

ARMS  
AND  
THE MAN

A PLEASANT PLAY

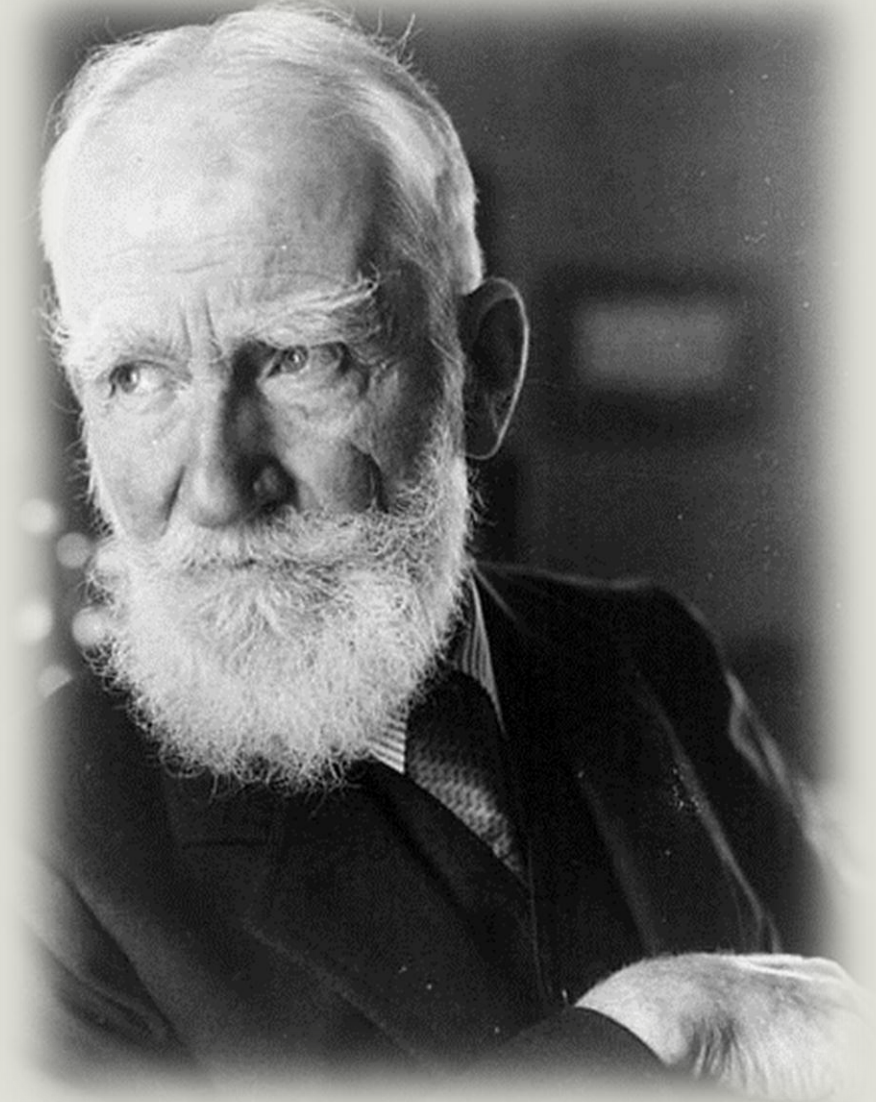
By  
