



# A THEMATIC EXPLORATION OF IDEALISM AND REALISM IN THE PLAYS, “ARMS AND THE MAN” AND “CANDIDA” BY GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

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## Abstract:-

This research paper examines the themes of idealism and realism as they are found in the plays Arms and the Man and Candida by George Bernard Shaw. The emphasis is on character analysis as a requisite to understanding the techniques which Shaw uses to demonstrate the themes in a brighter light. The characters have been examined in the light of realism with the intention of understanding why the concept is important and whether idealism as an opposite philosophy is necessary or not.

## INTRODUCTION

Realism originally started as a literary movement in the nineteenth century and can be considered as an exit from the prevalent and incredibly influential romantic era. Since the artists of the realist movement were conscious of romanticism, they wanted to remain averse from its grandiose expression. The exaggeration present in romanticism was not altogether to the liking of the realist authors and in fact, they wished to portray life as opposite in their art. This aversion from extravagant expression is an important aspect of realism. In fact, the entire movement was born due to realistic authors wanting to break free from romantic notions. They wanted to portray life just as it is. For them, art *“represents reality by portraying mundane, everyday experiences as they are in real life.”*

So, if one were to consider realism and its philosophy, what it actually intends to portray is the society in its authentic setting. There is a certain irreverence of romantic notions and the intended beautification of text that it entails, in order to imply a meaning that is at its crux, a simple truth, or perhaps an expected one. What realism actually offers is an emancipation from the ultra-reality portrayed by art that is shadowed over everyday life. In order to give real life, as experienced by the unprivileged faction of society its proper place in artistic expression, realist authors set out to write works that would pull the rug from under the audience's feet and thrust them into what is not only foreign to their imagination but is also an underlying and underrepresented reality of life.

In the present time, realist works have obviously gained a very important place in art, there are ample works that use the realist brush to shade over the gaudy depictions of life. However, it is also important to point out that all these works don't just use art as a modicum to capture everyday life as is, it doesn't just serve as a documented adaptation of real life. On the contrary, realism does rely on fantastical and fiction elements that led to off-shoots in the literary process of realists. Something that I would like to discuss in this paper is the sub-genre known as naturalism. Naturalism is a key form of realism along with the likes of magical realism and psychological realism. Naturalism is influenced by the work of Darwin and his theory of evolution.

“Naturalism applies scientific ideas and principles, such as instinct and Darwin's theory of evolution, to fiction. Authors in this movement wrote stories in which the characters behave in accordance with the impulses and drives of animals in nature... Naturalist writers believe that truth is found in natural law, and because nature operates according to consistent principles, patterns, and laws, truth is consistent.” (“Naturalism”)

If we just isolate this philosophy for a moment and look at it impartially, it possesses certainty as its chief theme. Certainty, that can also be correlated with determinism, i.e “under the assumption of determinism, one might say that given the way things have gone in the past, all future events that will in fact happen are already destined to occur.”(Hofer)

Naturalism is a genre wherein writers posit their ordinary characters in extraordinary situations. A similar theme can be found in *Arms and the Man*; Raina, the female protagonist belonging to the upper class of Bulgarian society, found herself in an unimaginable situation as a hostage to a soldier (Bluntschli) from the opposing camp. It was a situation where she had to concede to the demands of her kidnapper. Although there is no harm done to her, she is still in a position where she is forced to protect him from opposing forces in

order to save herself and her honour, or as is later admitted by Bluntschli, "I'd have blown out her brains if she'd uttered a cry," he would have, indeed shot her if she hadn't been obedient to him.

This is an inherent trait of naturalism, wherein external circumstances render the individual without any options. It can also be corresponded with determinism viz. "...the idea that individual characters have a direct influence on the course of their lives is supplanted by a focus on nature or fate," (Zhang 195) which basically means that individual will is not just absent but rather irrelevant.

Therefore, it seems that naturalism is in fact, to a degree present in Shavian works. So the sub-genre naturalism that is part of the bigger and wider umbrella term of realism will also be explored in this paper. The philosophy will be contrasted with idealism and how the mental notions of particular events and ideologies apply or not apply to reality itself. The mental constructs created by the human mind are an important part of realism as our perception of reality and the particular instances in our lives that influence our outlook shape the decisions we make. Just like the perception of Marchbanks and Morell regarding the 'object' of their affections: Candida. Candida is described as "a woman of 33, well built, well nourished, likely, one guesses, to become matronly later on, but now quite at her best, with the double charm of youth and motherhood." The very image Shaw wants to portray of his leading lady is that of an ideal one. Candida's name too is a play on the word 'candid', she is the very image of honesty and frankness all collated into one person imbued with a "dignity of character". That is Shaw's description of Candida but how exactly do we as an audience view her and how do the other characters in the story perceive her to be?

The perception of other characters vary from genuine affection and jealous adoration to romantic devotion and fond humility. The fact that so many perspectives of a single person are held as mental images by the characters has a lot of underlying meaning in reference to the place of women in society and in essence, the real implications of possessing such opinions. Ultimately, both the plays, *Arms and the Man* and *Candida* consist of a similar theme wherein the characters seem to possess views of the world and of other people that may or may not correspond with reality. What this entails is a very individual perspective based on notions that might be preconceived or idealistic in nature. Since they are more or less opinions instead of facts, they don't correspond to reality entirely and thus a gulf is not only created but maintained between idealism and reality. To expound on the subject in simpler terms, "idealism is a theory that states that our reality is shaped by our thoughts and ideas. Realism, on the other hand, deals with the fact that reality has an absolute existence independent from our thoughts, ideas and even consciousness." (Difference Between.net)

When one considers what realism stood for and its core philosophy, we can contrast it with idealism, what we can consider is, in some sense, its exact opposite. In this dissertation, I would like to consider, at first, idealism in its ethical perspective as the works under consideration imbibe this particular version of the comprehensive philosophy of idealism. In the ethical sense, idealism or an ideal is, "...a principle or value that an entity actively pursues as a goal and holds above other concerns perceived as being less meaningful." (Contributors to Wikimedia projects)

My topic for research is the working of these two opposite philosophies and how they correspond with their respective characters portrayed in the plays of choice. Apart from that, another important point that needs attention would be Bernard Shaw's opinions and political practices that consciously and subconsciously influenced the works under consideration. My aim is to develop a thorough understanding of these concepts and point out the instances in the plays wherein important and pivotal moments reflected how the themes of idealism and realism shaped Shavian literature.

Bernard Shaw, was an influential playwright and can be credited of having changed the theatre in his country by turning the heads of stereotypes and moulding a new genre of plays using the existing framework left over by other playwrights. To search for an example, we need not look further than our very own choice- *Candida*. The play was influenced by Doll's House of Henrik Ibsen or as it is known in Dutch- 'Et dukkehjem'. Both the plays share innumerable similarities but also possess a pivotal difference in the nature of the message relayed by them and the moralistic attitude that they carry. All of the difference lies in the climax and the denouement. In Doll's House, the protagonist Nora leaves her husband after realising that all she did till now was live for the men in her life, at first her father and now her husband- Torvald. In realising this significant starvation of the self, it occurs to her that she needs to break free from everything and find herself.

"Nora

I must try and educate myself—you are not the man to help me in that. I must do that for myself. And that is why I am going to leave you now." (Ibsen)

In making Nora do so, Ibsen set a precedent for the then conservative Victorian society about the emancipation of women. Shaw took the same concept and instead of forcing the hand of his protagonist, he let her choose in the 'auction' scene. He let her choose to either give herself and her love to the weaker or the stronger man. She gives it, in her kindness to the weaker of the men so that a stability is maintained in the society. *Candida* definitely deserved more than what Morell makes of her and it might be true that Marchbanks would deliver

her from her day to day afflictions as a poor Parson's wife, but in truth, the matter is a little more complex than that.

