

Love and War from both Arms and the Man and Major Barbara

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Abstract:

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950), the Irish comic playwright, literary critic, and a Fabian socialist thinker occupies a prominent position in the history of modern English thought in general and English drama in specifics. This is mainly due to his unconventional treatment of the conventional topics or ideas in his plays. Shaw wrote sixty-three plays which are all comedies that criticize wittily the social diseases prevalent in his society during his lifetime. Shaw's plays are dramas of ideas. He deals with many themes in his plays such as morality, wealth/poverty, society and class, power, heroism, violence, war and love.

This research analyzes two themes of love and war in his two well-known plays Arms and the Man (1894) and Major Barbara (1905). In the study, the complex meanings of love and war will be tackled with special focus on the unconventional outlook of the writer about the traditional concepts of love and war.

The aim of the study is to confirm the intermingle of love and war in Bernard Shaw's Arms and the Man as well as Major Barbara. The approach chosen by the researcher of the study will be cultural materialism, as it is broadly known as new historicism. This approach will focus on the social, political, and cultural events that happened during the period of Shaw's lifetime and how those events are reflected and have been dealt with in the mentioned dramatic works under study.

Keywords: Drama of ideas, Love, War.

Summary of Both the Plays:

Arms and the Man:

All of Shaw's literary works in British culture are considered as a new movement in the 19th century, because all of them contain ideas about human's freedom. Shaw's plays are called drama of ideas, because his aim was usually not to tell a story but to convey ideas to people. Arms and the Man examines the faults of the society. Shaw from the first act tries to combine all the humanity problems and show them to the audience/readers. The time with the setting of the play goes back to the brief Serbian and Bulgarian war in 1885. Shaw's friend Sidney Webb arrived with the news of the war as the model of the situation. At that time Shaw was at

the reading room in British Museum when he selected Serbia and Bulgarian war as the setting for his play Arms and the Man. The main character of the play is a Swiss Professional soldier named captain Bluntschli, The title of the play is derived from the ancient epic poem Virgil. Shaw chose the first line of the poem Aeneid: "Of arms and the man I sing" (Virgil, 2007). The title of the play is ironic and it is contrary to that of Aeneid, because Aeneid in the epic is proud and glorified the hero, but Shaw in the play used the anti-hero or runaway soldiers or known as a "chocolate-cream soldier" in the play (Shaw, 1946. Act I p. 29).

Arms and the Man depicts the historical events of

the war between two-neighboring countries. The war happened in Slivnitsa near the Bulgarian capital in 1885. Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia, which was commonly Bulgarian, declared their unification in 1885, against the will of the Great European Powers, particularly Austria. Serbia utilized the misrepresentation of a border to attack Bulgaria. The Serbians had advanced weapons however as in Shaw's form, they had trouble with their gun. They also underestimated the Bulgarians and used mostly young staff. Bernard Shaw demonstrates them fleeing as Bluntschli did. The Russian officers permitted the Bulgarian officers like Sergius and Petkoff to direct the war. They were not as experienced as the Russians, but rather they had strong patriotism and morale. Shaw marks Petkoff's opinion that without the involvement of the Great Powers, the Serbs and Bulgarians would not know how to battle. In the past, the Serbs and Bulgarians struggled on the same side against their enemies, but the Serbian fighters were deceived into fighting against former partners. Austria interfered after Slivnitsa, forbidding more battle. The Bulgarian victory established the unification question and increased the respect of Bulgaria, since the Serbs had not before known defeat. Bernard Shaw used Bulgaria as a symbol of the backward state desire to connect with the family of the modern European nations. Shaw does, in any case, draw out the political difficulty of such a nation as Bulgaria, battling for its personality among the greater, modernized countries. Petkoffs and Sarnoff, needing to be thought progressed, embrace the way of life of remote nations that do not legitimately instruct the general population. Sarnoff wastes his time attempting to be Byronic, and Catherine concentrates on having an electric bell. This same marvel is still seen today when poorer countries imitate what is prominent in wealthier nations. (Stafford, 2013).

