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## The Chocolate Cream Soldier: Subverting the Romantic Warrior and the Economics of Pragmatism

Syeda Nowshin Anjum Hoque<sup>1\*</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

This paper examines George Bernard Shaw's use of satire in his 1894 drama *Arms and the Man*, focusing on how he satirizes and undermines the Romantic warrior myth. At the center of this indictment is the so-called "chocolate cream soldier" which indicates a character whose pragmatism and interest in self-preservation represent a stark departure from 19th-century war literature's idealized, masculine portrayal of soldiers. Not a brave, self-sacrificing hero, Shaw's soldier is a man of common sense, unheroic, and deeply skeptical of the romantic myths that are told about war and honor. In this character, Shaw offers a biting critique of the contradictions and perils embedded within conventional tales of imperial heroism. In substituting a figure who is cowardly according to social norms but intellectually honest and grounded in a sense of principle for the conventional ideal of the warrior, Shaw provides an alternative conception of masculinity. This reimagining is not just a literary effect, but a political challenge. Engaging interdisciplinary solutions, norms of masculinity, economic pragmatism, and anti-romantic theories, this paper argues that Shaw's satire reads as a critique of imperial nationalism and its socio-economic foundations. The "chocolate cream soldier" lives on to give Shaw a mouthpiece for his sardonic skepticism about war, revealing the ancient myths of honor and duty for the sentimental fig leaves they are, hiding not just wartime realities but also the depressing business as usual. Moreover, this paper situates Shaw's work within the broader intellectual context of his time and demonstrates how *Arms and the Man* itself anticipates modernist and even postmodernist doubt. Shaw's takeoff on the war hero prefigures later literary developments in a tradition of skepticism about big ideological narratives and moral certainties imposed by them. The play becomes a place of dislocation wherein the traditional binaries of valor and cowardice, idealism and realism are constantly rendered unstable. Shaw's aggressive approach leaves his characters and anyone who watches the bonus disc, "A War Movie," no choice but to grapple with the uncomfortable realities of how war, masculinity, and socio-political influence operate. Finally, this thesis posits that Shaw's satire is not primarily literary, but fundamentally political and economic. By debunking cultural myths with wit and irony, Shaw reveals the moral and financial cost of clinging to outdated heroic values. *Arms and the Man* can be seen, then, as a cross critique of literature and ideology themselves: An exploration of what heroism means in a world of material usefulness and critical manipulation.

### INTRODUCTION

A biting satire on end-of-the-century romantic ideals of war and love, George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man* is most famously conveyed in the character of the so-called chocolate cream soldier. Central to this satire is the portrayal of the "chocolate cream soldier," a man who pragmatically sees through war and self-preservation, as opposed to the high-minded, self-sacrificing warriors that typically populate 19th-century war literature. Instead of heroic virtue, Shaw's soldier is pragmatic, down-to-earth, and deeply suspicious of romanticized tales of war and heroism. Shaw uses this character to subvert the classical conception of the warrior, producing not just a critique of personal heroism, but also a statement on politics and the economy.

This work examines Shaw's critique of the Romantic myth of the warrior and how his satire exposes imperial nationalism, masculinist ideals, and their socio-economic determinants. By portraying a soldier who ridicules the traditional notions of bravery and honor, Shaw presents

another vision of what it means to be masculine; one based on practicality and intellectual integrity as opposed to outmoded heroic ideals. This appropriation is not just a literary maneuver, but also a political intervention into current discussions about the price of war, the 'use' of soldiers, and how nationalisms construct popular notions of heroism.

In reaching behind the "chocolate cream soldier," Shaw is not concerned merely with literature, but, on a political level, with criticizing that which supports the myth of the heroic warrior. With his caustic wit and ironic spin on the Superman story, Shaw exposes the moral and monetary cost of holding onto such romantic notions. The subversive position taken by the play undermines privileged categories like courage versus cowardice and idealism versus realism, placing *Arms and the Man* as an early forerunner of modernist and postmodernist skepticism with respect to ideological stories and moral certainties.

