

المثالية والواقعية في رواية السلاح والرجل
لجورج برنارد شو

**Idealism and Realism in George Bernard
Shaw's *Arms and the Man***

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(1) استاذ الأدب الانجليزي المساعد- قسم اللغة الانجليزية وأدائها- كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية-
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الملخص:

بشكل عام، يعرّف جورج برنارد شو الأدب بأنه مرآة للمجتمع. ويقدم نظريته من خلال تصوير الأفكار الجيدة والسيئة لمجتمعه، إنه الكاتب المسرحي الذي ربط الرومانسية من خلال الحركة الواقعية التي بدأت في منتصف القرن التاسع عشر لتحل محل الرومانسية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى الكشف عن الحماقات الخاصة لشخصيات جورج برنارد شو في رواية السلاح والرجل، من حيث المثالية والواقعية في الحرب والحب.

كما أن هذه المسرحية هي نوع من الهجاء لحماقة تمجيد الحب والمثالية في زمن الحرب ومن خلالها يحاول برنارد شو أن يعكس حقيقة فترة زمانه ومجتمعه. وينتقد بشدة فكرة الحرب لأن عواقب وخيمة مثل إراقة الدماء والدمار والفقر وعن الحب يؤكد أنه من المهم أن يتبع المرء قلبه في الزواج وليس الحالة الاجتماعية أو المظاهر.

تستخدم الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي كما اختارت مصادر البحث من بعض الأعمال الأدبية وبعض الكتب والمقالات.

وتوصلت الدراسة الي عدة نتائج اهمها، رغبة برنارد شو في إصلاح السلوك التقليدي للمجتمع لإنقاذه من التزييف المتعمد لمفاهيم المثالية للحرب والحب وقد ظهر ذلك جليا في نهاية المسرحية أن المثالية قد تحققت وأصبحت أكثر واقعية، خاصة تلك المتعلقة بالزواج.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الواقعية، المثالية، السلوك التقليدي والهجاء.





Abstract:

Generally, George Bernard Shaw defines literature as the mirror of the society. He presents his looking-glass by portraying the good and bad ideas of his society. He is the playwright who attached the romanticism through the naturalism movement that started at the middle of the 19th century to replace romanticism. This research aims to reveal the private follies of the characters in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, in terms of their idealism and realism in war and love. This play is a satire on the foolishness of glorifying war, as well as on idealistic notions of love. Through it, Shaw tries to reflect the reality of his period of time and society. He harshly criticizes the notion of war because of its terrible consequences such as bloodshed, destruction and poverty. About love, he emphasizes that it is important to follow ones heart in marriage not social status or appearances. The methodology of the study is analytical. In conclusion, the results show that Shaw's aims to reform society's conventional behavior to rescue it from fake changing of characters idealism notions of war and love at the end of the play achieved idealism to become more realism, especially that relate to marriage.

Keywords: realism, idealism. Conventional behavior and satire.





1. Introduction

George Bernard Shaw (1856-1940) was a leading playwright and critic of the late 19th century and first half the 20th century English literature. He tried to write novels, but he failed; after penning down of his unsuccessful novels, he turned to drama. As a playwright, he made one of the most important contributions to dramatic literature in the English language, writing more than 60 plays. His plays deal with several important themes such as social problems, evils, crimes, oppression, history, war, marriage, religion, realism, idealism, authority, and women's rights. Bernard Shaw in writing plays, was very much affected by Henrik Ibsen, who pioneered modern realistic drama, meaning designed to increase awareness of some important social issues and sensitizes the audience (Siddiqui and Raza 12).

This research paper will study mainly the themes of idealism and realism in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. It will highlight the elements of idealism and realism in this play and also it will show how Bernard Shaw introduced them.

The research objectives are:

1- To examine how George Bernard Shaw expresses the theme of idealism and realism in *Arms and the Man*.

2-To find out the differences between idealism and realism in this play.





This research follows the qualitative method as realism is a way of seeing, accepting and dealing with situations as they really are.

