

فن وصف الشخصية في مسرحية السلاح
والرجل للكاتب جورج برنارد شو

The Art of Characterization in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*

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Abstract

This research is aimed to analyze the art of characterization in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, and to evaluate the artistic beauty that the characters add to the play. It is significant in a way that it adds a new dimension to the analysis by investigating the artistic excellences of the characters. The researcher uses a descriptive analytical approach. The research arrives at the following findings: Shaw uses both the techniques of telling and showing in the process of characterization with greater emphasis on the latter. The characters contribute to the charm of the play, and they form its essence. Like human beings in the real life, characters in the play are subject to changes in their beliefs and ideas. For example, Raina, with the help of Bluntschli, abandons her romantic and idealistic views of love and war, ultimately embracing a more realistic perspective. The play is seen as a combination of opposing ideas and beliefs enlivened by characters: realism versus idealism, lower class versus aristocracy, and cowardice versus bravery. But these opposing ideas and beliefs come to terms of reconciliation at the end. The characters such as Raina, Bluntschli, Sergius and Louka, revolt against the dominant social norms. For example, Raina, the rich beautiful twenty-three-year-old Bulgarian girl, accepts the marriage of Bluntschli, the thirty-four-year-old Serbian soldier; and major Sergius, the handsome young Bulgarian officer, agrees to marry Louka, the Petkoff's attractive young female servant. These marriages between high class people and lower class people promote the establishment of a classless peaceful society.

Keywords: Characterization, idealism, realism, *Arms and the Man*, George Bernard Shaw.





المستخلص:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحليل فن وصف الشخصية في مسرحية «السلاح والرجل» لجورج برنارد شو، وتقييم الجمال الفني الذي تضيفه الشخصيات إلى المسرحية، وتكمن أهمية البحث في كونه يضيف بعداً جديداً في تحليل المسرحية من خلال الكشف عن التميز الفني للشخصيات. استخدم الباحث في هذا البحث المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، وقد توصل البحث إلى النتائج التالية: استخدم الكاتب تقنية الاخبار عن الشخصية وتقنية عرض الشخصية في عملية توصيف الشخصيات مع التركيز أكثر على تقنية العرض. تضيف الشخصيات بعداً جمالياً، وتشكل جوهر مسرحية السلاح والرجل، وتتماها كما إن البشر في الواقع عرضة للتغيير، فالشخصيات في المسرحية عرضة لعدة تغييرات في المعتقدات والأفكار، فعلى سبيل المثال: تتخلى رينا، بمساعدة بلونتشي، عن معتقداتها الراسخة حول الرومانسية وآرائها المثالية عن الحب والحرب، لتصبح في النهاية ذات نظرة واقعية. اضافة الى ذلك ان مسرحية «السلاح والرجل» مزيج من الأفكار والمعتقدات المتعارضة التي تجسدها الشخصيات مثل الواقعية مقابل المثالية، والطبقة الدنيا مقابل الأرستقراطية، والجبن مقابل الشجاعة. لكن هذه الأفكار والمعتقدات المتعارضة تتماهى مع بعضها في النهاية. تنور الشخصيات التالية: رينا، بلونتشي، سرجيوس، لوكا، ضد الأعراف الاجتماعية السائدة. على سبيل المثال: تقبل رينا، الفتاة البلغارية الغنية والجميلة ذات الثلاثة والعشرون ربيعاً، الزواج من بلونتشي، الجندي الصربي البالغ من العمر أربعة وثلاثين عاماً، ويوافق الرائد سرجيوس، الضابط البلغاري الشاب الوسيم، على الزواج من لوكا، خادمة بوتكوف الشابة الجذابة، وهذا يدل على إن هذه الزوجات بين الطبقة العليا والطبقة الدنيا تدعم إقامة مجتمع يسوده السلام الاجتماعي ولا يؤمن بالطبقية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التوصيف، المثالية، الواقعية، السلاح والرجل، جورج برنارد شو.





Introduction

Traditionally, characters were not given great importance in any fictional writing until the seventeenth century. In the modern age, on the contrary, there has been an increasing interest in the analysis of characters in literary works (Cuddon, 1998, para. 126). In other words, characters are significantly of great importance in modern literature. Many writers, among which is George Bernard Shaw, draw their characters from the real life, and this makes them reasonable and acceptable. Shaw's characters are chosen from different European nationalities: English, Irish, Swiss, and Bulgarian. They also reflect different social classes. We can find, in his plays, different kinds of people: kings, queens, military generals or majors, soldiers, doctors, prostitutes, and servants.