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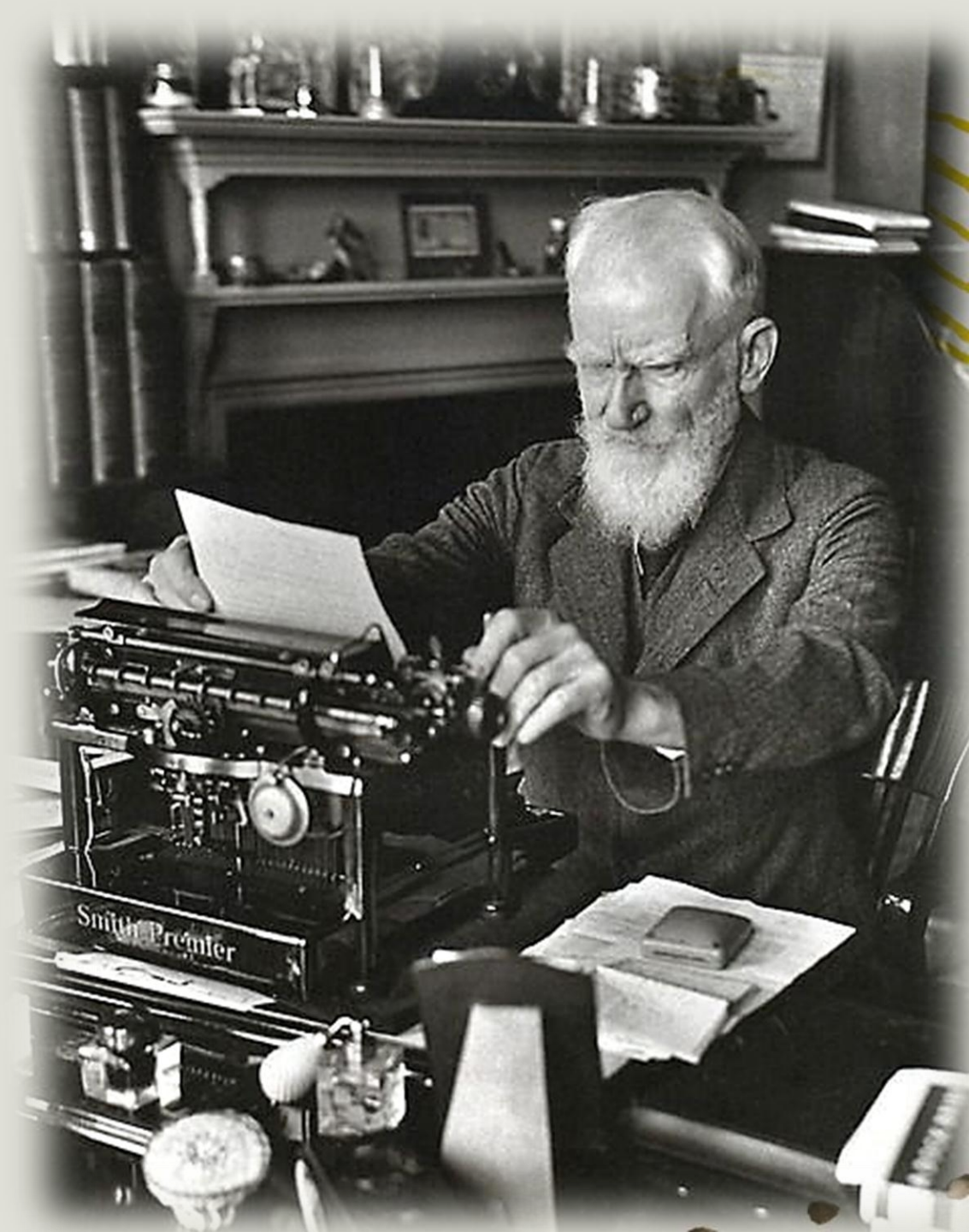
## *George Bernard Shaw's early life*