2. Literature Review

There are very few articles talked about idealism and realism in Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* and this research will shed light on these articles. The first article is "*Arms and the Man* by Bernard Shaw Study Guide", by Jim McNabb. This article talks about the conflict in *Arms and the Man* between opposing beliefs and ideas: the romantic or idealistic notions of the war and love. The second article is "Realism in *Arms and the Man*: Comparative Study – Realism and Idealism" written by Dr. Shahzad A. Siddiqui. It states that *Arms and the Man* is a wonderful play by Bernard Shaw that reflects wonderfully the elements of realism. In this article, Shaw attacks genially the romantic notions of war and love. The third article is "Realism and Idealism in George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*" written by Sushil Kumar Mishra. This article says that Shaw has generally defined literature as a mirror of life, and it presents his one-way mirror to the society to portray the good and ills of the society." The fourth article is "a comparative literary analysis of two distinguished fictions, namely: *Animal Farm* by George Orwell and *Arms and the Man*". This article is to spotlight, through a literary comparison of the forms, the major and salient differences and similarities in the portrayal of realism rather than idealism. The forms of the works, which are, compared ranges from the title, plot, and characterization to themes, style, and settings. By considering all the above mentioned articles, these articles studied only some elements of idealism and realism in Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*





but this study will investigate them comprehensively.

Idealism is the cherishing or pursuit of high or noble principles, purposes and goals. It is the tendency to represent things in an ideal form, or as they might or should be rather than as they are. Realism is a style in literature that presents things and people as they are in real life. It is opposing to romanticism or noble-mindedness. It is a way of seeing, accepting and dealing with situations as they really are, without being influenced by emotions or hopes. Idealism and realism is one of the central themes in George Bernardo Shaw's plays. It is the tendency of people to romanticize or idealize complex realities particular love, war, etc. Literary romanticism began to decline right around the time, and the play in many ways illustrates how and why romanticism historically failed. One of his plays is *Arms and the Man*, which is the research axis. In *Arms and the Man*, Shaw deals with many themes, trying to make members of an audience and readers think as much as they laugh. Indirectly, Shaw asks the audiences and readers to use their mental faculties and feelings to learn about how their assessments of certain issues are wrong debates among the characters.

Realism is a literary movement, part of the broader realism in arts that attempts to represent subject truthfully, avoiding speculative fiction. Realism in the theater was a general movement that began in 19th century Theater, around 1807s, and still presenting through much of the 20th century. Realism artists and writers strove for detailed, realistic and factual description. They tried to represent events and social situations as they actually are, without idealization. This kind of creative writings find credible in faithfulness fidelity





to actuality in its theatrical. Realism started as an opposing idea to idealism. According to Watt: realism “began from the position that truth can be discovered by the individual through the senses” , (I an Watt).

Idealism is the approach to literature of writing about everything in its ideal form. Realism aims to explain the actualities of any aspect of life, free from subjective prejudice, idealism, or romanticism. In other words, the ideas of realism replaced the ideas of romanticism (Idealism). It is an indirect opposition to romanticism. Realism in drama seeks to use characters from everyday life. They speak in naturalistic, authentic dialogue without verse or poetic style and acting mean to emulate human behavior in real life, meanly they act as an ordinary day scenario.

3. Analysis

This study initially illustrates a brief explanation of the plot to initiate the analysis of the theme of idealism and realism in Shaw’s *Arms and the Man* which clarifies the ways to represent the ideas obviously. On other hand, the plot will follow by summary about the important themes, war and love, to investigate the analysis of idealism and realism through war and love.

The play set in Bulgaria during the brief Bulgarian-Serbian war in the 1880s. It starts with the young romantic Raina Petkoff and her mother Catherine talking enthusiastically about a successful cavalry charge done by the handsome and heroic, Sergius, whom is Raina’s fiancé. Their young servant Louka comes in and tells them that there will be fighting in the streets soon, so they should lock all windows. Raina’s windows do not lock, suddenly





after the gunshots start that night, she notices a man climb onto her balcony and into her room. He is a Swiss soldier fighting for Serbia. However, he fights for the enemy and is not in the least heroic, he fears for his life, and carries chocolates instead of ammunition. He angers her when he tells her that the man who led the cavalry charge against them only succeeded by luck. Raina nevertheless agrees to stay the man safe, saying that her family is one among the most powerful and wealthy in Bulgaria, which his safety will be ensured as their guest. Raina goes to get her mother. When she returned with her mother, they saw him fallen asleep on Raina's bed. In the next act, the war ended. Major Petkoff (Raina's father) arrives home, Raina immediately met Sergius with idealistic words (my king, my hero). They communicate fondly to one another approximately how their beyond compare romance is. However, when Raina goes inside, Sergius holds Louka (Raina's servant) his arms, clearly lusting after her. Louka believes that he is taking advantage of her because she is a servant. Then, the man of chocolate cream announcing himself as Captain Bluntschli arrives, to return a coat he loaned the morning after he rested at the house. Catherine tries to sustenance him from continuance seen, on the other hand considerable Petkoff distinguishes him, and invites him inside to help with some of the last remaining military orders. In the final act, in the library, Raina eventually admits that she falls in love with Captain Bluntschli, who is at first hesitant, believing her to be much younger than she is. But when he contemplates on the reality of her age, he asserts his affectionateness for her. The play ends happily, with contemporary couple.