The time and the plot of the play is attractive and easy to follow. The drama is in three Acts which all are located in Raina's house. The first movements are in Raina's bedchamber between her and the man, Bluntschli. Their conversation shows their opposite ideals about war. Bluntschli has different thoughts about war between countries; his own ideal is that each country and the army in the battle will fight for their powers. Raina soon knows that her ideal is wrong about war and moved to her fugitive soldier. Because before seeing the fugitive soldier she thought that her fiancée 'Sergius' was

born with courage, especially her father Petkoff, who served his country and connected with the issue of nationalism. The time setting in the play is in good situation for gaining result to the viewer or readers. Shaw's Arms and the Man is a comedy about behavior and other Victorian traditions. Arms and the Man is the best example of Victorian literature. The play was presented to the British people in 1894. It is one of the Plays Pleasant Volume with other Shaw's plays, such as You Never Can Tell, Arms and the Man, Candida, The Man of Devils. The most fascinating thing about Arms and the Man are the comic elements; it manages a few political and social issues privately. The class conflict is the top idea of Arms and the Man, however as opposed to making the reader or audience aware of them, he presents interesting things and makes one think about these issues after the laughing. Not like different plays of the time, Arms and the Man did not look to just engage a group of people with considerate cleverness. Instead, Shaw tried to uncover most problems of the day that are begging to be addressed in an attractive configuration in the comic drama. This is a symbol of Shaw's creativity as he mentioned, What is the utilization of script plays, or composing anything, if there is not a will which at long last forms bedlam itself into a race of divine beings (Peters, 1996). Last point, is the play Arms and the Man shows the high standard of living between two idealistic couple in the bright time of the Bulgarian war. Raina acts as a queen, noble-woman, from the high class. However, Sergius appears as a brave, chivalric soldier in the battlefield (Hasim, 2015).

Major Barbara:

The second play Major Barbara is a socio-cultural play. Shaw presents what is wrong and what is right. In the play, he attacks religion and criticizes people who lived in a shelter called Salvation Army and the people there were supported by church. Salvation Army is a place, which is established, by William Booth and his wife in 1878. The poor people think that they are protected from starvation and dangers. Salvation Army is the place for those people who do not have money to buy food, and a place like a shelter for rest. It is called army because it is an organization of the military. In the shelter, they have a flag with a number 129 which means blood and fire. The term blood refers to the strong power of the Christ, and the Fire terms represent the flame of hell. The lady from the aristocratic family

Barbara was ranked as major in the army. The play Major Barbara is categorized as a gun story, it was written and shown in 1905. The play is a long debate about ideas in British culture. The aim of the play is promoting the ideas to support readers in learning basic nature of reality. The goal of Major Barbara is to teach the audience to change their idealistic thoughts and move towards reality. Bernard Shaw believes that idealism takes us away from reality. Idealism diverts the mind of the audience from facts and possibilities. He also notices that in the idealism, if the individual falls in love, as a result he puts her/his life in the hell of ignorance and ugliness, because people think, idealism may help them know the beauty of life. Previously, idealism has taken humankind's place as the explanation and experimentation of life. Idealism has controlled humans' lives. This is supposed to be the main goal of the play. As Edman states in his essay, "maintaining the control over people has continued since the creation of mankind and will continue till the end of mankind" (Edman, 2017). All in all, Shaw rejects these thoughts and struggles with idealism. To understand the true meaning of the idealistic issue, the individual must stop flying in the empty sky of empty idealism. It is also so important to stand on the ground of reality to learn the actual social problems. Through Shaw's philosophy, idealism makes common people unaware of their daily life. In Shaw's mind, realistic people are the best for authors to understand the nature of the individual's problems (Albert, 2012). The play has focused on the self-assured girl, Barbara, who is working in the Salvation Army in London. Barbara with her mother and sister have been irritated by Undershaft, the father. Andrew Undershaft now arrives and is shown as a rich man with a successful gun factory. Undershaft desires to purchase salvation and offers cash to Barbara. In this way, he wants to attack Barbara, because Barbara hates her father and does not want to get polluted with her father's money. Furthermore, her father asserts that poverty is a more frightful issue than weapons. Undershaft is more confident to support people by offering work, occupations and wages, more than her daughter in the shelter is offering soup and bread. This play was written before starting the social reform in Britain, also was published before World Wars I and II (Albert, 124). Barbara's mother, Britomart, the noblewoman from the British era, and Stephen her son are discussing how to find a source to pay for her two daughter's