Although the character of Morell has been chalked out as a capable, dense and slightly sanctimonious parson, there isn't a complete lack of truth in all he says. It reflects a little of what Shaw himself believes in. Shaw was a socialist and a member of the democratic socialist think tank Fabian Society. He often authored pamphlets for them and there is an obvious similarity between Morell's propagation of socialism and Shaw's personal beliefs. It can also be said that perhaps the competition between Marchbanks and Morell is, in fact, a personal conflict within Shaw's own artistic self, i.e Marchbanks vs. the politically and socially ideal Morell.

Apart from the socialist attitude of Shaw, another interesting aspect of his philosophy lies in his idealistic notion of the 'life force' and 'superman'. A.C. Ward writes, "Shaw was convinced, as *Man and Superman* shows, that human beings were created to carry out the divine purpose of raising mankind to a progressively higher level until Man becomes perfected in the Superman. For the achievement of this purpose, Woman (in Shaw's philosophy) is of primary importance as-ideally the bearer of better and better children, while Man is the instrument through whom Woman's destined function is fulfilled. Whereas the common conventional belief is that the man seeks and pursues and masters the woman he desires to marry, in Shaw's plays it is the woman who seeks out and masters the man she has selected to be the father of her children. Women are, he believed, unconsciously controlled by the Life Force (the divine spirit working in us) and, being guided by the Life Force in its upward striving, they have the superior rank and active control." (Ward xiv)

When looked at from the perspective of idealism, Shaw wanted to express his idea of a 'Superman' as the final form of humanity. The philosophy of 'Superman' doesn't just revolve around a physical or scientific change, but rather an emotional and spiritual one. Shaw believed that even though man had come a long way with regards to scientific development, there was a significant deficiency in the spiritual sphere. To tackle this, he undertook the job of writing plays in a way that rejuvenated the mental spirit of man and pushed him to reconciliate the due course charted by a magnificent progress in science and a static blur of unacknowledged spirituality.

As far as the role of women is concerned, we can safely conclude that Shaw's opinions seem dated with regards to the current socio-political climate and the position retained by women in the current society as being equal to man. However, Shaw claims that women are superior to men in their nature of being "unconsciously controlled" by the Life Force. Therefore, in his opinion, women are 'purer' and nearer to being a perfect human

than man is. The comparisons are indeed found in his plays where Candida is compared to the “Virgin of Assumption”, thereby indicating a direct connexion between an ‘ideal’ image of a woman to the guidance received by the Life Force. Shaw cannot be considered as an anti-feminist for he does believe in women’s rights but says that each being is assigned their particular task and in the case of women, he explains that they would be the ideal bearer of ‘better’ and ‘better’ children and they serve the ‘divine’ purpose of acclimating the human race to a higher level until they reach the level of ‘Superman’.

It is amply clear that Shaw possessed views that were extraordinary for his time and such views were possessed due to a host of factors that we partly are aware of and a part of which will always remain unknown. In essence, the plays produced by this outstanding playwright serve to be some of the most conscientious work created not just for the sake of producing art like the ‘aesthetes’ but to produce a new body of work through the dramatic medium which would alleviate the human soul and help them emancipate themselves from the daily dreary drudge to a new spiritual awakening.

The themes of idealism and realism are comprehensive and are wrought in the plays under consideration. A large portion of this paper would consist of textual analysis of dialogue and to point out instances wherein the themes can not only be found and analysed but also be sampled with drama as a modicum and how it differs from other formats of literature. It’s definitely of the greatest importance to listen to what Shawian plays have for us to learn about daily life and the extenuating circumstances it imposes on us along with the mystery of existence and the pursuit of being one with the truth.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The primary literature that was used while conducting the research was, of course, the respective plays, “Arms and the Man” and “Candida” by George Bernard Shaw. The books also included the preface to Plays Pleasant written by Shaw himself. Along with the preface, an introduction by A.C. Ward along with notes was immensely useful in understanding the text. The critical analysis section analysed the themes, characters and setting of the play; which, in turn helped to decipher the context of the play along with the importance of characterisation as a tool in formulating the plot of the play along with the final message. The primary source and its bundled secondary sources were immensely useful and its utility can be seen in the research itself.

Siddiqui and Raza’s, “Realism in Arms and the Man: A Comparative Study – Realism and Idealism” was referenced to understand the prevalence of realism as an important tool in “Arms and the Man.” While

understanding what naturalism and what its adjoining presence in literature meant, Zhang's, "On the Influence of Naturalism on American Literature" was alluded to. To decode Shaw's understanding of important socio-cultural factors like war and religion, his book of addresses, "Bernard Shaw on Religion " was cited. Crutchfield's, "What Lies Between Order and Chaos" was cited as an instance to comprehend the balance between idealism and realism.

## CHAPTER 1

(Realism vs. Idealism and characterisation in *Candida*)

### 1.1 What is realism? Meaning and denotations.

In fashion with the unique perspective on art by realist authors and artists, one can say that realism can be expressed with a single word denoting its true purpose and reason for existence: ordinariness. The French artist Jean Cocteau describes realism as, "True realism consists in revealing the surprising things which habit keeps covered and prevents us from seeing."

It is the banal and empty everyday real life that realism challenges to see in a different perspective. It allows the human mind to imagine scenarios wherein ordinariness is bound to mean more than it actually is. It was this philosophy that encouraged the realist writers to bring about a movement wherein they defied the superfluous standards of the romantic expression and sought to make a difference by ultimately allowing normal people to understand that the place of art is not subject to class and circumstances but is wrought in reality.

So what lies at the other end of the spectrum of realism? What constitutes the opposite of realism and how does it bring about an effect on realism as an escape to this philosophy?

"Romanticism is realism's polar opposite. Romantic works tell stories of larger-than-life characters who embark on ambitious adventures, pursue passionate love affairs, discover new worlds, conquer fearsome enemies, or otherwise make themselves paragons of virtue and nobility." ("SuperSummary")

Romanticism is the instrument of idealism. It uses imagery and storytelling that subverts realistic expectations either by creating a fantastical world or by orchestrating a plot that only leads to outcomes that are unexpectedly bizarre and unnatural. However, due to the popularisation of the genre, the outcomes that were meant to be unexpected now only seem queer and cliched. Most romantic stories are easy to interpret and predict due to the nature of the plot and this could be one of the reasons that realistic authors sought to change the genre by

setting their stories in regular circumstances so as to elicit a different kind of response from the readers as they tried to read between the lines.

To explore how realism functions in the plays selected, a study of the characters is an important component in deciphering the various nuances with which the characters have been formulated. The circumstances, beliefs and actions, all bring together the reality of what the characters are and if their existence carries any substance whatsoever. Therefore, to illustrate the functionality and multiple faceted nature of humans (including the presence of idealistic and realistic attitudes), a character study is imperative.

The characters in realistic works are mostly arbitrary in nature. In comparison with the romantic sketch of characteristics assigned to various roles that are quite well etched and easily recognised. Realistic characters are not reliant on a clear cut system wherein they can be easily put under. In essence, we can understand that realist characters are 'grey' whereas, in romanticism, the characters can be found to be either 'black' or 'white'. So what we understand between these distinct elements in characterization can be pointed out in *Candida* and *Arms and the Man* respectively.

Here is a list of characters and their inclinations-

- *Candida*- *Candida*, the leading lady of the mystery play *Candida* is a very interesting blend of what an 'ideal' woman is for Shaw. We can see that her name literally means 'frank' and 'genuine'. Apart from this, we can see that she possesses an incredible ability to engage the 'affection' of people, without the smallest 'scruple'. "...she is like any other pretty woman who is just clever enough to make the most of her sexual attractions for trivially selfish ends. *Candida's* serene brow, courageous eyes, and well set mouth and chin signify largeness of mind and dignity of character to ennoble her cunning in the affections."