Born in Dublin, he was in his own words, "The fruit of an unsuitable marriage between two quite amiable people who finally separated in the friendliest fashion." His mother, an aspiring singer, went to London to pursue her musical career; Shaw followed five years later, in 1876. In London, he began his literary career by attempting to write novels and music criticism.



## *The 1880s*

“The 1880s were the decade in which Shaw found himself personally and professionally”. During this period, he became a socialist, a journalist, an orator, a critic of the arts, Shaw also became a political activist and a leading member of the Fabian society. Fabian Society, a socialist organization that had committed itself to gradual reform rather than revolution, preferring to use the power of local government and trade unionism to transform society. George Bernard Shaw, Graham Walls, Sidney Webb, Sydney Olivier and Annie Besant.



## *Shaw's main point of view*

 Socialist= socialism as the answer to societies problems.

Shaw used his public personality—iconoclastic, clownish, argumentative— to advocate social ideas. He was radical in many respects. He was a vegetarian, a non-smoker, and a non-drinker. He was courageous enough to be a pacifist in World War I. He championed the reform of English spelling and punctuation. He believed in women's rights and the abolition of private property. He also believed in the Life Force and progressive evolution, driven by the power of the human.

 Realist= against idealism and romanticism.

## *De-romanticizing Love*

Arms and the Man questions highly idealized expressions of love; as David Satran points out, in the play Shaw “Sets out to challenge conventional beliefs of sacrosanct subjects, love and war foremost among them”. When Sergius returns after the battle, they greet each other rapturously:

**SERGIUS.** (hastening to her, but refraining from touching her without express permission). *Am I forgiven?*

**RAINA.** (placing her hands on his shoulder as she looks up at him with admiration and worship). *My hero! My king.*


**SERGIUS.** *My queen!* (He kisses her on the forehead with holy awe.)



## *The higher love*

The critic David Sauer says that when Raina speaks to Sergius of the higher love, she conforms to Shaw's definition of the "Womanly Woman" in the quintessence of Ibsenism. Such a woman, says Shaw, deceives herself in the idealist fashion by denying that the love which her suitor offers her has any tinge of physical attraction.





The interactions between Raina and Sergius are entirely defined by such conventions:


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

**Raina** *And you have never been absent from my thoughts for a moment` `.(Very solemnly.)*

**Sergius** *I think we two have found the higher love. When I think of you, I feel that I could never do a base deed, or think an ignoble thought` `*

**Sergius** *My lady, and my saint` `.*





Almost immediately after this exchange of sublime feelings, it is ironical that we find Sergius flirting with the servant girl Louka and trying to embrace her.

**Sergius** `` *Louka, do you know what the higher love is* ``?

**Louka** (astonished) `` *No, sir* ``.

**Sergius** `` *Very fatiguing thing to keep up for any length of time, Louka. One feels the need of some relief after it* ``.

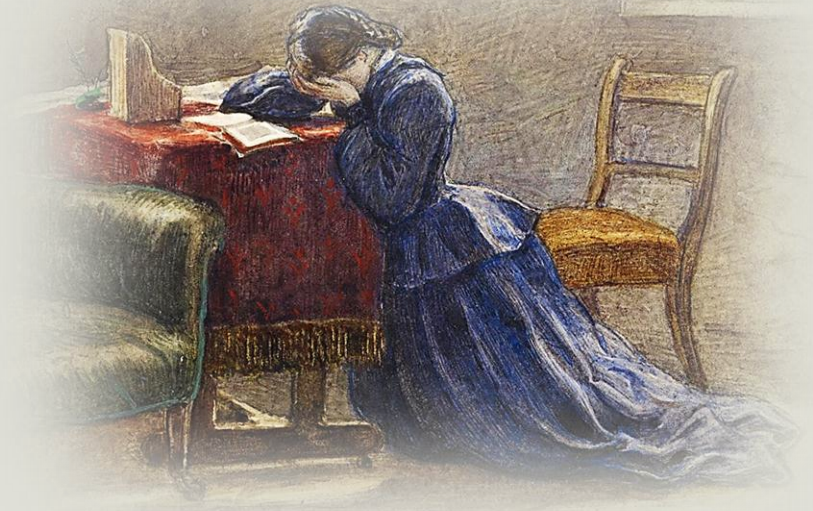


Sergius's words express his difficulty in maintaining the affected pose of 'higher love.'

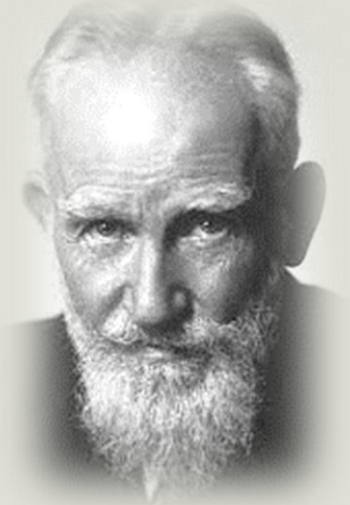


Later in the play, we find Raina, asking herself, “*Oh, what sort of god is this, that I have been worshipping?*”

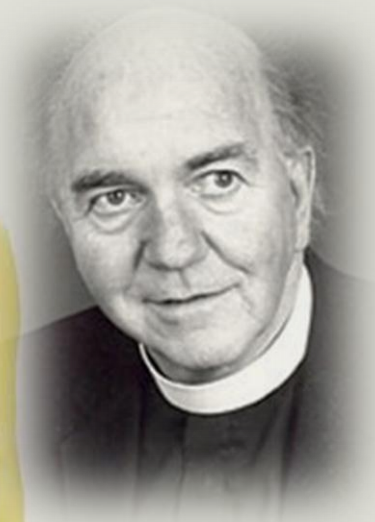
She also gets rid of her romantic illusion of ‘higher love’. She changes and grows to adopt a more mature view of love based on honest, mutual understanding. The audience grows and matures with her and learns “that love requires honesty and respect more than romance; that soldiering is an awful and deadly business;



## *Existentialistic outlook*



**Shaw**'s principal concern of existentialism, determined the true dignity and successful existence of human being, considering all the important issues referred to life.