wedding. Sarah, engaged to Charles Lomax, Barbara, engaged to Adolphus Cusins (Greek teacher). Lady Britomart talks with Stephen to ask her alienated man, Andrew, for money. Andrew as an effective and specific man has collected a million pounds from his weapon factory. He creates the widely used weapons named torpedoes, firearms, submarines, and aeronautical boats. Actually, where the kids are small: their father leaves them, now they grow up, have never seen their father's face before. Andrew Undershaft suggests that he will visit Barbara's shelter, and Barbara will visit his factory. Andrew Undershaft is frightened in the Shelter, because he sees that his daughter Barbara works with different people who search for social organizations in the Salvation Army; Barbara treats them with resilience, strength, and seriousness. Undershaft with Barbara's fiancé 'Cusins' discusses Barbara's position in the salvation. He asserts that he has a plan to buy Salvation Army. He offers a huge amount of money with the whisky distiller's company who makes alcohol. Barbara considers her organization as a charity place more than her father's factory. Contrary to that, her bosses declare that she has betrayed Salvation Army. Barbara poorly leaves their shelter in disappointment (Albert, 116).

Later, Lady Britomart asks her irritated husband to find a business for her son Stephen:

Lady Britomart: I want to talk to you about Stephen.

Undershaft: Don't, my dear. Stephen doesn't interest me (Act III, p. 132).

Themes of War, Love In Arms and the Man and Major Barbara:

The Theme of War in Arms and the Man:

Shaw's aim behind writing Arms and the Man is to examine the concept of war, which is connected with human nature in Victorian period (1837-1901). During that period, there were various plays that had the same ideas of Arms and the Man but Shaw's philosophy in the play is different from all the other plays. In the play, Shaw presents famous themes of love and war and explains them in a different way. Here, war is presented in a funny way and this seems to be an explosion in the British Theater. In the preface of the Plays Pleasant Shaw states that: "Drama, in England at least, was a figment of the revolutionary imagination"(Shaw,

1964). Shaw presents war in a witty way to give the audience an approach for applying it in their daily lives. However, Shaw's attempt in the play is not to show the good or the bad sides of war, but his intension is to present how it has affected human's nature. For instance, in the preface of the *Heartbreak House* (1919), Shaw states that war destroys the pretenses of civilization and breaks humans life (Griffith, 2003).

Through *Arms and the Man*, Bernard Shaw as a social writer delivers a number of messages to the viewers to be aware of what is happening around them. This play can be considered as a military play, because Shaw in the preface of *Plays Pleasant* states that the purpose of his plays is to deal with romantic follies of society. In the play the ideas of the war returns to the brave man or fighter that able to overcome all the danger in the battlefield. However contrary to that, Shaw believes that war damages the society and brings starvation, poverty, prostitution, and homelessness. He also conveys a message in the play to audience to recognize the true reality of the warrior in the war. Shaw attacks war in general and scorns the romantic notion of the warrior in a specific way; as such, he deals with war in an anti-epic style (Mahdi, 2011).

Bluntschli is a realistic man and hero soldier in the play, because his entering Raina's bedchamber changes all the illusions and traditional notion of war. Through his coming to Raina's room, he explains the entire images of war and the warrior in the battlefield. Bluntschli's vision about soldiers is not to make the difference between a hero and a coward. He believes that there are two types of soldiers in the battlefield, he says: "The young ones carry pistols and cartridges: the old ones, grub" (Act I, p.26). In this quotation, Bluntschli mentions that the young soldier has ammunition, guns but the old soldier has skill in war and they do not care about death one day. Bluntschli is the best example of the experienced soldier, and describes him as the mouthpiece of the author. Because Bluntschli shows the soldier's life in the battlefield, suffering from lack of food, sleep, and filled with fear. Bluntschli uses his ammunition pockets to carry chocolates rather than cartridges for his pistol, and he thinks that it is important to be a professional soldier carrying a box of chocolate to eat instead of bullets for his pistol. Because in the battlefield, it is very hard to find food to eat, and with empty stomach, they cannot fight, for that the best thing for the soldier is to eat chocolate. He explains to

Raina: "I've no ammunition. What use are cartridges in battle? I always carry chocolate instead; and I finished the last cake of that hours ago" (Act I, p. 25).