Before we begin analyzing Shaw's art of characterization in his play *Arms and the Man*, we should first understand character and characterization. Character is "one of the people portrayed in a book, play, or movie" (Microsoft® Student, 2009), and characterization is "the way in which a writer portrays the characters in a book, play, or movie" (Microsoft® Student, 2009). In his explanation of characters, Abrams (2009) states that they

are the persons represented in a dramatic or narrative work, who are interpreted by the reader as possessing particular moral, intellectual, and emotional qualities by inferences from what the persons say and their distinctive ways of saying it—the **dialogue**—and from what they do—the **action**. (p. 42)

In the same concern, Roberts (1964) points out that character is created by the author

through the medium of words, of a personality who takes on actions, thoughts, expressions, and attitudes unique and appropriate to that personality and consistent with it. Character might be thought of as a reasonable facsimile of a human being, with all the qualities and vagaries of a human being. (p. 45)

Understanding the way the writer develops and characterizes his/her characters in a literary work leads to understanding the meaning of that literary work. In this concern, Peck and Coyle (1984) state that characters and characterization are means for dramatizing the themes of a drama. They also declare





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that

In thematic terms a dramatist is always dealing with a much larger question than that of character: he is focusing on concerns that are central in human experience. Our problem, of course, is how to grasp this wider meaning of the play. It is not something stated directly by the dramatist; it is only implicit in the action and the characterisation. (p. 74)

Here, we can say that characters are the people in fictional and dramatic works, and characterization is their presentation and development, or rather it is the ways of creating the traits of characters. Every writer presents and develops their characters using two characterization techniques: telling and showing. In the first way, the writer describes his characters directly or makes other characters do the task. In the second way, the writer shows his/her characters in actions. A writer can create a character who knows everything about himself/herself and about others, or a character who knows nothing. That is why one writer can be different from another in the process of depicting their characters.

Objectives of the Study

This research aims to identify and analyze the major and minor characters in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, and to ascertain whether Shaw's technique used in characterizing the people of the play is showing or telling, and to evaluate the significance of characters and their artistic contribution to the play.

Methodology

The process of analysis is intended to analyze the major characters and minor characters in the play: their behavior, ideas, and attitudes. In this study, the researcher uses a descriptive analytical approach. The techniques of characterization: telling and showing are analyzed through using a content analysis approach.

Significance of the Study

What attracts the attention of the researcher and motivates him to study the art of characterization in *Arms and the Man* is the lack of a holistic study concerning its characterization. The current study reveals the artistic excel-





lences of the characters in the play, and opens a new window to the study of its artistic beauty.

Scope of the Study

The current study is confined to the discussion and analysis of characters in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. It excludes discussion and analysis of themes, plot, images and symbols in the play.

Literature Review

From its publication till now, *Arms and the Man* has been and still is a subject of great interest to the critics. Its thematic, structural and technical aspects have drawn the attention of the critics in ample measure. Shaw's art of characterization has also been a subject of criticism by many critics.

It is said by some critics that the characters of Shaw's plays are his mouth-pieces that reflect his point of views. In this connection, Mulgan and Davin (1969) state that "Plot is subordinated to dialogue for which characters themselves though often clearly drawn are but mouthpieces. And this dialogue is the expression of Shaw's ideas" (p. 164). "But this is not true," Ward (1955) points out in his introduction to *Arms and the Man*: "Because in each of his plays the different characters put forward opinions which conflict with each other, and Shaw leaves the reader (or the spectator in the theatre) to decide which is right" (p. 91).

On the other hand, Thornley and Gwyneth (1984) note that "He [Shaw] delighted in saying and showing the opposite of what his audiences expected: *Arms and the Man* (1898), for example, presents as a sympathetic figure a soldier who doesn't want to fight" (p. 166).

According to Lenker (2011), *Arms and the Man* is a play in which the realistic hero succeeds in making the idealistic heroin believes in realism. Lenker elaborates:

Arms and the Man . . . features a handsome soldier with a realistic attitude toward war who deflates the romantic notions of the heroine concerning battle and the bravery of her betrothed. In this well-known farce, bits of chocolate substitute for bullets, and overcoats prove more useful than smart uniforms. (pp. 113-14)





Similarly, Holder (2015) argues that Shaw made a change in the writing of melodrama through his move from unpleasant to pleasant plays. And, Holder continues,

His [Shaw's] first success, *Arms and the Man*, was a take-down of military melodrama, in which characters who embody the heroic roles of those plays – Sergius, Raina – are ultimately liberated from the constricting nature of their adopted personae. (p. 107)

In his discussion, Harper (1983) declares that what is known as noble deeds in wars has no place in today's wars. In other words, Harper writes:

This early play by Shaw . . . cuts through the noble ideals of war and the "higher love" that Raina and Sergius claim to share; *Arms and the Man* presents a world where the practical man who lives with no illusions and no poetic views about either love or war is shown to be the superior creature. (pp. 25-53)

Analysis of Characters

Analyzing characters in any literary work is not an easy task because we have to look through characters as if looking through real human beings. As analyzing people is difficult, analyzing characters is difficult too. In this section, the researcher explains how the characters in *Arms and the Man* look, and how they behave with one another throughout the play.