**John Macquarrie** noted, " To gather up the whole self into a concentrated act of will is really an authentically to become oneself and to be rescued from the scattering and this dissolution of the cells in trivial concerns and in the crowds ".

This is possible by having  
Self choice and true identity.

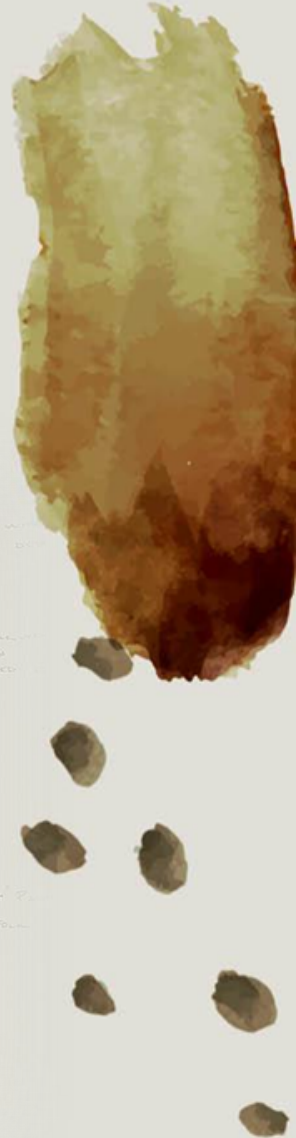
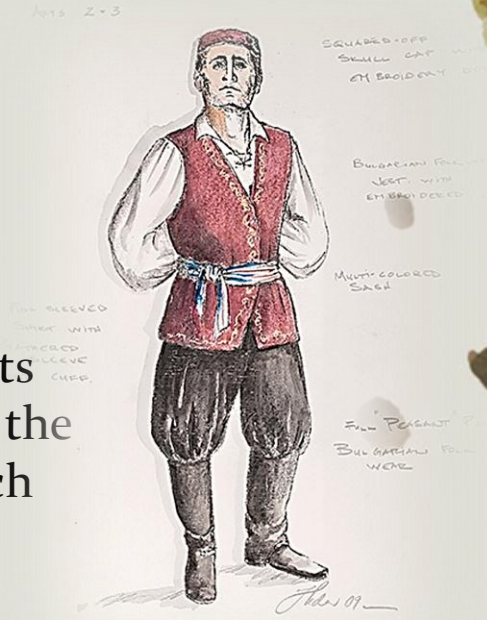
# Struggle towards Self and True Identity

**Petkoff** "Scoundrel! He's got out of hand while I was away. I'll teach him. Infernal blackguard! The sack next Saturday! I'll clear out the whole establishment".

**Nicola** "I'm a human being. I get tired of being servant occasionally".

## The distinction between Louka and Nicola

Although Nicola is constantly humiliated by the Petkoff family, he respects them. Since he considers his financial future to depend on their help. On the other hand, Louka has a soul above her station and keen on marrying a rich man. There is a world of difference between Nicola and Louka.



Louka is introduced as a disobedient and bold character. She undoubtedly rejects the norms and criteria of Bulgarian Society. Her behavioral courage is evident in the scenes in which she recklessly confronts Sarguis.

### Sergius



*“That shews that you are an abominable little clod of common clay, with the soul of a servant”.*

### Louka



*“But I don’t care, now I’ve found out that whatever clay I’m made of, you’re made of the same”.*



*“You ll never put the soul of a servant into me”.*  
*”You shall never be a master in mine”.*

## Revealing the real *self* of Raina

### **Bluntschli**

*“When you get into that noble attitude and speak in that thrilling voice, I admire you; but I find it impossible to believe a single word you say.”*

### **Raina**

*“I, Raina Petkoff, tell lies!”*

*“How did you find me out?”*

*“You know, I’ve always gone on like 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.”*

From the very beginning of the play, Raina is depicted as a young lady who is derived by romantic notion and fictional novels. She appears as a gentle and noble lady for her entire life. In the last act of the play, Bluntschli ultimately reveals her real *self*.