Shaw convinces the reader that his protagonist is a character that is well-liked and admired by most of the other characters for some or the other reasons but he also provides some inherent and pivotal flaws that give us an idea of the importance of characterisation in realistic writing. For example, Shaw says that *Candida* is 'courageous', possesses 'largeness of mind' and a 'dignity of character' which 'ennoble'(s) her 'cunning', i.e., her ability to meet her own needs; however, she does so righteously, thereby 'ennobling' her actions.

While on the subject, it is also important to point out other instances where *Candida*, although created with a mind to depict an ideal woman by Shaw, is still a person who would rather do what is needed than do what is right. "*Candida*: It seems unfair that all the love should go to you [Morell], and none to him [Marchbanks], although he needs it so much more than you do." What we can assume from this instance and with full



knowledge of the auction scene, a disparity occurs in the conduct and decisions of Candida. She claims that Morell is spoiled for love and Marchbanks is starved of it although he needs it more than him. However, towards the end she gives all her love and herself to Morell as the 'weaker' man of the two and Marchbanks loses his opportunity at possessing his idealistic love. The disparity that occurs here is in the words and the actions of Candida wherein she gives herself, out of kindness to Morell but she hurts the sentiments of a younger, and in need-for-experience life than Morell. Marchbanks understands the world better than Morell does, at least as far as love goes and this makes him a 'stronger' man. But, Candida serves as a wife, maid, mother and a sister to Morell. One can argue that she would be tough to replace in Morell's life but it can also be theorised that perhaps because of her menial status as a superficial woman who only works and lives for the sake of Morell, any other woman who could be fit for the task, especially the women with 'Prossy's complaint'.

Yet, Candida chooses to give herself to Morell instead of Marchbanks, who, in his head, has a very idealistic notion of a life together with her. These notions include a lot of romantic elements wherein the two reside in clean and high places away from the troubles of everyday life. Candida realises the immaturity of the poet and the reality of the situation, yet she *chooses* to give it to the person who is spoiled for it, instead of the one who needs it. This serves as evidence to the fact that Candida cannot be considered as a flawless female figure and is, in fact, the mistress of a flaw that testifies for the authenticity with which Shaw has included such elements in his characters that reflect a realistic outlook of the play.

- Morell- Reverend James Mavor Morell is one of the main characters of the play, he is Candida's husband and is one of the people involved in a love triangle along with Candida and Eugene. In Morell's description, Shaw describes him as, "A vigorous, genial, popular man of forty, robust and goodlooking, full of energy, with pleasant, hearty, considerate manners, and a sound, unaffected voice, which he uses with the clean, athletic articulation of a practised orator, and with a wide range and perfect command of expression."

Morell is a socialist clergyman and he holds his beliefs in high esteem. He uses almost every occasion to use his orator's skill in order to pontificate divine aphorisms. He doesn't even spare his family members and friends from this exercise and while it proves to be incredibly useful in the church, his teachings most of the time are not received with the pure intention with which he delivers them. Mr. Burgess, who is Candida's father along with Candida and Marchbanks are averse to the way he exhorts people and on several instances in the play point out the ways in which Morell is not fulfilling his role in life other than being a man of the cloth.

“BURGESS (with grave disapproval). Don't you keep a servant now, James?”

MORELL. Yes; but she isn't a slave; and the house looks as if I kept three. That means that everyone has to lend a hand. It's not a bad plan: Prossy and I can talk business after breakfast whilst we're washing up. Washing up's no trouble when there are two people to do it.

MARCHBANKS (tormentedly). Do you think every woman is as coarse-grained as Miss Garnett?”

Although Mr. Burgess is a selfish and avaricious man, who won't even pay his workers the proper wages unless forced by a County Council contractor who wouldn't do business with him unless he paid the proper wages to his workers, agreed that Morell's socialist attitudes possesses an inherent flaw. Even a greedy and selfish man like him still points out the lack of servants in the house due to which Candida has to clean up a lot more. To which James replies, that the house looked “as if I kept three.” There is enough evidence to indicate that the price of James's ideals has a significant detrimental effect on his personal life. For instance, we can consider Morell's socialist ideas to be of note.

“Burgess, being a capitalist, his only aim in life is to make profit by hook or by crook. So, he makes his workers over work and pays them the lowest wages. This is contrary to the cannons of socialism so dear to Morell's heart. Morell calls him a ‘scoundrel’.”

Morell, much like Shaw is a socialist and represents that philosophy in the play; Burgess on the other hand, portrays capitalism. Morell is quite fixated in creating the ‘kingdom’ of heaven on earth which is a socialist ideal that he possesses and is absent in other titular characters of the play. This perspective leads him to practice what he considers a selfless life, but in actuality, his limited care and interaction with his family is a price that he has to pay for it; thus, making his selfless endeavours from his family's perspective selfish and single ended. This is an important aspect of socialism that Shaw perhaps wanted to point out and create an image of James as an ‘ideal’ man according to society but was, in fact so flawed that only the persons who can detach themselves from his preaching i.e. Candida, Marchbanks and Mr. Burgess are able to recognise his bigotry. To encapsulate, Morell with his fine oratorship, his physical reliability and his genuine kindness is not what one would consider to be unwise, but it is due to his being protected by his family at first and now by Candida that results in him being, in fact, a weak man, as is later in the auction scene of the play. So conclusively, we can acknowledge the fact that Morell's past and present is moulded by the women who care for him and his future prospect and his current fine self is the result of rigorous hard work that not only he but the people around him undertake. If Morell's own strengths were to be isolated, it can be assumed that he isn't exactly the ‘ideal’ man

and is rife with flaws, rather it is his wife who *chooses* to make him one. Thereby portraying an imperfect and realistic character.

- Eugene Marchbanks- Eugene Marchbanks is an aristocratic and timorous romantic poet who is on good terms with the Morell family. He has been ousted from his own family in order to make him cede to their demands and due to his shy nature is not quite accepted anywhere.

“Marchbanks is shy and withdrawn in the early scenes. But there is an audacity and cockiness that comes over him when Candida fusses over him, and when Morell begins to see him as a threat to their marriage. Candida treats Marchbanks as a child, fixing his collar and tie, his hair and his neck kerchief. Marchbanks believes that his poetic soul has struck a chord in Candida's and that Morell, whom he calls a 'moralist' and 'windbag' is incapable of giving her the finer things of life.”

He has trouble speaking to people on regular everyday affairs but turns fiery and passionate when it concerns love. One can assume that Shaw wanted to sculpt a figure of a conventional romantic artist. Marchbanks is the very picture of a starved, unkempt and effeminate man who obsesses over the ‘finer’ things in life.

“CANDIDA. ...You remember what you told me about yourself, Eugene: how nobody has cared for you since your old nurse died: how those clever, fashionable sisters and successful brothers of yours were your mother's and father's pets: how miserable you were at Eton: how your father is trying to starve you into returning to Oxford: how you have had to live without comfort or welcome or refuge, always lonely, and nearly always disliked and misunderstood, poor boy!

MARCHBANKS (faithful to the nobility of his lot). I had my books. I had Nature. And at last I met you.”

What we can understand from Marchbanks is that although Candida is very fond of Marchbanks and likes him well enough to consider him for her love, his behaviour in return, with Morell, is an indication of how well he handles the success of his adoration. He believes that since Candida, after having heard his story, and having understood him means that she is ready to accept his love that is brewing passionately in his young heart. Marchbanks, however, still exhibits puerility and an immaturity for a serious and realistic relationship. For all his understanding and wisdom, he still lives in an idealistic world in his mind. He assumes that if he is capable enough to deliver to Candida the ‘finer’ things, i.e. his veneration and service, then he would be able to be with her. For him, his own notions of love and life and his ideal of love possess a precedence over any other aspect of life.

“MARCHBANKS ...a boat—a tiny shallop to sail away in, far from the world, where the marble floors are washed by the rain and dried by the sun, where the south wind dusts the beautiful green and purple carpets. Or a chariot—to carry us up into the sky, where the lamps are stars, and don't need to be filled with paraffin oil every day.