Major Characters

There are four major characters in the play: Raina Petkoff, Captain Bluntschli, Major Sergius Saranoff, and Louka.

a. Raina Petkoff

One of the major characters in the play is Raina, the heroine. She is the daughter of one of the well-to-do families in Bulgaria. She is a romantic young girl who is engaged to Sergius and later marries Bluntschli. She is a dynamic character since there is a change in her ideas: she was idealistic at the beginning of the story and realistic at the end. She has many romantic ideals about love, nobility, courage and beauty, but she does not use them to get what she wants. She is described by Shaw (1913):





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 are part of it, is gazing at the snowy Balkans. She is in her night-gown, well covered by a long mantle of furs, worth, on a moderate estimate about three times the furniture of her room. (pp. 15-16)

Here, Shaw authoritatively intervenes to directly describe Raina and evaluate her. He uses the technique of telling.

On the other hand, Shaw shows the readers, using the technique of showing, that Raina is intelligent and empathetic. For example, she has cleverly succeeded in convincing the officer who interrogates her about the fugitive, and she makes him go without having any doubt about the presence of the fugitive in the chamber. Another example of her cleverness is seen in her skill of removing her photograph from the pocket of her father's coat pretending that she is trying to help him put on his coat. In a conversation with her mother, Raina says "I don't care whether he [Sergius] finds out about the chocolate cream soldier or not" (Shaw, 1913, p. 42). This is a good evidence of the transference of her affection from Sergius to Bluntschli. She is also a sympathetic and pitiful lady. For example, in her bed-chamber, Raina behaves with Bluntschli like a nurse who treats a little boy. When he tells her that if she wishes him to cry, she is about to scold him like a mother scolding her child, but armed with pity and sympathy, Raina says "I'm sorry. I won't scold you" (Shaw, 1913, p. 15).

It is shown that Raina has learned and acquired the romantic ideas through her reading for Byron and Pushkin with her romantic lover, Sergius. To her, a soldier is a hero, and war is a military glory. In her eyes, Sergius is a romantic knight who is in the charge of leading his soldiers to fight his enemies. She thinks that soldiers are above physical pains because they are able to endure all sorts of suffering.

She is also shown as a lady of principles. Though Bluntschli fights in the army of her country's enemy, and gives insulting remarks about her lover Sergius, Raina does not hesitate to offer a help for the person who is in need of her help. Therefore, she provides him a safe shelter when she hides him behind the curtains of her chamber. She does so because she is impressed by his realistic views. Clearly, Raina is self-confident enough to hide her country's enemy





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though Louka informs her that a Serbian soldier was seen climbing through the water pipe of her room balcony and, therefore, the Bulgarian soldiers want to search for him in her bedroom.

The conflict between Raina's idealistic ideas and Bluntschli's realistic views add power to the play. In this concern, Gordon (1998) "The comic energy of *Arms and the Man* is generated at first by the clash between the romantic heroine . . . and the practical and prosaic Swiss mercenary . . . who strips away her false idealism" (pp.133-34). After discovering Bluntschli's realistic views about war and love, Raina is no longer a romantic lady; she is now a realistic lady. In this connection, Ward (1955), in his introduction to *Arms and the Man*, remarks: "In the opening scene of the play, after adoring Sergius' portrait, Raina goes to bed murmuring 'My hero! My hero!' This is a romantic girl's view of life, but then reality suddenly breaks in upon her" (p. 97). As a result, Raina has fallen deeply in love with Bluntschli. This is obvious through the conversation between Raina and her mother while he is sleeping in her bed, and her mother is trying to wake him up:

CATHERINE [shaking him] Sir! [Shaking him again, harder] Sir!!
[Vehemently, shaking very hard] Sir!!!

RAINA: [catching her arm] Don't, mamma: the poor darling is worn out. Let him sleep.