By focusing attention on the contradictory principles

<sup>1</sup> Department of English, Shahjalal University of Science & Technology, Sylhet, University of Scholars, Dhaka, Bangladesh

\* Corresponding author's email: [syedanowshin808@gmail.com](mailto:syednowshin808@gmail.com)

embedded in representations of heroic conduct and characters, both the audience and society are compelled to confront uncomfortable truths about war, masculinity, and the mechanisms that contribute to it. In this genius satire Shaw's critiques not only literature, but it also poses a core political and economic challenge to the status quo.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Shaw's Economics

George Bernard Shaw's intellectual trajectory retained substantial Marxist affinities even as he adopted Fabian tactics and later engaged with marginal utility economics in public debate and dramatic practice, and scholars have mapped this complexity in Shaw's political economy and dramatic output (Bevir, 2011). Critics trace how Shaw's economic thinking his sympathy for socialist redistribution, his interest in nationalization, and his engagement with commodity culture which shapes thematic choices across plays including *Arms and the Man* and *Major Barbara* (Dukore, 1971; Guillebaud, 1968; Satran, 1994).

Shaw's early intellectual formation shows explicit engagement with Marxist critique and with the socialist milieu that informed Fabian reformism, a foundation that critics identify as important for reading his dramatic interventions in class and economic relations (Bevir, 2011). Scholarship also stresses that Shaw was economically eclectic: he absorbed ideas from marginal utility theorists such as Jevons and used them polemically against orthodox labour value positions, which helps explain why his plays stage economic arguments in pragmatic rather than doctrinaire terms (Guillebaud, 1968). Dukore's (1971) account of Shaw's later plays and political writings locates plays' proposals for public policy and nationalization within Shaw's sustained concern with the material ordering of society, making economic themes integral rather than incidental to Shavian drama. In overview, recent critical introductions position Shaw as a dramatist whose formal experiments and commodity sensibilities invite economic readings that combine Marxist critique with attention to market rationalities (Dukore, 2012).

### Bluntschli's Anti-Hero

This section assembles critical readings that identify Captain Bluntschli as a deliberate anti romantic figure whose behaviour and discourse instantiate Shaw's practical economic sensibility and critique of martial idealism. Scholarship reads Bluntschli's demeanor, speech, and actions as a patterned inversion of the sentimental warrior, emphasizing efficiency, paid professionalism, and survival calculation over heroic sacrifice (Dukore, 2012; Mills, 1969; Satran, 1994).

- **Practicality:** Bluntschli's refusal of bravura and insistence on "doing the job" rather than seeking glory is foregrounded in readings that label him the eponymous "Chocolate Cream Soldier," a figure of comic anti romantic realism who exposes the folly of aristocratic war rhetoric (Satran, 1994).
- **Economic Personhood:** Critics argue that

Bluntschli exemplifies a market informed subject: he is paid for professional service, calculates risk, and privileges self preservation and remuneration over suicidal honour, which critics locate in Shaw's political economy critique of warmongering elites (Dukore, 2012; Mills, 1969).

- **Anti romantic Staging:** Shaw's theatrical strategy substitutes realist comedy for epic pathos so that audience laughter reveals the theatrical repudiation of romantic valor rather than its affirmation (Mills, 1969).

Taken together, these studies interpret Bluntschli not merely as comic relief but as a dramatized thesis: heroism recast as competence and economic rationality rather than noble self annihilation (Dukore, 2012).

### Chocolate Cream as a Symbol

The play's recurring chocolate cream reference has been the subject of focused scholarship that treats edible luxury as a condensed social sign, an object that registers class, commodity circulation, and survival tactics in the play's domestic and military economy (Moore, 2009; Satran, 1994). Critics draw on histories of chocolate's transformation into a mid Victorian bourgeois commodity to read Shaw's confectionary motif as ideologically freighted rather than purely comic (Moore, 2009; Satran, 1994).

- **Commodity Identity:** Shaw's chocolate creams index the newly consumerist identity of the European bourgeoisie: sweetened, solidified chocolate becomes a marker of sanitized colonial consumption and middle class taste in the nineteenth century (Moore, 2009).
- **Survival Pragmatism:** Bluntschli's reliance on chocolate creams converts the confection into a symbol of everyday survival and exchangeable goods, small remunerative comforts that stand in for abstract heroic sacrifice (Satran, 1994).
- **Class Contrast:** The juxtaposition of Bluntschli's pragmatic snack and the aristocrats' lofty rhetoric dramatizes a materialist binary: lived, purchasable comforts versus idealized but impractical codes of honour (Moore, 2009; Satran, 1994).

These readings converge on the claim that chocolate creams operate as a miniature commodity fetish in the play, converting pleasure into ideological evidence of bourgeois materialism and the economic basis of pragmatic heroism (Moore, 2009; Satran, 1994).