MORELL (harshly). And where there is nothing to do but to be idle, selfish and useless.

CANDIDA (jarred). Oh, James, how could you spoil it all!

MARCHBANKS (firing up). Yes, to be idle, selfish and useless: that is to be beautiful and free and happy: hasn't every man desired that with all his soul for the woman he loves? That's my ideal: what's yours, and that of all the dreadful people who live in these hideous rows of houses? Sermons and scrubbing brushes! With you to preach the sermon and your wife to scrub.”

There exists a clear disparity of class within ‘Candida’ and it is portrayed quite aptly in the text above. Marchbanks belongs to the aristocracy, he is the nephew of an Earl and it is his background and upbringing which effectually impacts his development as an artist and as a person. He is unaware of the daily strife in life and its reality. He lives in love soaked ideals that form a facade over his ability to clearly analyse his own situation and the condition of Candida and her family. Eugene Marchbanks is the portrait of a typical, romantic artist but he is in no way an ideal person. His ideals are only limited in his mind and all that he expresses in reality is an immature child who is yet to realise the true nature of human relationships. In the above text, with typical poetic adroitness, he claims to want to take Candida away in a chariot to the sky where the ‘lamps’ would be ‘stars’ and didn’t need to be filled with ‘paraffin oil’ everyday. What Marchbanks wishes to denote is the absence of struggle because he thinks that Candida doesn’t deserve to be troubled by all the household chores because they are menial in nature and she, as a woman, deserves better than that. He thinks that someone like Proserpine is fine for such endeavours since she is “coarse grained”. His outlook with regards to the right for love is in fact quite partial. Not only is his opinion flawed in the context of his favour to Candida, but also with regards to the people that live on Hackney Road. He describes the neighbourhood where Morell’s church is located as “hideous rows of houses”. For all his claims of finding and pursuing love for the shy and lonely, he is incredibly hypocritical. This hypocrisy is perhaps noted by Candida and she makes it a point to realise that Marchbanks, with all his poetic dexterity and romantic wisdom, is still not capable to completely comprehend what a lifetime of love entails. In conclusion, one can not only assume but present instances in the play which introduce us to Eugene Marchbanks’ character that is flawed in a lot of senses. The exploration

of this character, especially, has revealed what conflict gifts to a story and how realistic of a scenario it imbibes to the entire plot of the play.

In the above analysis, the major characters of the play “Candida” have been discussed with respect to the purview of realistic characters to testify for realism present in the play. With the discoveries, one can confidently pose the theory that Morell and Marchbanks possess idealistic notions in their mind, but they are only limited to their mental workings. However, in real life, all their claims fall short of their actions and/or their results. Candida is the one with the least amount of idealistic notions but her choice towards the end does provide some proof for the fact that she might have done damage to an irreparable degree. All of the characters, when purged of the burden of their ideals are found anew in a state of abstract and undefined reality which gives the play its mysterious trademark.

Arms and the Man is one of the better known plays written by Shaw and it follows suit with the element of typifying typical characteristics of the popular plays of the time and moulding the plot into something new. Candida does this by turning the notion of the love triangle on its head and constructing a storyline wherein the woman chooses her lover. Usually, in other plays of the time, the woman was found to be an infidel and when her husband discovered the betrayal, he would either sever their relationship or the woman would be given another chance. “The moral, or immoral, key to that type of play is in the sexual intrigue, the deception of the honest husband by the unfaithful wife.” Candida, however, doesn’t follow suit with this trope and the woman is afforded the right to choose due to the dependence the men in her life have on her. This is a cornerstone of Shaw’s philosophy with regards to women and their ideal status.

## CHAPTER 2

### (Characterisation in Arms and the Man)

Arms and the Man as a play and as a story is quite different from Candida. The play doesn’t end in a mystery, in fact, it is considered as an ‘anti-romantic comedy’, the meaning of which can be ascertained with the chief themes that the play deals with, i.e. war and marriage. Sergius and his ardent veneration by Raina as a war hero, Sergius’s idealistic and foolhardy attitude towards the battlefield are some prime examples that Shaw wants to illustrate about war. He emphasises that war is a horrible thing and anyone who thinks that blind courage instead of intelligent decision making is ideal, is like a person who agrees to charge into death’s yawning, endless abyss voluntarily. Marriage, on the other hand, is another important theme of the play. As

expected, most of the characters have crafted an ideal sculpture in their imaginations about marriage. In this regard, Louka and Bluntschli are the ones that are the most pragmatic about their choices while Sergius and Raina claim that their 'higher love' is special, which reinforces their romantic ideology regarding marriage based off of no genuine feeling and affection but on romantic notions of a hero and a princess worshipping her courageous warrior. The characters follow traditional models and possess a typical score of values and most of them possess idealistic notions much like the major characters in *Candida*. The major characters that impact the progress of the plot in the play are: Raina Petkoff, Sergius Saranoff, Louka and most importantly, Captain Bluntschli.

So how do these characters portray a realistic sense in the way they behave? The following findings were made:-

- Raina Petkoff- Raina is the central female figure in *Arms and the Man*. She is a beautiful, aristocratic, young girl. She is a picture of elegance and a perfect specimen of fine society. Outwardly, it seems that she has her life all planned out and a perfect future awaits her but a pivotal moment in her life changes that. The backdrop of the play is that of a war between Bulgaria and Serbia. With a background such as this, we find that Raina encounters a strange soldier from the enemy Serb camp, as he creeps up the balcony and into her room. Raina accedes to the forceful demands of the soldier as he asks her not to give him up to the Bulgarian soldiers. Raina, having never seen a realistic side of the war realises that giving someone defenceless up to his enemies is as good as killing him, this realisation perhaps kindles a kindness in her and she hides him. "It is universally true statement that no one wants to die. Raina thinks that only some soldiers are afraid of death. But the runaway soldier makes it clear that all of them are. Here Shaw makes it a point to prove realism that a dying soul can go to any extent in order to save life." (Siddiqui and Raza 46).

Bluntschli comes across to her, as a soldier and as a person that she has never had the misfortune of meeting. Instead of her romantic attitude as a result of reading idealistic works of literature that glorify war and "courage" of soldiers, she is left unhinged by facing a reality that is far removed from her experience and knowledge. It becomes apparent to her that there is no winner in a war. "On the balcony, a young lady, intensely conscious of the romantic beauty of the night, and of the fact that her own youth and beauty is a part of it, is on the balcony, gazing at the snowy Balkans. She is covered by a long mantle of furs, worth, on a moderate estimate, about three times the furniture of her room." In the beginning itself, Shaw establishes certain characteristics of Raina that can be found as recurring throughout the play.

The intensely romantic image with the snowy mountains, her beauty and her expensive, fashionable clothes reflect a picturesque setting that inspires the audience in an awe struck revelry. However, in the same notes, he contrasts it with a very important observation. Shaw states, rather comically, that the “long mantle of furs,” were quite a deal more expensive than the furniture of the entire room, which serves as a symbol for the hollowness of romantic ideals, and in extension, the romantic ideals of Raina. She herself is conscious of her ideals that don’t reveal even an iota of her true nature. Having lived out all her life in a pretentious dream of idealistic notions of life, she comes face to face with reality as she meets the “chocolate cream soldier”. The Serbian soldier, i.e. Bluntschli is a polarising figure that changes Raina’s views on virtually everything. He symbolises rationality and Raina is a figure of romantic ideals.

“RAINA. Well, it came into my head just as he was holding me in his arms and looking into my eyes, that perhaps we only had our heroic ideas because we are so fond of reading Byron and Pushkin, and because we were so delighted with the opera that season at Bucharest. Real life is so seldom like that—indeed never, as far as I knew it then. (Remorsefully.) Only think, mother, I doubted him: I wondered whether all his heroic qualities and his soldiership might not prove mere imagination when he went into a real battle. I had an uneasy fear that he might cut a poor figure there beside all those clever Russian officers.”