CATHERINE [letting him go, and turning amazed to RAINA]
The poor darling! RAINA!!! [She looks sternly at her daughter.
The man sleeps profoundly]. (Shaw, 1913, p. 23)

Raina is a flexible lady. That is why she finds what Bluntschli tells her is acceptable. She is highly impressed by his realistic views about war. For example, it is not graceful if a soldier flies away from the battlefield because it is his responsibility to save his life as possible as he can. So her views about war have been modified by Bluntschli. She no longer thinks that it is a sort of cowardice for a soldier to run away from the battlefield.

Obviously, Shaw shows us that there is a change in Raina's personality traits. She accepts Bluntschli's marriage proposal though she has been previously betrothed to Major Sergius. She prefers realism to romantic pretense. She finds that Bluntschli is a quick-witted person full of lively and rational conver-





sation. However, Raina's love for Sergius is strong, high, and true. Before this change, she has seen him with Louka in privacy, but she does not allow misgivings to reign over her heart. It is only when secrets are brought to light, and she is convinced that Sergius has been definitely attracted by Louka, that Raina breaks her love relationship with him turning to the "chocolate cream soldier", Bluntschli. About her love for Bluntschli, Arthur Ganz (1983) comments:

All the genuine romantic charm that Shaw evokes, as Raina finally accepts her 'chocolate cream soldier', is characterised less by erotic attraction than by a variation on the pedagogical impulse . . . By refusing to believe in her 'noble attitude' and 'thrilling voice', Bluntschli teaches Raina not the reality of her self . . . but the reality of proper behaviour in the world. (pp. 102-103)

In brief, Shaw tells and shows us a unique heroine, Raina, whose dynamic character is a cocktail of good physical and mental characteristics. She is a beautiful young girl. She is also intelligent, flexible, sympathetic, brave, and enthusiastic.

b. Captain Bluntschli

Another major character in the play is Captain Bluntschli. He is a professional Swiss soldier. He is about 35 years old. He is shown by Shaw that he fights for the sake of money rather than patriotism. He looks at war from the professional point of view. He joined the Serbian army for no other reason but that Switzerland lies on the road through which the Serbian soldiers pass to encounter their Bulgarian foes. When his forces were defeated by the Bulgarian army, he found shelter in Raina's room. He is pragmatic, with a sense of humor about the world. He regards the military deeds of Sergius, the bravest of the brave in Raina's eyes, unsoldierly and unprofessional, and more than that they are a sort of madness. When Raina doubts his views on her lover, he confesses that "It's no use dear lady: I can't make you see it from a professional point of view" (Shaw, 1913, p. 17).

One can realize, through the technique of showing, that Bluntschli is a gentleman with good ideals. For example, he asks Raina to break the news of his presence to her mother. He would not like to be there without the knowledge of her mother because it is not the nature of the gentleman to bring disgrace to the lady who offers him a safe shelter. It is true that he takes Raina's





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cloak which is disgraceful, but for no other purpose except to save his life. As soon as he finds that this scheme is of no use to him, he throws it to her and prepares to bravely meet his enemies and his fate. When he finds that his talks with her about Sergius hurt her, he quickly and politely apologizes to her saying, "I am really very sorry. . . Perhaps I am quite wrong, and know: no doubt I am" (Shaw, 1913, p. 17). When he realizes that his staying at Raina's bed-chamber would bring disgrace on her, he is ready to take a risky event to climb down the water pipe which may result in his death. In short, Raina herself confesses that he is a gentleman. This is the occasion on which she offers him her hand, and he rejects to touch hers because his are dirty. So she says, "That is very nice of you. I see that you are a gentleman" (Shaw, 1913, p. 21). After she discovers that Bluntschli is a well-mannered person who behaves in a realistic way, Raina is no longer in love with Sergius. Such transfer of her love from Sergius to Bluntschli is obviously hinted. In short, He represents the realistic view in the play. By the end he got married to Raina.

He is also a very clever soldier. He stands against the romantic views of war, some of which is the view that says that a soldier must die in the battlefield and must not flee away. But Bluntschli sees that it is the duty of a soldier to live as long as he can. So he flies from the field of the battle to preserve himself and protect his life. And he comes to the bed-chamber of Raina where he uses his cleverness employing many means to save his life. It can be said that he represents the anti-romantic views.

Bluntschli's views about everything are realistic. He believes that food is more important than ammunition:

RAINA: Load it by all means.

THE MAN. 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.

RAINA [*outraged in her most cherished ideals of manhood*]
Chocolate! Do you stuff your pockets with sweets--like a school-boy--even in the field?

MAN. Yes. Isn't it contemptible? (Shaw, 1913, p. 14)

His realism about war is seen through his view that war is evil and should not





be glorified. His experience and real observation of life are seen through his outlook of his description of the cavalry charge, whose leader is Sergius. In this regards, Gordon (1998) writes “In *Arms and the Man* Bluntschli helps Raina to abandon her out-of-date idealizations of love and war whereupon the two will lead the way towards a new kind of realism” (p. 133).