The interactions of characters are particularly involuntary by romanti-





cist love, or deprivation lack of it. Social conventions of love during Shaw's period included public and formal courting, parental approval, and consideration of social status and wealth of each partner. On the other hand, the characters in this play stand up to the averages and each borderline up with an individual that is beyond compare suited to them. Characters slowly disabuse themselves of the capabilities of romantic love they have maximum loved all their lives, and recognize that it's far a long way greater complex. Raina does break through to appreciation Sergius in the commencement of the actions, on the other hand when she subsides infatuated with Blunsthcli; she realizes her love for Sergius was superficial. By contrast, Louka, though intermeshed to her individual domestic servant Nicola, does not break through to sustain ever been in appreciation with him, and make evident that she is enthusiastic to elbow grease burdensome to become man and wife into a higher rank.

Romantic appreciation does not stand in to be a crucial in her decisions. The commencements of Louka's communication with Sergius are illicit, and stand up to collective averages of courtship. Bluntschli's launching to Raina is furthermore unconventional, as they accommodate surreptitiously in her bedroom. Moreover, when they ultimately be remodeled engaged, Bluntschli, the pragmatic and calculating soldier, surprises everyone by revealing himself a lifelong romantic. *Arms and the Man* gives several examples that can reveal how Bernard Shaw influenced by idealism and realism in this play such as: Raina thinks that there are two types of soldiers, the brave and the coward. She takes into her account her fiancé Sergius as a hero, brave and handsome from the speech of her mother about him. In addition, Raina is





beautiful so, the brave man must wed the beautiful girl according to Bulgarian tradition at that time. "My hero! My hero!" (Shaw 21) according to these lines, Bluntschli confirms Raina's suspicion of the bravery of Sergius. He illustrates the heroism in this battle. It is not fought on equal terms, and it has been won by mistake especially when the Serbs have the wrong ammunition and have not been able to fire their machine guns. Also when she is looking at her fiancé's portrait and says "the bravest of the Brave" (Shaw 30). Raina is a romantic girl. She pretends the idealism of love. She dreams that Sergius is her knight who fights the world for the sake of her. News comes that there has been a battle as Catherine says:

"A great battle at Slivanitza! A victory! And it was won by Sergius" (Shaw 18).

Catherine, Raina's mother, praises Sergius and his cavalry charge. Catherine continues to talk and ask Raina a rhetorical question with strong enthusiasm. She represents Sergius as a hero. He is idealist in her description. Catherine says: "You can't guess how splendid it is. A cavalry charge- Think of that! He defied our Russian commandments-Acted without orders- Led a charge on his own responsibility-headed it himself. He was the first man to sweep through their guns." (Shaw 18).

Raina feels hesitance and anxiety about the Sergius heroism or patriotism. She is in doubt and suspicion about that. She thinks their patriotism and heroic ideas are just dreams. She says to her mother: Raina: "It proves that all our ideas were real after all. Catherine says our ideas real! What do you





mean? `Raina: our ideas of what Sergius would do. Our patriotism. Our heroic ideals. I sometimes used to doubt whether they were anything but dreams” (Shaw 19).

Raina has a true idealism in her ideas. In contrary, her fiancé Sergius has somehow different ideas around the realism and idealism.

Shaw is smart to show us a reversed image of the battle reported first by Catherine. He illustrates the cavalry charge through Catherin’s view and now Bluntschli will illustrate him. Bluntschli tells the truth when he reveals exactly what happened in the battlefield when he says: “well, it’s a funny sight. It’s like slinging a handful of peas against window pone: first one comes: then two or three close behind him, and then all the rest in a lump” (Shaw 29). They have not able to fire their machine guns. Sergius won the engagement. As he says: “I won the battle the wrong way when our worth Russian generates was losing it the right way. In short, I upset their plans and wounded their self-esteem” (Shaw 45). He shows off himself in a foolish and wrong way. He carries a false mock idea about the idealism. Therefore, many things confirm the idea that Sergius ignores the art of war, and he is not a hero as Raina thinks. In contrary, there is a realistic man who reverses the ideals of the 19th century. Bluntschli supplies himself with chocolate, which means food. Instead of bullets. The chocolate is the symbol of surviving. He sees war as cruel when he saw his friend “burnt alive” (Shaw 84). He easily feels a sleep because he has not had two hours undisturbed sleep since he joined, and he has not closed his eyes for forty eight hours. He illustrates war is not an exciting sport, but dull and dull of merciless actions of killing people, so





the war is awful.