Since it has been established that Raina possesses romantic ideals, the extent of her faith in those notions should also be established. Raina seems to doubt Sergius’s competency in the battlefield as she considers that he wouldn’t be able to match the “clever Russian officers.” It can be assumed that Raina had a suspicion about her ideals on love as she also states that maybe her attitude is such due to their passion for Byron, Pushkin and the opera season at Bucharest, all of which are obviously fictional and are vitiated depictions of life formed from human fancy. It was her agency of intelligence that inspires her to wonder whether heroic ideals and their results transpire into reality. This is an important aspect of Raina’s character. Even though she has been conditioned by her social circle and her family’s expectations of her character, she still wonders if her true nature is worth portraying in reality.

“BLUNTSCHLI. I can't help it. When you get into that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you; but I find it impossible to believe a single word you say.”

Bluntschli realises Raina’s nature due to his long term experience as a soldier. He has learnt to be suspicious of people and not just that, he is wise enough to decipher the reality of various characters throughout the play.

Notably of Sergius and Raina. He is a cornerstone of realism in the play and serves as a reality check for Sergius and Raina.

Raina wonders if it's wise to acknowledge her true feelings about love or let her propitious yet pretentious image exist. This can be attributed to Shaw's expectations of women as powerful, thinking beings instead of a dependent group in need of saving and protection by men. The presence of a critical thought process is essential in discovering the true potential of Raina's character. Especially, because she exhibits this faculty from the beginning of the play wherein it is not just the scenery that seems out of place-with the existent disparity between the furniture's worth and Raina's apparel-but also her thoughts. Her doubts in Sergius are grounded in reason based on her observations of him as a person.

Needless to say, Shaw sets a strong precedent of a female protagonist, quite in line with *Candida*, but with major differences in the settings and with vast differences in individual tastes and influences. Keeping that aside, we can claim that Raina is a realistic character, she is not free from flaws but even apart from that, her responses towards situations indicate a rational and realistic mindset. For example, when she was threatened by Bluntschli in the beginning of the play, a typical female character would commit suicide instead of allowing her honour to be besmirched by housing a strange man. She does what is true to her innocent yet practical nature, something that would be quite out of place in other typical plays with stereotypical characters and superfluous conflicts resulting in expected resolutions.

- Captain Bluntschli- *Arms and the Man* is a play that is designed to quell romantic notions of some of the most essential parts of human life. To construct a play with the dexterity with which *Arms and the Man* is composed, an agent of truth is required to deliver the characters from their falsely extravagant delusions. Who better than the incredibly pragmatic and sensible Swiss soldier Bluntschli. Bluntschli, at the beginning of the play, is described by Shaw in a typical Shavian style. “

“As far as the candlelight and his unwashed, unkempt condition make it possible to judge, he is a man of middling stature and undistinguished appearance, with strong neck and shoulders, a roundish, obstinate looking head covered with short crisp bronze curls, clear quick blue eyes and good brows and mouth, a hopelessly prosaic nose like that of a strong-minded baby, trim soldierlike carriage and energetic manner, and with all his wits about him in spite of his desperate predicament—even with a sense of humor of it, without, however, the least intention of trifling with it or throwing away a chance.”



Shaw uses facial features to describe the mental/emotional personality of the character. He leaves some important details in the description which is further elucidated in the progression of the play as characteristics. Bluntschli's physical appearance has important clues such as his "obstinate looking head", which logically is hard to picture since there is no particularly popular notion of what an obstinate head looks like. Shaw leaves it up to the imagination of the readers and to the casting directors of his plays to decide what Bluntschli looks like and what his physical characteristics denote. Similarly, there are other descriptions which aid this notion of Bluntschli's character traits hidden in his description. "a hopelessly prosaic nose like that of a strong-minded baby..." The "prosaic" nose is a seminal adjective utilised by Shaw for describing the "unpoetic" or unimaginatively realistic approach towards life. He is further described as a "strong-minded baby", the meaning of which can be ascertained clearly. The adjective of strong mindedness used for Bluntschli is used to depict the clarity of reality that he possesses. As an agent of realism, it is of the utmost importance that he is aware of inflated hyper realistic notions and their lack in the situations that he finds himself in. He points out these occurrences and his clarity of reality is what makes him "strong-minded", however, to claim that he is "strong-minded" in the normal sense of the term is an unjust accusation. He can be termed as strong minded from the perspective of the characters, as his pragmatic nature is foreign to them.

"SERGIUS. He does: he does. Swiss civilization nursetending Bulgarian barbarism, eh?"

Sergius calls out Bluntschli's pragmatism by connoting it to his nationality. However, the truth may lie in Sergius's own identity instead of Bluntschli's. The Petkoffs are depicted as rich Bulgarians but they are still not "civilized" enough as other European countries. Catherine Petkoff is adamant on being seen as a Viennese lady and hence wears a tea coat all the time to prove the same. The disparity between the cost of Raina's fur coats and the furniture in her room is again a testament to the fact that even the presence of money doesn't necessarily result in financial literacy. The Petkoffs' spending habits alludes to the functioning of a class that stresses only on outward appearances and glamorous dispositions. This is in fact, the exact opposite of Bluntschli who appears as a soldier but is galaxies away from the disillusioned mindset of Raina. He appears as a tired but vigilant soldier who says that he carries chocolate with him instead of extra cartridges because of his experience serving him with the lesson that sometimes food is more important than ammunition in a battlefield. "BLUNTSCHLI. No; but it doesn't matter. I didn't ask the reason when you cried on; and I don't ask the reason now that you cry off. I'm a professional soldier. I fight when I have to, and am very glad to get out of it when I haven't to. You're only an amateur: you think fighting's an amusement." Bluntschli is a soldier

quite unlike others. In this typical scenario when challenged by another man for a duel, he gears up and is ready to accept the invitation. However, it appears that he does so, because he is confident in his own abilities instead of Sergius's self righteous narcissism. He knows that he won't lose to him but even apart from the outcome of the hypothetical battle, Bluntschli states that he is a professional whereas Sergius is an amateur and he is glad to "get out of it". He knows the reality of war and violence and realises that the potential for destruction possessed by humans is not to be trifled with.

This is perhaps the most important element of realism present in Bluntschli's character. He was created by Shaw in a time when the world wars hadn't quite taken place but he despised even the notion of war. "...Shaw believed that while war is evil and stupid, and marriage desirable and good, both had become wrapped in romantic illusions which led to disastrous wars and also to unhappy marriages." Shaw's own stand on realism is reflected in his plays and especially in *Arms and the Man*. Bluntschli is the practical pivot that brings a resolution to all idealistic notions in the play much like *Candida*. Towards the end however, Bluntschli paints a picture of himself as a romantic by providing enough evidence for the same.

"BLUNTSCHLI (promptly). An incurably romantic disposition. I ran away from home twice when I was a boy. I went into the army instead of into my father's business. I climbed the balcony of this house when a man of sense would have dived into the nearest cellar. I came sneaking back here to have another look at the young lady when any other man of my age would have sent the coat back—"

From this perspective, an important precedent is revealed. Bluntschli isn't completely romantic or completely realistic so as to be dull. He foments an interesting phase of human development. Shaw has created him with the intention of making a character that is somewhere between romantic and extremely realistic. "In the first Act itself, Bluntschli had informed us that his father owned six hotels: it was highly unusual for such a man's son to be working as a mercenary. The mystery is now explained. Bluntschli turns out to be the most balanced character in the play, who tempers his romanticism with common sense. He possesses a sense of romance but without any illusions about it." (Shaw 123)

This balance between romantic temperament and pragmatic thinking is, in fact, essential to lead towards the resolution in the play as it provides room for healthy romanticism like Bluntschli's actions, but also provides a heavy tug of common sense to pull out the other characters from their extremely romantic revelry.