Bluntschli, a leading character, is an anti-hero. He is an ordinary person and there is nothing extra-ordinary and glorious about him. He has instinct and impulses like ordinary human beings. For example, when Raina points pistol at him, he feels frightened, scared, and nervous. Another example, when Raina asks him to get out of her chamber and climb the water pipe, he puts his head in his hands in desperation.

Bluntschli is neither weak nor coward, but strong and brave. He has been under fire for three days without sleeping or rest and he is also extremely exhausted when he enters Raina's chamber, but he is ready to stand firmly and bravely to face another difficult situation if he is invited to do so. He tries to protect his life, and does not hesitate to use any means or invent any trick. When he finds that Raina's cloak is no longer a shield, he promises her to fight like a devil.

Bluntschli cannot be easily deceived. Though Raina, who deceives everybody in the play, tries to deceive him by telling lies for him, he tells her firmly that he admires her, but could not believe a single word that she tells. Accordingly, Raina surrenders and asks:

How strange it is to be talked to in such a way! You know, I've always gone on that . . . I mean the noble attitude and the thrilling voice . . . I did it when I was a tiny child to my nurse. She believed in it. I do it before my parents. They believe in it. I do it before Sergius. He believes in it. (Shaw, 1913, p. 56)

c. Sergius Saranoff

Sergius is also one of the major characters in the play. He is an officer who fights under the leadership of Petkoff and a fiancé of Petkoff's daughter, Riana. Shaw describes his appearance directly using the technique of telling:

Major Sergius Saranoff . . . is a tall, romantically handsome man, with the physical hardihood, the high spirit, and the susceptible





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imagination of an untamed mountaineer chieftain . . . The ridges of his eyebrows, curving with a ram's-horn twist round the marked projections at the outer corners; his jealously observant eye; his nose, thin, keen, and apprehensive in spite of the pugnacious high bridge and large nostril; his assertive chin, would not be out of place in a Parisian salon, showing that the clever, imaginative barbarian has an acute critical faculty which has been thrown into intense activity by the arrival of western civilization in the Balkans. (Shaw, 1913, p. 30)

Major Sergius Saranoff is engaged to Raina, but at the end, he married Louka, the maidservant. About Sergius' marriage to Louka, Ganz (1983) writes that "This curious relationship between the firmly professional soldier and the bloodlessly efficient household servant is crucial to the quality of Shaw's success in *Arms and the Man*" (p. 103).

Sergius is a romantic hero. He imbibed the romantic ideas through his reading of the works of Byron and Pushkin with his beloved Raina. He is ideally a suitable hero and lover for a romantic beloved. The world he lives in is imaginative and unreal. To him a soldier can gain a glory through war. So he fights his enemies like a true hero and knight showing them all sorts of bravery in the field of battle. According to Bluntschli, the realistic hero, all these deeds are an act of madness.

Sergius' views on love are romantic and unreal. Raina, to Sergius, is his queen and his heroine who inspires him to perform glorious deeds. They talk with each other in high romance. When he returns from war, he addresses her as his queen, and she repays "My hero! My king" (Shaw, 1913, p. 35)! Raina, in his eyes, is a perfect human being without weaknesses. His love of her is highly romantic. So when he discovers the truth about her, his strong love of her is shattered.

Unlike Bluntschli who is regarded as a clever man, Sergius is considered a foolish and self-conceited person. He is not able to think out a good plan for sending the regiments. He does not understand the tactics and strategies of war. He can be easily deceived. Louka, Raina's maid, has succeeded in her flirtation with him to take him away from his higher love. She has caught his heart in her hand. In other words, Louka is cleverer than him, so she exploits his vanity to





win his heart, and by the end of the play she marries him. In spite of his foolishness, Sergius behaves in a gentlemanly way on some occasions. Though he discovers the truth about his higher love (Raina), he does not insult her. Even with Louka, when he injures her feeling, he begs her pardon and seriously tries to compensate for that injury saying: "A gentleman has no right to hurt a woman under any circumstances" (Shaw, 1913, p. 40).

In brief, Sergius is shown by Shaw as a person with a complex personality. On different occasions, Sergius behaves differently, sometimes romantically or ideally and sometimes foolishly or wisely.

d. Louka

Louka, the maidservant in Petkoff's house, is also a major character. She is beautiful, but she is self-satisfied. She does not respect Raina. She is afraid of Catherine, but with her she even dares to behave insolently. She does not like those who serve willingly.