Raina imagines that “Sergius is just as splendid and noble.” (Shaw 19) as he looks because Raina is a romantic character, her ideals concepts illusioned her that her fiancé Sergius is handsome and noble, while in reality it is wrong. This quotation shows how Raina was deceived by her romantic ideas. When she says: “all of them believe me. It is our duty to live” (Shaw 23). This statement confirms that all humans seek to live more time and fear of death. Shaw’s purpose of it to show the fact of life that nobody wants to die even soldiers, despite they go to battle, they do not waste their lives, in reality they try to preserve their life and to be elsewhere from annihilation. “Nine soldiers out of ten are born fools” (Shaw 25). This quote shows Raina’s and her mother romantic ideas are pushing them to describe Sergius as noble and heroic. However, Bluntschli describes the real heroism is not of Sergius but of Raina’s when she saves his life.

Bernard Shaw aimed through this play to deliver a message that killing people are not heroic, absolutely the real meaning of heroism is to save people’s life. “I suppose soldiering to be a trade likes any other trade” (Shaw 47). Shaw shows the reality of war by this statement of Petkoff saying that war it is like business trade, commercial and moneymaking “Whatever clay I’m made of, you’re made of the same” (Shaw 55). Shaw reveals the reality that all human are equal because they all made of the same clay (flesh and blood). These quotation satires the ideals of Petkoff’s family by having a library. Each member of it speaks proudly about their library that the only one housed in home in all of Bulgarian. However, the act three discloses that this library is





just a sitting room with a single bookshelf. Petkoff's romantic ideas of wealth and nobility make them feel superior and consistently ridiculous. "I've no ammunition in the battle? I always carry chocolate instead" (Shaw 27). This statement shows the changes of many Raina's and audience concepts of war.

Bluntschli reveals the reality of soldiers as humans, that they do not care of carrying ammunition to win the battle, but instead they carry supply to survive their lives from death that caused by starvation. Therefore, Bluntschli admits that he always carries chocolate instead of ammunition. As Louka says: "You have the soul of servant, Nicola" (Shaw 40). This statement shows Louka's insulting which aimed to harm Nicola, but he accepts her words without being harmed. He pleurably accepts his position in society, in contrast to the complaint of Louka about her status as a servant. Shaw's purpose here is to illustrate the reality of the strength effects of class on local society. "This hand is more accustomed to the sword than to the pen" (Shaw 65). This statement shows that most soldiers are not educated, so they use stamp rather than pen. Sergius here tries to justify such thing by saying that his hands are more accustomed to the sword than pen. "Do you like gratitude? I do not. If pity is akin to love, gratitude is akin to the other things" (Shaw 70). Shaw tries to say the real notion of love that if you love someone you will help him/her and give your efforts to make him/his happy.

In contrast, Raina's romanticism which makes her waiting for Bluntschli to thank her and be grateful to her. "Act as if you expected to have your own way, not as if expected to be ordered about" (Shaw 77) Shaw says a critical social idea through Nicolas tongue that if one wants to get what he wishes he





had to be honest, realist and believe of himself. Through this quotation, Shaw discusses two ideas, first, social position does not make a good person but a good action does. Second, it is not law which makes a good society, but good society makes a good law as law needs adherence to. "The courage to range and kill is cheap" (Shaw 79). Here, Sergius romantic ideas about war are ultimately changed to be real.

Bluntschli's actions in the play indicate that he is a realist and practical character. His reality makes him remind Sergius that a soldier should have ammunition on the battlefield. As: "If I go, I shall take a machine gun. And there shall be mistakes about the cartridges this time" (Shaw 82). He also says: "I'm a professional soldier I fight when I have it and am very glad to get out "of it when I haven't to. You're only a mature: you think fighting's an amusement" (Shaw 85). After Sergius and Bluntschli dueling, Bluntschli firmly explains to Sergius the difference between their attitudes towards fighting as his own professional attitude and Sergius romantic attitude. Initially Sergius believes that he surely will be the winner, but Bluntschli's practical thoughts lead him to try to do his best to keep both of them unharmed, that means in Sergius romance is a sign of moral weakness, but in reality Bluntschli is not coward, unwilling or unable to fight well, but he knows the destruction of fighting; however, Sergius is still ignoring the meaning of violence and its consequences.