In the last act, actually *identities* get brought out and misunderstandings are resolved.

# Freedom of choice and decision

**Catherine**

*“Oh, if you have a drop of Bulgarian blood in your veins, you will worship him when he comes back”.*



Raina needed to be supported by her parents to make important decisions. Her mother Catherine, frequently motivated her to adore Sergius.

**Raina**

*“Oh, I know Sergius is your pet. I sometimes wish you could marry him instead of me. You would just suit him. You would pet him, and spoil him, and mother him to perfection”.*



SHORT AND FEMININE  
DRESS WITHOUT BEING TOO FANCY

# *Identity of Bluntschli*

Throughout the play the one who owns self-knowledge is undoubtedly Bluntschli. The reason can be related to the fact that, he is practical and anti-romantic man. Having realistic attitudes have major role in leading him to his real identity.

## ***Bluntschli***

*“I ran away twice when I was a boy. I went to the army instead of into my father’s business “.*



## *De-romanticizing war*

### **Sergius**

*“I am no longer a soldier. Soldiering my dear madam, is the coward’s art of attacking mercilessly when you are strong, and keeping out harm’s away when you are weak”.*

### **Petkoff**

*“I suppose soldiering has to be a trade, like any other trade”.*

Analyzing the true concept of a notion, we need to define the reason and roots of that particular action. If no account or acceptable motive can be recognized, the action is hollow and meaningless.

Shaw questions the probable necessities and hollowness of war, he presents it as a trade in real life. He explains the significant difference between a glorious war in novels and in real life. Shaw claims, this is understandable for the soldiers who experience it.



**Raina**

*``Some soldiers I know are afraid to die``.*

**Bluntschli**

*``All of them, dear lady, all of them.  
Believe me, it is our duty to live as long  
as we can``.*

Clearly enough, it is difficult for Raina to imagine what it is like to actually be on the battlefield.



Bluntschli's way of thinking about war can be taken as a pattern of Shaw's perception of battle. Through the lens of Bluntschli, Shaw puts emphasis on the fact that war is a trade like any other profession in life. Therefore, soldiers must save their lives whenever it is needed. He believes there is no honor in dying on battlefield.

Bluntschli's unusual condition at the First act shows the intensity of pressure And stress of being in front. The reasons Like, not taking a shower or sleeping For days, not having appropriate food the constant voice of shooting and so on, Made Bluntschli nervous and drained.



In *Arms and the Man*, Shaw framed simple, sharp and spontaneous conversations to construct a pleasant platform. Using this reliable ground, each character of the play flourished unhesitatingly fronting diverse problematic situations. Contextually, both love and war had been used here as two basic courses of exam where everyone participated. By the time being, Shaw analyzed the facts of human existence confirming respectful livelihood. Furthermore, he searched the very basic prerequisite of life "The Self" no matter what designation the personality possessed or not. In order to determine true human existence, Shaw put his characters face to face towards life and reality, the traditional and unusual situations and the perception of higher and lower.

*Arms and the Man* attracted scholars from different parts of the world. A good number of scholars contributed their valuable ideas, innovative explanations and comprehensive analyses to this play. Significantly, this paper incorporated a new dimension to interpret the play from existentialistic perspective.



# Raina

A twenty year old Bulgarian girl betrothed to Sergius

A regular romantic character

Trying to seem noble and dignified in the eyes of people

Courageous enough to hide the Serb soldier and save his life

Impressed deeply by Bluntschli's outlook



## *Bluntschli*

A powerful man of 35 years old

A Swedish professional soldier

Represents anti-romantic view of war

His experience of war has taught him  
not to believe in heroism

A clever man to judge human nature  
due to his instinct and experience

A man of quick understanding and  
penetrating insight



# *Sergius*

Tall , handsome and wealthy soldier  
Seemingly in love with Raina  
Mixture of different personalities  
Living in an unreal world the same as Raina  
Despite Raina` s opinion about him, He is an undignified  
Winning the fight accidentally  
Being in an artificial love with Raina, regarding as a higher love  
Betrays Raina and falling in love with Louka



## Symbols

### *Petkoff's Coat*

The coat is a symbol of the various instances of deception around the characters of the play.