Louka's poverty and lower class do not prevent her from thinking on marrying a rich man of a high social class. She does not confess that she is a maidservant, so she does not think as servants think. When Nicola tries to give her a part of the money he earns from Sergius and Bluntschli, she refuses and scolds him saying, "Keep your money. You were born to be a servant. I was not" (Shaw, 1913, p. 60). Therefore, she struggles to win a new social position. Obviously, Nicola knows that she is an ambitious lady. He says, "You have a great ambition in you, LOUKA. Remember: if any luck comes to you, it was I that made a woman of you" (Shaw, 1913, p. 61). Here, Shaw portrays Louka as a character who behaves according to her individuality. She is separate from others. In other words, she does not believe as other servants believe.

Louka has been betrothed to Nicola, but she sees that such marriage would not be successful because there is a wide gap between them in thinking. She believes that he is not going to be a happy husband for a happy wife. He has the soul of a servant, and she does not have the soul of a maidservant. Her prediction becomes true: Nicola remains a servant, and she succeeds in marrying Sergius. She despises him because he is good at nothing except in serving others. She believes that he would be, at once, her servant, but not her husband. When, one day, she tells him that she knows some family secrets and that she can reveal them, he declares to her: "you dont know the power such high





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people have over the like of you and me when we try to rise out of our poverty against them” (Shaw, 1993, p. 25). Here, Ganz states that “we hear the voice not of a Bulgarian servant but of an English socialist” (1983, p. 3).

Shaw shows us that Louka struggles to win Sergius’ heart, so she appears on some occasions in front of him in an attractive appearance. In order to obtain this achievement she must wear fashionable clothes and play the coquette. Moreover, she plays all the tricks she is good at in order to seduce him and arrest his attention. In fact, a person who is clean and tidy in how he/she dresses up commands better respect from others. On the contrary, a person whose appearance is unkempt will not receive the same respect from others. Obviously, Louka is physically and emotionally attractive and that is what attracts Sergius to marry her. Here, Ganz (1983) writes: “More to the point, however, is the relationship between Sergius and Louka. It is characterised by passion, jealousy, quarrelsomeness, and struggles for sexual power” (p. 102).

Louka behaves in an insolent manner with Raina, Bluntschli, Nicola, and even with Sergius as if she were not a servant. She tells Raina that Bluntschli has no affection towards his father. He receives the news of his father’s death coldly. He does not feel sorry towards his poor father. On another occasion, she tells Sergius that Raina will not marry him; instead she will marry “A man worth ten of you (Sergius). Then you can come to me; and I will refuse you. You are not good enough for me” (Shaw, 1913, p. 64).

Louka cannot be easily deceived. When she enters Raina’s chamber to tell her about the fugitive and the pursuers, she observes the revolver on the sofa and recognizes that there is something behind the curtains. She is clever and wise enough to judge human nature. She tells Sergius that if Bluntschli is going to come again to Petkoff’s house, Raina would marry him whether he likes it or does not like it. Surprisingly enough, what she has predicted becomes true.

Minor Characters

There are three minor characters in the play: Nicola, Catherine Petkoff, and Major Petkoff.

a. Nicola

One of the minor characters in the play is Nicola. He is a flat character





because there is no change at the level of his personality from the beginning of the story till the end. The author's description of Nicola is:

He is a middle-aged man of cool temperament and low but clear and keen intelligence, with the complacency of the servant who values himself on his rank in servitude, and the imperturbability of the accurate calculator who has no illusions. He wears a white Bulgarian costume: jacket with decorated border, sash, wide knickerbockers, and decorated gaiters. His head is shaved up to the crown, giving him a high Japanese forehead. His name is Nicola. (Shaw, 1913, p. 35)

Here, Shaw authoritatively interferes to directly tell the readers about Nicola, using the technique of telling.

Nicola is good at problem-solving, especially in difficulty. For example, Catherine orders him to bring the luggage of Bluntschli, and she denies giving him the order of bringing them, particularly after Major Petkoff gets angry for what he has done. Cleverly, Nicola manages the situation without putting his mistress in an awkward position. So he takes the fault for himself and requests to be excused, and goes away with the luggage, behaving as a fool taking the blame for himself. This shows his cleverness and resourcefulness.

Nicola is a wise and faithful servant. He respects his job too much, so he is satisfied to work as a servant in Petkoff's house. He knows everything important and trivial about his masters, but he does not attempt to reveal them to others. He knows his limits, so he does not try to transgress them. He is not like Louka who behaves in an insolent manner with her masters. Unlike her, his ambitions could not come above his social status. According to him, a servant should not defy his masters, and must deal with them in a respectful manner.