Bluntschli is the most pivotal character in the play and serves as a reality check, quite literally for the characters but also for the audience. The play goes that were expecting a classic romantic tale are introduced to a character that destroys all such notions with his practical outlook. The audience is confronted with the reality of their own lives and are forced to remember that disillusionment, like all things pretentious, is a temporary facade unlike the message that they are supposed to retain from the play.

- Sergius- Sergius Saranoff is the prior love interest of Raina in the play. He calls himself an “apostle of higher love” and claims that the pure adoration and worship that exists between him and Raina is special and rare. He is the tool that Shaw uses to portray the notion of ideal love. His relationship with Raina is the impetus that allows the audience to get invested in the play. Much like James Morell from “Candida”, Sergius is the very picture of an ideal man in the beginning of the play. He portrays his ‘role’ well as the romantic and idealistic hero well, acting as Raina’s lover and also as a soldier, a trade which he soon quits.

Just like Bluntschli and the rest of the characters in the play, Shaw provides a lengthy physical as well as mental description of Sergius, with satirical depictions of his features that tend to intimate the reader about his sanctimonious disposition. “Major Sergius Saranoff, the original of the portrait in Raina's room, is a tall romantically handsome man with the physical hardihood, the high spirit, and the susceptible imagination of an untamed mountaineer chieftain. But his remarkable personal distinction is of a characteristically civilized type.” (Shaw 35)

Shaw describes Sergius as a “romantically handsome man”, which we can expect paints a pretty ample image for the reader considering his actions further in the play. His description as a romantically handsome man is essential to deem him worthy of the status as the “hero” in a romantic setting. Shaw uses this element sarcastically to poke fun at idealism and idealistic imagery of the hero, especially one whose valour and notions of higher love land him into a position quite far from his innate wishes. His physicality, spirit and imagination is compared to an untamed mountaineer chieftain denoting his rather rugged appearance tripled with an unwavering spirit and a characteristic that is necessary for denoting his idealistic role in the play- an indefatigable imagination. However, Shaw says that even after this his “personal distinction” is of a characteristically “civilized type”. Perhaps Shaw wants to indicate that Sergius, even after all his eccentricities, possesses a certain elegance that comes with being a part of one of the most influential families in the country.

“By his brooding on the perpetual failure, not only of others, but of himself, to live up to his ideas; by his consequent cynical scorn for humanity; by his jejune credulity as to the absolute validity of his concepts and the unworthiness of the world in disregarding them; by his wincings and mockeries under the sting of the petty disillusionments which every hour spent among men brings to his sensitive observation, he has acquired the half tragic, half ironic air, the mysterious moodiness, the suggestion of a strange and terrible history that has left nothing but undying remorse...It is clear that here or nowhere is Raina’s ideal hero.” (Shaw 35, 36)

Shaw himself points out that Sergius is crafted for the very reason to make the ideal hero come to life. The characteristics he possesses are unique in the sense that he is set up as an imperfect and rather realistic romantic hero. For example, he is incapable of living to his own lofty standards. He does hold the rest of the world accountable but also keeps himself in check with the same standard. This arises due to the blind faith that he has in his ideals. He has “absolute validity” in his own conceptions and he constructs these disillusionments which he realises are disregarded by everyone. Due to this realisation he assumes the air of a “byronic hero”, a person or hero who can be described as “a melancholy and rebellious young man, distressed by a terrible wrong he committed in the past.” (“Definition of Byronic Hero”). This is another satirical lament that Shaw uses as an ironic component to purport the pretentiousness of Sergius and how he goes to quite an extreme length to live out the fantasies that he has formed of himself. It only serves as a compliment to the society around him and is also a ready answer to the idealistic notions of his betrothed, Raina.

With this ironic element of strange moodiness and his rather cliché appearance, Shaw has used Sergius as yet another tool to disseminate his own ideas. Sergius’s appearances aside, there is the similar theme of his ideals only being skin deep. There is no particular gravity in Sergius’s thoughts but rather, it seems that they suit his own moods and needs. Even something that he considers divine can be corrupted without due understanding or remorse.

“SERGIUS. I won the battle the wrong way when our worthy Russian generals were losing it the right way. That upset their plans, and wounded their self-esteem. Two of their colonels got their regiments driven back on the correct principles of scientific warfare. Two major-generals got killed strictly according to military etiquette. Those two colonels are now major-generals; and I am still a simple major.” (Shaw 36)

Sergius exhibits a quixotic tendency. As a major in the Bulgarian army, against the wishes of his superiors, he in his idealistic fervour read his cavalry in a dangerous charge against the opposing forces. The Serbs, having no ammunition, were luckily overwhelmed by Sergius’s forces and he wins the battle for them. However, it is

important to note that it is only because the Serbs possessed no ammunition that Sergius got away with the attack, otherwise he, along with his forces would have been slain. Even with his foolish victory, Sergius expected a promotion in his rank and, accustomed to his pretentious nature, resigned from the army.

He does give another reason for his resignation, however, “SERGIUS. I am no longer a soldier. Soldiering, my dear madam, is the coward's art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out of harm's way when you are weak. That is the whole secret of successful fighting. Get your enemy at a disadvantage; and never, on any account, fight him on equal terms. Eh, Major!

PETKOFF. They wouldn't let us make a fair stand-up fight of it. However, I suppose soldiering has to be a trade like any other trade.

SERGIUS. Precisely. But I have no ambition to succeed as a tradesman;...” (Shaw 37, 38)

Sergius, here speaks on behalf of Shaw when he says that war and violence altogether as a soldier is a far cry from the romantic depictions of honorary warfare. He is similar to Bluntschli in this regard, in fact, it is Bluntschli himself who recommends him to resign from soldiering. Both of them realise that war and soldiering is not a “trade” that can be easily entered and exited. The technique and repercussions of war are serious and once Sergius realises that, he departs from the field altogether. However, perhaps retirement is not just a commentary on war from the perspective of Shaw but also an important factor in understanding Sergius's thought process. Sergius says that war is nothing but the act of attacking when having an upper hand in combat and leaving the battlefield when one finds themselves weak. He rejects this way of warfare not only because he has seen the harsh realities of war but also because he realises that according to his own romantic ideals, such a way of fighting was not upto code and his notions have turned out to be true. He realises that war and soldiering is not what Catherine Petkoff describes as “Bulgarians with their swords and eyes flashing, thundering down like an avalanche and scattering the wretched Serbs...” (Shaw 13). The realisation that there is no such romantic reality and his ideal and self image as a hero was marred with no room for unrealistic and foolish courage, he sought to retire from the army thereby keeping intact his ideals along with his lucky win. This provides an interesting insight into Sergius's characters which lends a dual dimensionality in the sense that his attitude is his own but his actions and justifications reflect Shaw's temperament towards war.

“RAINA. How I have envied you, Sergius! You have been out in the world, on the field of battle, able to prove yourself there worthy of any woman in the world; whilst I have had to sit at home inactive,—dreaming—useless—doing nothing that could give me the right to call myself worthy of any man.

SERGIUS. Dearest, all my deeds have been yours. You inspired me. I have gone through the war like a knight in a tournament with his lady looking on at him!

RAINA. And you have never been absent from my thoughts for a moment. (Very solemnly.) Sergius: I think we two have found the higher love. When I think of you, I feel that I could never do a base deed, or think an ignoble thought.” (Shaw 40)

The dynamic that exists between Sergius and Raina is the most important contraption at Shaw’s disposal to depict the marred reality of what they claim as “higher love”. The love that Sergius and Raina claim as theirs is at most, just a jejune feeling of adoration. It functions on a system of deceptive reverence. They both possess outlooks wherein they only “worship” each other and lend a characteristic with which they fulfil themselves knowing that they are investing their affections on a station suitable for a romantic poem or a novel. This is an idealistic practice and they are each playing a character without an iota of credible and genuine feeling. Since they are so disposed to a farcical expression of love, they tend to overestimate each other. Neither of them have any truth and they even lie in order to keep up this act.