Raina's father is one of the officers in the Bulgarian army, he joins army so as to get the rank of major. Raina describes her father to the man in her bedroom and says: "I must tell you that my father holds the highest command of any Bulgarian in our army. He is a Major" (Act I, p. 31). Major Petkoff is a major and a business-man in the Bulgarian army; in the war he makes a trade of horses and his talk with Sergius explains this. He says: "I suppose soldiering has to be a trade like any other trade" (Act II, p. 43).

Another idea in the play is that Sergius notices that the war for the warrior is the dream of showing himself as a brave soldier in the battlefields. Also Bluntschli describes himself as tradesman soldier, whoever comes first, he will contact him. Bernard Shaw as a pacifist writer is against the glorification of war and his aim of writing *Arms and the Man* is to serve people to know more about war and warrior in the battlefield. Because Shaw depicts two- neighboring countries Serbia-Bulgaria who fight against each other and start to make war without knowing any rules of war. In Bernard Shaw's mind, heroism must help humanity by directing people to a peaceful life. He does not agree with the military heroism in war, because people become poor, orphan, and hungry (Mahdi, 2011).

The Theme of Love in Arms and the Man:

Arms and the Man is a witty play; describing wrong notions of both two themes. Especially, themes of love towards Raina, appears as a romantic girl right from the opening Act. In the first Act, when she stands on her balcony looking at the sky and admiring the brilliant stars around her country. She is joyful because of the hero Sergius and waiting him to return from battlefield to marry him, she describes Sergius: "Oh, I shall never be unworthy of you any more, my soul's hero: never, never, never" (Act I, p.19). On Sergius' return to Raina's house, they called each other my hero and my queen, because Raina is an attractive Bulgarian woman, full of notions of love. When Raina hears about Sergius' bravery in the battlefield she is joyful and happy. She is confused by the news she hears, she describes her fiancé as knight, and hero, and she keeps his photo and kisses him. She imagines that she is fit to marry him. Because at that time bravery

is considered as a simple thing that a soldier can get in the battle. Sergius explains his love for her and says: "If you are away five minutes, it will seem five hours" (Act II, p.46). The characteristic of Raina towards love shows love in a great situations of society (Rao, 2004).

Arms and the Man is ironic play that attacks individuals who are proud cowards boasting about war. For that Raina's thoughts towards love and war went to change after the arrival of Capitan Bluntschli. Before coming Bluntschli, Raina believes that soldiering is the duty of killing and fighting in battlefield and they do not have any fear of death. However, Bluntschli explains the situation that happened in war field, he tells that all soldiers have fear of death and there is nothing about cowards in the war, and its bravery to save your life as long as you can. He presents a negative image of soldiers in war: "nine soldiers out of ten are born fools"(Act I, p.22). Bluntschli escapes from the war and enters Raina's bedchamber through the window, and helps Raina to have a realistic picture of love and war. At the end of the play, Sergius' relation with Raina moves to Louka, because he knows that his relationship is not built on realistic manners, he also thinks that Raina does not accept him as her hero, and now she is not looking at him as her future husband. Petkoff as the master of house thinks that there is a love between Louka and Nicola, but Nicola refuses to have any relationship with Louka. In the play, Shaw explains the realistic notion of love and marriage between Louka and Nicola. So, it is right to say that all of Shaw's work is inspired by Ibsen's work especially in struggle between reality and love (Singh and Arjun, 2013).

The Theme of War in Major Barbara:

Major Barbara is considered to be one of Shaw's common plays about gunpowder and money. The play is a discussion between daughter and father for saving poor souls. The play shows the hypocrisy of the religious people who trust in God on one hand, and collecting a great amount of money from the gun sales on the other. It contains dialogues between Barbara a poor girl from the hell with the multi-millionaire Andrew Undershaft, the owner of the gun factory. Both of them discuss about changing the poor condition in their shelter of Salvation Army, because people think that the shelter is the place to live, and have a daily food with places to rest. The people of the shelter are proud of their poverty and think that this is a gift

from God. They agree to ask for food on one hand, and on the other hand they think that God is all forgiveness. Andrew Undershaft as a wealthy and owner of the gun factory hates poverty especially a jobless man. He believes that his work is far much better than Barbara's work in the shelter, because he uses his money in the profitable business of war to save people from poverty. He discusses with Barbara and Cusins says:

Undershaft: ...I will drag his soul back again to salvation for you. Not by words and dreams; but by thirty-eight shillings a week, a sound house in a handsome street, and a permanent job (Act III, p.162).