Nicola has a strong desire to establish a shop, and in order to obtain this desire, he needs to earn money by hook or by crook. As a result, he is ready to support his masters even if they tell lies. Nicola is a person with a businesslike mind. He cares for money more than anything else. In order to make them confide in his honesty, and give him money in return, he does not reveal the secrets to the others. He is always ready to please them even at the expense of his happiness. He knows that a lady like Louka who is strong-minded and likes fashion will not be a good wife for him. Moreover, his love for her will cost





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more money than he can afford. As a result, he encourages her to achieve her schemes, one of which is to marry Sergius.

Nicola also paves the way for Sergius to marry Louka. For example, while Nicola and Louka were talking with each other in the library, Nicola was about to scold Louka, but interrupted by Sergius' entrance, Nicola changed the topic saying to Sergius:

I was only speaking to this foolish girl about her habit of running up here to the library whenever she gets a chance, to look at the books. That's the worst of her education, sir: it gives her habits above her station. (Shaw, 1913, pp. 68-9)

In fact, Shaw tells us throughout the play that Nicola does not desire to get a place above his social strata. He is realistically eager to marry a lady from the same class. Shaw also shows us that he is practical and he devoted his life for the sake of his job.

b. Catherine Petkoff

Another minor character in the play is Catherine Petkoff, Raina's mother who has a powerful personality. She is described in the author's words as

a woman over forty, imperiously energetic, with magnificent black hair and eyes, who might be a very splendid specimen of the wife of a mountain farmer, but is determined to be a Viennese lady, and to that end wears a fashionable tea gown on all occasions. (Shaw, 1913, p. 16)

Catherine is a lady with a strong sense of fashion and tastes. She wears the latest fashions. She is proud of herself. She desires to appear in front of her husband in a tidy, attractive, and well-organized way. In the day of Petkoff's coming back home from the battlefield, Catherine is described by Shaw in the following words:

Catherine, who, having at this early hour made only a very perfunctory toilet, wears a Bulgarian apron over a once brilliant but now half worn-out red dressing gown, and a colored handkerchief tied over her thick black hair, comes from the house with Turkish slippers on her bare feet, looking astonishingly handsome and stately under all the circumstances. (Shaw, 1913, p. 38)





She is also proud of her family, her house, her husband's library, and her country. In short, she is proud of everything that makes her appear in front of others in a civilized manner. For example, she reveals to her husband the information about the electric bell in a way that is full of pride. When Petkoff says that they can shout for the servant instead using the electric bell, Catherine responds in a showy manner: "Civilized people never shout for their servants" (Shaw, 1913, p. 39).

Catherine's patriotism is revealed through her love of her country. She talks about the Bulgarian soldiers in a patriotic way. She loves her country sincerely and dedicatedly without any doubt. For example, she receives the news of the victory of her country happily and exultantly. In this connection she says to Raina:

Can't you see it, Raina: our gallant splendid Bulgarians with their swords and eyes flashing, thundering down like an avalanche and scattering the wretched Servians and their dandified Austrian officers like chaff. And you! You kept Sergius waiting a year before you would be betrothed to him. Oh, if you have a drop of Bulgarian blood in your veins, you will worship him when he comes back. (Shaw, 1913, pp. 16-17)

Catherine is a good wife for Petkoff, and her life with him is happy and pleasant. When Louka informs Catherine and Raina about the shouting in the street, Catherine stands up immediately in a businesslike manner and says, "I must see that everything is made safe downstairs" (Shaw, 1913, p. 18). On another occasion, when Bluntschli has slept at Raina's bed-chamber, she tries to wake him up, but in vain. She does so because she is afraid of the disgrace that he may bring on her daughter in particular and the family of Petkoff in general.

Catherine is a good mother because of her concern about the future of her daughter. She tries to marry her to Sergius because he is rich, handsome, and brave. To Catherine, a man having such qualities like Sergius will make her daughter happy. In fact, she loves her daughter too much. That is why she agrees to marry her to Bluntschli after she discovers that he is high in rank and wealth, and that he could make her life happier and more comfortable because this is the person her daughter loves deeply. In fact, it is the nature of parents to feel comfortable if they know that their children are also comfortable.





c. **Major Petkoff**

Major Petkoff, Raina's father, is also a minor character in the play. The author's description of him is that,

He is a cheerful, excitable, insignificant, unpolished man of about 50, naturally unambitious except when it comes to his income and his importance in local society. Just now he is greatly pleased with the military rank which the war has thrust on him as it makes him a man of consequence in his town. (Shaw, 1913, p. 37)

Major Petkoff is rough in his treatment with others. He is good at breaking the rules of a conversation. For example, he does not hesitate to cut jokes with Louka. He says: "Well: the Serbs havent run away with you, have they" (Shaw, 1913, p. 37)?

