bernard Shaw countered it with the ironic realistic behavior found in this play, not as Petkoff believes and his opinion about the war as just a challenge and a necessary evil, but as the Swiss soldier sees it, who believes that if he dies, no one of the figures of these wars that the leaders make up, and in this part the element of realism in the theatrical work and its simulation stands out to us the play *Arms and the Man* can be anti-romance and war, but this does not mean that it is anti-love in all its forms, but rather it takes care of the sublime love, which can be a true love that supports the human idea and real human ideology, not the pseudo-romantic dimension as it is between Sergius and Raina, but the sublime love that is formed between Bluntschli and Raina.

Sergius and Raina both believe in the so- called 'higher love' in which there is no carnal desire. They promise each other that they will never do a base thing in each other's absence. Yet, they are quite irresponsible when it comes to keeping their words. So to speak, their higher love is a mere hoax. She gives shelter to Bluntschli, the Swiss-born Serbian fugitive, in

her room at night because his life was at stake. This clearly shows how humane and kind Raina is to a random person whom she never met before. However, letting the man kiss her hand and allowing him to sleep on her bed creates a bit of confusion because she is about to marry Sergius in no time. "Lovely Raina is first appalled by his cowardice, then charmed and sympathetic, and then . . . well, that's the play" (Kennedy). What makes the whole episode so dramatic is when she calls him "a chocolate cream soldier" (Act I, 27). Bluntschli has major trust issues with her as he says, "I admire you; but I find it impossible to believe a single word you say" (Act III, 69) (Uddin, M. A., & Karmakar, K. 2020)

### Characters Of Peace and Sublime Love in Play:

- **Raina:** a young woman from an upper-class Bulgarian family, begins the play clinging to romantic fantasies about both war and love, idolizing her fiancé's brave exploits in the war and cherishing the pure love they share.
- **Bluntschli:** a Swiss mercenary who climbs through Raina's bedroom while fleeing from Bulgarian troops, represents the best qualities promoted by the play: realism and pragmatism.

### Characters that Support the War and Social Stratification in Play

- **Sergius:** he is Raina's somewhat foolish fiancé, believing in the romantic ideals advocated by poetry and opera, Sergius leads a doomed cavalry charge, which is saved only by stupid luck.
- **Louka:** the beautiful and rather rude maid of the Petkoff family, has difficulty accepting her place in the house.
- **Catherine:** Raina's mother, Catherine, shares many of her daughter's fantasies about love and war, as well as her class claims.
- **Major Petkoff:** Raina's father cuts a ridiculous figure. Like Sergius, major Petkoff is unable to coordinate the movements of the core troops and relies on Bluntschli to do his job for him.
- **Nikola:** serves the Petkoff family, he is a very practical man, Nikola understands and embraces his social status.

### Conclusion and Results

Since the play *Arms and the Man* is a play against the concept of war, we have seen the reaction of both sides, the play divided its main characters into two sides, the first: Raina and Bluntschli, who are elements of realism and opponents of the principle of war, so Bluntschli's appearance was mocking the concept of war by carrying chocolate bars instead of ammunition and his disdain for the concept of War Bernard Shaw as fools bragging about their money, reputation and personal life.

That this division, created by Bernard Shaw in the play, the agitator of war and romance, is based on two basic principles, namely that war is a behavior shunned by rationalists who support peace, and this appeared in several places in the parts of the play, so we find that the division of the characters are for anti-and supporters of war, and the other principle is anti-romance, although love in this play is also a division, we find that Bernard Shaw Bluntschli and Raina at the end of the play mean that Shaw is not opposed to the principle of love but simulates a reality real according to the realist movement of modern realist theater.

Here Bernard Shaw shows us his ability to convey each character in its specific aspect, such as Raina and Bluntschli on one side and Petkoff and the others on the other side, as well as in the character itself, Bernard Shaw managed to divide one character into two sides at the beginning, we saw Raina's tender romance loving Sergius and the romantic part appears in

him, while at the end, Raina herself shows the realistic part that renounces war and behaves with more realistic behavior, and this is also the case with Bluntschli when he appears stupid with the appearance of a child and at the end with the appearance of an intelligent role model who is able to love Raina and contribute to holding peace in that war. This is the harmony of the characters in Bernard Shaw's play, showing the group divisions as a social-class division and the individual division as a personal and psychological division.

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