Andrew Undershaft thinks that the poverty is worse than a crime. He believes that it is better for a man to work in his gun factory than sitting in the shelter waiting for soup and bread. Undershaft's famous speech is that man must have enough money to be the master of himself in life, because he believes that money brings power and freedom to people (Act III, p.158). Andrew knows that his work was not acceptable in Barbara's view, but he prefers that it is better for Barbara to ask him than others to help the shelter. This issue is presented in other discussions of the play. Barbara with her mother Britomart thought that Undershaft's work is immoral, violent and brings death to the innocent people. They believe Undershaft's money was dirty, because he earns billions of dollars from selling weapon to any one who wants to buy. However, at the end of the play Undershaft can attain his goals by telling them his work in producing weapons is something moral and money is needed to save the people's souls (Stafford, 2013).

Bernard Shaw in the play shows the conflict between two sides: Undershaft as a capitalist and owner of the gun factory who loves war and collects much money from it, and Barbara with her fiancé Adolphus Cusins are more important voice because they represent peace in the world especially in their shelter. Both sides in the play intend to change the problematic issues such as poverty, starvation, homelessness, and joblessness that British culture suffered form in the 19th century. Nevertheless, their intentions are different from each other's, because Undershaft appears as a realistic person, but Barbara is the opposite, she is an idealistic character. Barbara's vision of the people in the shelter is to change their souls to good people.

Barbara fails to save the souls of poor people because she announces that the shelter is closed, due to financial problems, they wanted to find a supporter. In any case, Undershaft notices that he can save the shelter by giving money as he benefits from weapon. But the source of Undershaft's money has come in this way:

Undershaft: To give arms to all men who offer an honest price for them, without respect of persons or principles: to aristocratic and republican, to Nihilist and Tsar, to Capitalist and Socialist, to Protestant and Catholic, to burglar and policeman, to black man white man and yellow man, to all sorts and conditions, all nationalities, all faiths, all follies, all cause and all crimes (Act III, p.157-158).

Undershaft thinks that gun is power and life force needs this job. Because this is the reason why he leaves his family soon, since every day his wife asks him about the source of his money. Undershaft asks his daughter Barbara to mention the meaning of power especially gunpowder to her mother because she does not want to understand (Burton, 1916).

The Theme of Love in Major Barbara

Major Barbara is a social play discussing the social identity through lovely girl working in organization. Barbara as a heroic character from an aristocratic family working in Salvation Army with the rank of major. She is an emotional girl and a merciful officer. She loves poor people in the shelter and desire to them. Barbara is considered to be the mouthpiece of Christianity in the shelter. Barbara's language with people in the shelter is different from others, because her idea of working in the shelter is to spread her loves to everyone. Barbara grows from her mother's hand without being supported by any others; her father leaves them and goes to collecting money, this is mean that her fathers does not loves them. Barbara in the play represents the authors' speech for supporting and defending woman, because when Shaw wrote the play, woman in British society could not vote in election or working outside their homes. Shaw broke this rule by creating a lovely woman from the shelter, and raising her to get the rank of major in the army. At the shelter when Bill Walker drags Jenny hill's hair,

and told her, you want to tell your major. Barbara scorns him and said: man must be love woman, because woman needs man's love. Shaw makes Barbara responsible for all faults in the shelter such as poverty, homelessness, and starvation. All the characters ask Barbara to find a solution for the problems they have. At the time when the Greek teacher Adolphus Gusins comes to the shelter and sees Barbara who is alone with her voice in the shelter and asks help for poor people. He is attracted by her behavior and tells her father that he has been accepted in the helter, as a "poor professor of Greek"(Act II, p.102). Cusins notices that, before coming to the shelter, he does not desire to marry or make love with woman, but when he sees Barbara's performance he is shocked and at once asks her to love and marry him. Cusins defines his love to Barbara and says: "She bought my soul like a flower at a street corner, but she bought it for herself"(Act III, p.153). He mentions that no one is able to take me away from Barbara's hand (Fisher, 1983).

In his professional speeches, Cusins can gain his goals in Undershaft's heart to love him and find a place for him in his factory. Undershsft mentions that: "Professor Cusins: you are a young man after my own heart" (Act II, p.104). In the play, the debate between Barbara and Undershaft starts when Barbara loves her father and desires to help him in his work (Baker, 2002)

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