Major Petkoff does not like war, but he cannot help avoiding it especially if it is under the umbrella of patriotism. He loves to stay at home and live in peace and quietness. Obviously, Major Petkoff is seen harsh in his behavior and old-fashioned way of living. He does not like the habits of his wife who, for example, keeps on washing almost daily, which he regards as a source of illness. For example, when she complains as usual of sore throat, Petkoff says, "That comes from washing your neck every day. I've often told you so" (Shaw, 1913, p. 39). He does not reflect the parental affection toward his daughter, Raina, whom he severely humiliates in front of Sergius. In this regard, he says: a "soldier's daughter should be able to stand up without flinching to a little strong conversation" (Shaw, 1913, p. 44).

Major Petkoff knows how to indulge his wife in love, and how to pleasantly tickle her affection. In a discussion, after his return from war, with his wife who in a romantic way thinks that he is in a hurry to reach a treaty, and instead he is supposed to take over Serbia and incorporate it to Bulgaria, Major Petkoff says, "and that would have kept me too long away from you. I missed you greatly" (Shaw, 1913, p. 38). Under the emotional influence of such words upon her affection, she extends her hand across the table to affectionately squeeze his hand.

Like the other members of his family, Major Petkoff is proud of his house, his library, his social status, and his military rank. For example, he scolds his wife for spreading the washing to dry where the visitors of Petkoff's house





can see it. In this regard, he says:

Well, I'll tell you something I've learnt too. Civilized people don't hang out their washing to dry where visitors can see it; so you'd better have all that . . . put somewhere else. (Shaw, 1913, p. 39)

Major Petkoff loves his house more than any place. As soon as war stopped, he came back home quickly and eagerly to relax and to meet his wife whom he says that he missed greatly. He is also fond of his daughter, Raina. His love for Sergius grows out from his true love for Raina. Petkoff is well satisfied to marry his daughter to Sergius because of his wealth and social status. He believes that Sergius will provide her with happiness and comfort. Knowing that his daughter is no longer comfortable in her love toward Sergius, major Petkoff agrees to marry her to Bluntschli whom she truly loves.

Conclusion

Shaw's art of characterization in *Arms and the Man* constitutes the fascination of the play. The study of characters in this play, their attitudes and thoughts results in an understanding of its themes. In other words, through the feelings and behavior of characters, themes of war and marriage are made concrete. The play has great recognition and popularity because of the way characters are portrayed in. Shaw describes his characters throughout the play using both techniques: showing and telling, with great focus on the former. The play is also a drama of challenging ideas of wit, humor, irony, idealism, and realism, in which characters form its essence.

Through the investigation of the characters, we can realize that Shaw selects his characters carefully to represent different social classes and delineates them in a realistic way. Like real human beings, Shaw's characters are subject to change in their thinking and attitudes. Raina, who thinks that war brings military glory, and that marriage is the meeting of a romantic hero and a heroine, becomes a realistic girl under the influence of Bluntschli's realistic views about life. She understands herself very well after removing the romantic shield. Sergius has changed his romantic views about war after returning home from the battlefield, and sending in his resignation. Louka, who was a servant maid in the Petkoff's house, achieves her ambition and becomes Sergius' wife.

The characters of *Arms and the Man* contributed to the charm of the





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play. Sergius represents the romantic views about war and love in a snobbish and haughty style. Raina with her physical charms, flexibility, and cleverness adds an artistic taste to the play. Bluntschli with his frankness, shrewdness, and realistic outlook for life makes the content of the play new. The Petkoffs being proud of their name, library, electric bell, and house reflects their thinking that they are civilized people, and better than their neighbors. Louka with her self-confidence and perseverance has succeeded in obtaining a position above her social status, which astonishes the reader. Nicola and his ambition of running a shop, his respect for his job, and his resourcefulness give a realistic picture to the play.

To sum up, Shaw's characters are different from other writers' characters because of their realism, individualism, and sense of revolution. They revolt against the dominant social constraints in their society. For example, Raina, the rich, beautiful twenty-three-year-old Bulgarian girl, accepts the marriage of Bluntschli, the thirty-four-year-old Serbian soldier; and Major Segius, the handsome young Bulgarian officer, agrees to marry Louka, the Petkoff's attractive young female servant. Such marriages promote the existence of a new social system, which is a society without social classes or rather a classless society. Obviously, one can say that Shaw's characters are social reformers.





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