● Raina left an inscribed picture of herself in its pocket.

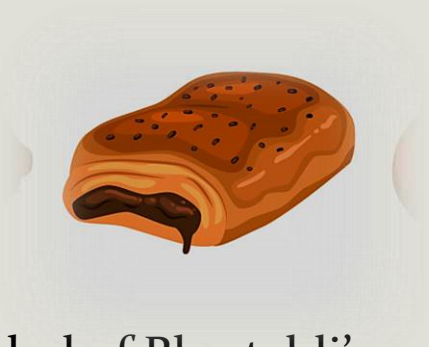
● She loves Bluntschli despite being engaged to Sergius.

● The coat hides Raina's love for Bluntchli.

● This love is only revealed once Raina's photograph is removed from the coat.



## *Chocolate Creams*



Chocolate Creams are a symbol of Bluntchli's pragmatism and disdain for romanticism

Symbol of youthfulness

Maturity and knowledge

“Chocolate Cream Soldier”



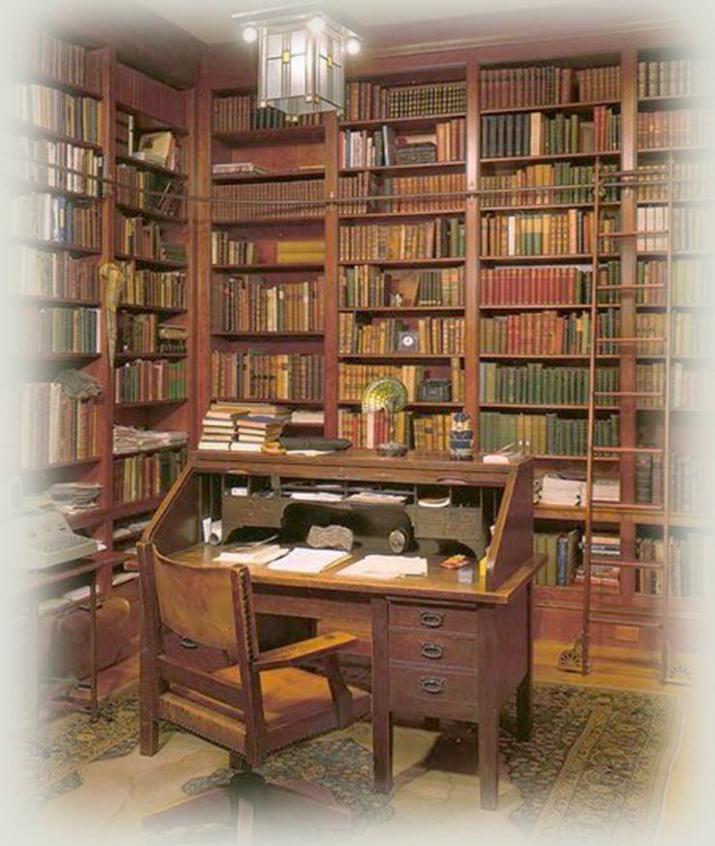
## *The Library*

For the Petkoffs the library is a sign of cultivation, wealth and status in the family which they perceive as rare among Bulgarians

Their library is the only one in the area

The library symbolizes both the Petkoff's preoccupation with what they see as fine taste, and the reality of the family that falls far short of this ideal

It ironically symbolizes the lack of better learning, critical thinking and cultural awareness



## *Sergius's Portrait*

Stands in a position of honor in Raina's room

She venerates the appearance of the portrait  
not the actual man it represents

Raina feels that she should love her venerated  
war hero, Sergius, as a woman of social  
standing

Her love is nothing more than a performance  
of how she thinks love should appear





## The title of the play

*Arms and The Man*

## CLASS DISTINCTION / SOCIAL POSITIONS



nobility

tea gown

library

opera



## Servants' dialogues

Nicola's soul of a servant

the power of rich


dare to marry

## personal honesty

All major characters' external and internal conflicts revolve around the theme of **HONESTY**.

## Bravery and infidelity

From ignorance to confess and acknowledge



Leaving the boundaries of ROMANTIC, DRAMATIC  
illusions we make about life ...



Says Louka

*“Constraints is more worthy of praise”.*