In *Arms and the Man*, George Bernard Shaw goes deeply to talk about two movements, idealism and realism. He presents his distinction about these two movements through criticizing two main themes, love and war. The play





argues how war is made, how it is fought, and how parties for peace at the close of it. The Serbo-Bulgarian war conflict is not addressed as the straight-away in the text, although that is the verifiable templet on which Shaw pedestals his production. War conflict is merely an employment for soldiers, and insignificance more. Sergius is not the great person as he is initially seemed to be. He romanticizes war conflict to many proportions that he shows the way a gooselike guardianship against the enemy, and by oneself does so in progression to climb up mount the position for recognition. Bluntschli furthermore destroys Raina's romanticist approximation of war conflict and amorousness when authenticates that the beyond compare fighters are recurrently not identified intrinsically on the outside. For Bernard Shaw, war conflict is merely a course of action for men to take possession of occupying themselves, conceivably perhaps in redrawing inconsequential percentages of the governmental borders, patch others on the domestic front, who are predominantly women, shape many more aspects of life. Though Catherine and Raina are ostensibly dependent upon the outcome of the war, coping with Bluntshli they may be additionally lively members in a number of intrigues. In harboring an opposition and in consummation marrying him, they aggregate to the argumentation that war conflict and its divisiveness buoy is meaningless.

According to Dr. Sushil, Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* depends on contrast of characters, unexpected turns of the events, mistaken identities, surprising opinions, irony, wit and satire. *Arms and the Man* is most clearly an attack on the false ideals of war and the soldier's profession. Late nineteenth century British society, particularly the aristocratic ideas, tended to see war





as noble and soldiers as brave, courageous, fearing nothing—resolved to conquer or die. Many military melodramas of the period supported these virtues, but they were, performed for a civilian audience; soldiers themselves did not think this side, as Shaw has Bluntschli make clear. As Hussein Marwa puts it, Shaw is not opposed to war when necessary, but he does demand that it is seen for what it is war makes men tired and hungry, afraid and nervous.

George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* is a pleasing and funny assault on both. Bernard Shaw makes use of humor as a way of thought hence tending to difficult to understand his diffused satire on battle and the genteel instructions and his exploration of the romantic-realist spectrum in human disposition. These romantic beliefs make up the essence of the play's satirical times and expand the topic of realism. As Hassan Abdelkareem , states in his book " Varieties of English" , in " *Arms and The Man*" , we have the basic incident around which the play is built the dramatic opening enables Shaw to satire and make fun of the glory of war and romantic notions about love and marriage." H. Abdelkareem "Varieties of English". (19) Shaw satirizes romanticism inside *Arms and the Man* via way of means of contrasting romantic idealism and realism.

Bernard Shaw's portrayal of his characters may be a very important aspect of his writing. "He is not interested in man's eternal nature but in his changeability. In the words of Mishra in his article "Idealism and Realism in *Arms and the Man*," the earliest plays of George Bernard Shaw, "It appears to be amusing but has serous message. It shows the futility of war and deal with hypocrisies of human nature" His characters are full of contradiction imposed





on them by the environment as can be seen in *Arms and the Man* with virtually every character. Only Bluntschli's character represents the realist side that the rest of the characters have to realize in themselves at the end of the play.

Conclusion

The study finds that throughout the play an underlying battle is visible among romanticism and realism inside the characters. The men who come into Raina's existence are representations of this battle. Sergius depicts the passionate, impulsive, and romantic battle hero, and Bluntschli characterizes the practical, realist and strong-minded expert soldier. This play illustrates the conflict between idealism and realism. The romantic ideal of war as glorious opportunity for a man to display courage and honor". This play skillfully, depicted this conflict between idealism and realism.

Finally, the study concluded through declaring that romantic idealism as opposed to realism in Shaw's *Arms and the Man*. Shaw makes use of them as a satire of glorifying conflict in addition to idealistic notions of love. These issues come out to endow the two contrasting ideas—realism and idealism, in which the concept of the realist trumps over the idealist.

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