“SERGIUS (coming clear of the table and drawing her with him). I am surprised at myself, Louka. What would Sergius, the hero of Slivnitza, say if he saw me now? What would Sergius, the apostle of the higher love, say if he saw me now? What would the half dozen Sergiuses who keep popping in and out of this handsome figure of mine say if they caught us here? (Letting go her hand and slipping his arm dexterously round her waist.) Do you consider my figure handsome, Louka?”

...

“LOUKA. Then stand back where we can't be seen. Have you no common sense?

SERGIUS. Ah, that's reasonable. (He takes her into the stableyard gateway, where they are hidden from the house.)

LOUKA (complaining). I may have been seen from the windows: Miss Raina is sure to be spying about after you.

SERGIUS (stung—letting her go). Take care, Louka. I may be worthless enough to betray the higher love; but do not you insult it.” (Shaw 41)

Sergius betrays Raina and tries to seduce Louka just after his “worship” of love with Raina. The divinity that Raina and Sergius connote with their romantic life is illusionary but the question that remains is; why, in fact, do they go to these lengths to keep a relationship alive that has no basis in truth and is just carried out on a basis of compulsion rather than feeling? Considering the complexities of the human mind, there may not be any definitive answer but if one were to examine the text of the play, an interesting thought can be perceived. Raina’s behaviour stems from an adoration for the gaudy and romantic plays and fiction that she reads. She imagines herself to be in a fairytale come true, although she has her doubts about that. Considering that, how can we develop an understanding of Sergius? How does his mental cadence cater to his reality?

“ SERGIUS What a man! Is he a man!” (Shaw 79)

The play ends at this dialogue and it reflects a very important concept not just about realism and idealism but how that is reflected in gender roles. Perhaps Sergius’s pretentiousness stems from the need to be seen as a man worthy of admiration. He chooses the conventional methods that are depicted in fictional works and gives himself the air of a “Byronic hero”, in order to not feel emasculated by his real self. He is of aristocratic birth in his home country, however, in the burgeoning Europe Bulgaria wasn’t at the forefront of civilisation and this inherently, somewhere or the other leads him to feel as if his disposition needs to be altered to suit the rest of the ‘civilised’ and advanced society. That is the reason that he decides to duel with Bluntschli, since he is not actually in love with Raina, duelling to the death isn’t something that he would take up just for the romantic notions of war, instead to challenge the ‘civilised’ Swiss to prove his own mettle as a man and as a Bulgarian. Raina says that she has been nothing but useless at home, whereas Sergius has proven his mettle in battle. According to her, she has done nothing that she can claim that allows her to be “worthy” of any man. In the play, as it has been evident, war is treated as a patriotic act that is conducted to prove one’s own honour. They have unrealistic notions of war and are far removed from the brutality of the sheer unrestrained violence that is accompanied with back handed tactics. All the characters except Bluntschli are enveloped in these false ideologies, Raina along with her mother tend to believe that soldiering is a brave act of charging into the opposing forces and winning battles through unfiltered and unrestrained will. Sergius is of the same opinion, until, of course he comes face to face with reality in his lucky win over the opposing Serbs.

● Louka- Louka is the other important young lady in the play. Born in the lower caste, she is unequal by birth to the rest of the characters in the play, sparing Nicola, whom she is betrothed to. Nicola is a true servant who believes in accepting the position given by society as set in stone, never to be overturned. Louka doesn't accept this and can be seen as a rebel against the class distinctions that were so prevalent in nineteenth century Europe. It is her immense pride and self awareness that can be characterised as a chief reason for her impetus to wanting to lead a better life. Shaw describes her as a "handsome proud girl", who is "...so defiant that her servility to Raina is almost insolent. She is afraid of Catherine , but even with her goes as far as she dares." (Shaw 14)

It is perhaps her looks and the confidence that comes with youth that influences Louka so much as to be "almost insolent". However, she is realistic enough to know her limits and is afraid of Catherine to the extent that she doesn't risk being on the bad side of the actual mistress of the house. Louka's convictions about herself lead her to be defiant in a lot of aspects throughout the play. "Her defiance stems from an awareness of her own merits and an independence of spirit that refuses to accept the inferior social position that fate has placed her in." (Shaw 124)

Louka's independent spirit is the natural answer for someone who has been repressed all their life to an extent that hard times force them to rebel against the social strata and status quo. She finds any opportunity to go against what she is told to do in order to maintain a sense of autonomy in her life. For instance:

“LOUKA (secretly, to Raina). If you would like the shutters open, just give them a push like this. (She pushes them: they open: she pulls them to again.) One of them ought to be bolted at the bottom; but the bolt's gone.

RAINA (with dignity, reproving her). Thanks, Louka; but we must do what we are told. (Louka makes a grimace.) Good-night.

LOUKA (carelessly). Good-night. (She goes out, swaggering.)” (Shaw 15)

Louka was instructed by Catherine to fasten the shutters despite Raina's protests, however, in an act of defiance, she shows Raina how, due to the absence of the bolt the shutter can be opened easily with just a push. At this, Raina reproves her but Louka doesn't respond with any apology, rather, she gives a curt expression and "swaggers" out, with the insolent air that a defiant and self-respecting person does. It is the fact that Louka considers herself equal to the people she is serving rather than the meinal attitude that a docile servant like Nicola does.



In the beginning of Act two, in the dialogue between Nicola and Louka it is revealed that she has an old father who lives on a little farm. The paradigm that Shaw wants to depict here is in fact social commentary on one of the most important issues in society, i.e. class difference. Nicola and Louka both belong roughly to the same position in the status quo but they have vastly different opinions on the nature of surviving in a society that is governed by the rich and the aristocracy. Nicola is a middle aged man and has served the Petkoffs for many years; on the other hand, Louka is quite young and hasn't quite adjusted herself to the idea of serving others with total submission. She wishes to be free from the crippling burden of the station of her birth.

“NICOLA. Be warned in time, Louka: mend your manners. I know the mistress. She is so grand that she never dreams that any servant could dare to be disrespectful to her; but if she once suspects that you are defying her, out you go.

LOUKA. I do defy her. I will defy her. What do I care for her?

NICOLA. If you quarrel with the family, I never can marry you. It's the same as if you quarrelled with me!”  
(Shaw 30, 31)

Nicola has lived a life of servility and has little to no ambition with regards to his position. He only wanted to open up his own shop in Sofia and for that, relied on the Petkoffs for their support. Whereas Louka with her inherent pride and immense self importance did not like conceding to the upper class just for the sake of financial security. She would go as far as to defy her own masters just to be respected. The difference that arises between Nicola and Louka is that Nicola perhaps due to his age or maybe due to his temperament has always wished to live a secure and risk free life. He doesn't risk any sort of disagreement with the family that he is serving. Whereas, Louka, in her youthful vivacity could not care to appear as an appeasing servant. Her aim is to exit this current life of submission that binds her to a destiny which lacks comfort and respect to the degree that she wishes to possess it.

She does not have any idealistic notions of a life of servility. She is realistic enough to consider her station, but also idealistic enough to realise that her true wish lies in transcending her social position. It is her ambition with the cool level headed planning of a mature person that makes her similar to Bluntschli. This pragmatism allows her to make Sergius-who was lusting after her-for her hand in marriage and become a rival of Raina herself as a lady vying or rather making Sergius vye for her affections. She represents the balance of idealism and realism just as Bluntschli does albeit in a different manner.

“NICOLA (pityingly). I should have expected more sense from you, Louka. But you're young, you're young!”

(Shaw 31)

Nicola thinks that Louka's atypical behaviour as a person in her station is due to the asinine attitude that accompanies youth. However, Louka realises that possessing a self respecting attitude without any caveats in itself can not help her, so she points out that she has leverage against the family that can be used to her advantage if and when the situation arises. It is perhaps this knowledge that keeps her more confident and secure in herself than her prior position.

“LOUKA (avoiding him). No, I don't want your kisses. Gentlefolk are all alike—you making love to me behind Miss Raina's back, and she doing the same behind yours.” (Shaw 42)

Louka uses Sergius and his libidinous nature with the utmost dexterity. Just as he is about to kiss her, she withdraws herself and informs Sergius about the Serbian soldier episode with Raina. Not only does she use Sergius's lust to her advantage but also turns the tables on his pride and faith he has in his idealised “higher love”.

“LOUKA (retreating) I know the difference between the sort of manner you and she put on before one another and the real manner. (Sergius shivers as if she had stabbed him. Then, setting his face like iron, he strides grimly to her, and grips her above the elbows with both hands.)” (Shaw 43)

Louka doesn't hold back in her jibes and makes it clear to Sergius that his “higher love” is already quite falsified and that the “manner” with which both Raina and Sergius conduct before each other is quite different from who they really are. By raising the curtain on their real identities, Louka severs the connection between the romantic and realistic and incurs Sergius's displeasure. She does this on purpose so as to illustrate the fragile connections that are made in upper society are nothing but laborious impressions of romanticism. There is no real feeling behind them and it is in fact just a charade.

We have developed an understanding of the philosophical subscriptions of Shaw that he illustrated adroitly through the four characters of the play that help elucidate idealism and realism through their conduct. Sergius, Raina, Louka and Bluntschli provide an interesting paradigm with which one can examine the reality of war and marriage, which are the two chief themes of the play.

From quixotic idiocy to romantic fantasy; Arms and the Man, even in current society, has a lot to talk about.

Although today we are enlightened about the repercussions and implications of war, we still haven't completely gauged the importance of realistic expectations of marriage and romantic relationships. The difference between the romance at the beginning of the play and the legitimacy of affections towards the end is a testament of how Shaw idealises humanity to progress. He intends to portray this development in a typical setting in order to make it easy to understand and even easier to practise by the one rule of thumb that is essential when discussing the reality of life: balance. A balance between idealism and realism is the key to a future which will ultimately lead to a perfection in the human race.

“What lies between order and chaos? The answer now seems remarkably simple: Human innovation. The novelist and lepidopterist Vladimir Nabokov appreciated more deeply, than many, the origins of creativity in this middle, human ground [20]: There is, it would seem, in the dimensional scale of the world a kind of delicate meeting place between imagination and knowledge, a point, arrived at by diminishing large things and enlarging small ones, that is intrinsically artistic.” (Crutchfield 13)

It is the innovation of the human race that Shaw wants to bring about and for this purpose, uses his work as a modicum to illustrate his ideology. He thinks that art can be used to bring about a change in human society and with his works rife with moral overtones, it only makes sense that even the plays that end in mystery are supposed to be optimistic pontifications on the human condition.

### CHAPTER 3

(Conclusion)

From the character study conducted in this research paper, a lot about the nature of the themes and the subject of idealism and realism was unearthed. With the passage of time, there have been many developments in the study of Shavian literature and a lot of it has been imbibed by other writers into their works. The relevancy of Shaw's oeuvre can perhaps be attributed to his approach to the literary process. Although there is the typical and entertaining humour found in his works, there is also the obvious and less than silent dogmatic philosophy needed to support his work. Shaw tackles some very important themes that can be addressed in a socio-political light either from a macro or even a micro perspective. While thinking of Arms and the Man and Candida as plays, the most important aspect that can be discussed is the deference Shaw has for human evolution and the important part that religion, imagination, power, hierarchy and relationships play in the life of humans.

Shaw writes in “Bernard Shaw for Religion”: “The Heretic is a sort of person who, no matter what religion is supplied at the shop-by which I mean the nearest church-he will tinker at it until he makes it what he thinks it should be. The Heretic is really a man with homemade religion, and if a man can make a religion for himself at home we need not bother about him-he will make his religion to suit himself. What we want to trouble about is the great mass of people who take religion as they find it-as they get it at the shop.”

(G. B. Shaw)

Shaw’s ideas about religion and what it means to be a practising religious person is quite atypical. He typifies a heretic as a person who tailors his own religion to suit his own needs. The new philosophy that the heretic decides to originate is a disruptive and unique idea that can result in a rippling effect throughout society. According to him, the heretic will craft his own religion from the existing ideas in the fray and develop a newer compound. This heretical compound, however, only originates from the lens of the heretic himself and doesn’t necessarily mean that it can be applicable to a larger group of people. The personalisation of a popular ideology is fomented with Shaw’s conceptualisation of a heretic; and since a heretic is personalised and single minded, the heretical compound crafted, is in fact, limited.

So how does a heretic find himself in the discussion of idealism and realism, and, by extension in the plays of choice? If looked at concurrently, characters like Louka, Bluntschli and Marchbanks subscribe to a form of heresy which can be connoted to realism. Louka is of course the proud servant with exceptional ambition and lack of a “servant’s soul” that provides her with enough motivation to transcend her status in a society that is bound by an unmoving and indefatigable hierarchy. Instead of conceding to the idea, like her betrothed Nicola to a life of servitude, Louka wishes to turn herself into a lady. She does this with clever manipulation and a sense of realisation of her actuality. She becomes a heretic when she wishes to realise her dream of emancipation from servitude, to tailor her position into something more meaningful than rank, title and gender. Bluntschli is perhaps the most important and actual indicator of realism as a heretical characteristic. Throughout the play, he serves as a mouthpiece for Shaw and his opinions on war and marriage. The portrayal of Bluntschli as a character is at the outset, that of a pragmatic and indelibly practical disposition. He separates reality from the farcical and thus ushers in a new way of thinking whereby he not only stays realistic but maintains a healthy balance between the two. We can concede to the fact that in the twentieth century, society wherein people were motivated by romantic art to the extent that they moulded their lives according to it; Shaw

tries to illustrate an optimal way of living through the character of Bluntschli. He is romantic in his senses but practical in his actions. This way of life was less than understood in Shaw's time and the play is written in this exact format to rid people of their romantic notions of serious aspects of life. However, it is also important that we realise that Shaw doesn't want to impede idealistic ambition, a society that is completely realistic with not an iota of idealism is a society with no scope for development.

"To nature, the life of an empire is no more than the life of a swarm of bees, and a thousand years are of less account than half an hour to you and me." (G. B. Shaw)

Shaw's opinions on the impermanence of human civilization can be correlated with his views on realism. Arms and the Man ventures into the avenues of war and marriage while Candida does so using the themes of religion and gender roles. The impermanence of humanity is an inherently realistic concept whether observed from a micro or macro lens. Marchbanks uses superfluous imagery, much like a poet, to describe Candida and what her beauty is worth.

"MARCHBANKS (softly and musically, but sadly and longingly). No, not a scrubbing brush, but a boat—a tiny shallop to sail away in, far from the world, where the marble floors are washed by the rain and dried by the sun, where the south wind dusts the beautiful green and purple carpets. Or a chariot—to carry us up into the sky, where the lamps are stars, and don't need to be filled with paraffin oil every day." (Shaw 47)

Marchbanks modifies his words to immortalise his ideals and in doing so, illustrates his own ignorance of life. Candida, in the auction scene, after acknowledging Marchbanks's ability to understand realises that he is not yet as mature as he needs to be. Due to the fortunate position that he is in as an aristocrat, he doesn't quite understand the position of people who are less fortunate and perhaps even the fact that the definition and practice of love may be different for them. The dichotomy that class plays in Arms and the Man and Candida for love, or lust, is quite similar. Class along with need, is an impediment in realisation of ideals. They are the realistic barriers that obstruct the path of achieving the goals of the respective characters.

Bluntschli, Marchbanks and Louka are all important characters to show that the surpassing of realism is a necessary stepping stone in achieving near idealism. Since the absolute achievement of idealism is, in fact, unrealistic.

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