### Warrior Archetype Comparison

Warrior Archetype Comparison situates Shaw's subversion of the warrior by comparing three paradigms epic or heroic, Shakespearean or tragic, and Shaw's pragmatic soldier and shows how Bluntschli systematically diverges from traditional models while inheriting theatrical echoes Shaw consciously inverts (Knox, 1983; Miola, 1987; Whitman, 1977; Zelenak, 1998). The following table, table 1 summarizes cross textual contrasts and locates Bluntschli within that field.

Shaw's Bluntschli thus functions as a theatrical opponent

to epic and tragic ideals: where classical heroes valorize self sacrifice and Shakespearean heroes dramatize moral crisis, Shaw's soldier dramatizes economic calculation and professional standards as the criteria for social usefulness (Knox, 1983; Miola, 1987; Satran, 1994). Comparative scholarship shows that Shaw deliberately signals epic intertext only to undercut it through comedy and material

detail, thereby recasting the heroic category along economic lines (Knox, 1983; Whitman, 1977).

**Redefining Heroism**

Building on Marxist and economic readings of Shaw's oeuvre, scholars argue that Arms and the Man reconceives heroism as a function of economic rationality,

**Table 1:** Comparative Analysis of Heroic Archetypes

Feature	Epic Hero (Iliad/Aeneid)	Shakespearean Tragic Hero	Bluntschli (Shaw)
Primary Motive	Glory and destiny (Knox, 1983)	Moral complexity (Miola, 1987)	Survival, pay (Satran, 1994)
Relationship to Death	Acceptance as honor (Zelenak, 1998)	Ambivalent risk (Miola, 1987)	Avoidance (Satran, 1994)
Social Function	Exemplary model (Zelenak, 1998)	Moral probe (Miola, 1987)	Exposé of practicality (Dukore, 2012; Mills, 1969)
Valuation Metric	Honor, fame	Integrity, insight	Efficiency, cost/benefit (Dukore, 2012; Satran, 1994)

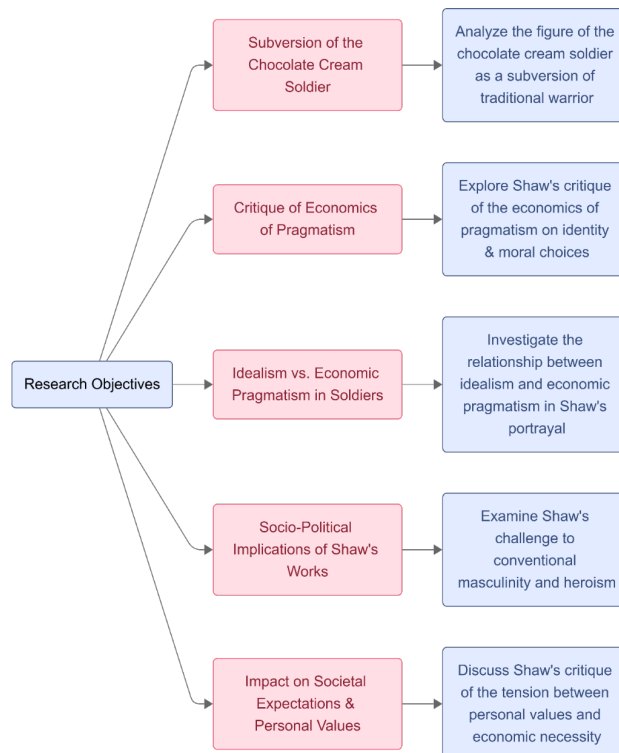
professionalism, and efficiency rather than sacrificial nobility, and that this reconception aligns with Shaw's broader critique of capitalist war making and bourgeois ideology (Bevir, 2011; Dukore, 1971, 2012; Guillebaud, 1968). Dukore's (2012) recent treatment identifies a Shavian polemic that uses anti heroic figures to question romantic militarism and to foreground pragmatic modes of social service and economic prudence as the basis for public esteem.

A critical synthesis of the literature shows converging support for the thesis that Bluntschli embodies Shaw's economic/materialist critique of romantic warfare: Bevir (2011) and Dukore (1971) supply the intellectual

and political genealogy that makes an economic reading plausible, while Guillebaud (1968) documents Shaw's engagement with marginalist economics that helps explain the playwright's privileging of cost effective rationality in character construction. Satran (1994) and Moore (2009) provide close symbolic and cultural analyses that connect Bluntschli's chocolate creams to commodity culture and bourgeois survivals.

**Research objectives**

The overall research objectives have been portrayed through Figure 1. In this Figure 1, all the criteria and sub-criteria have been summarized with better visual.

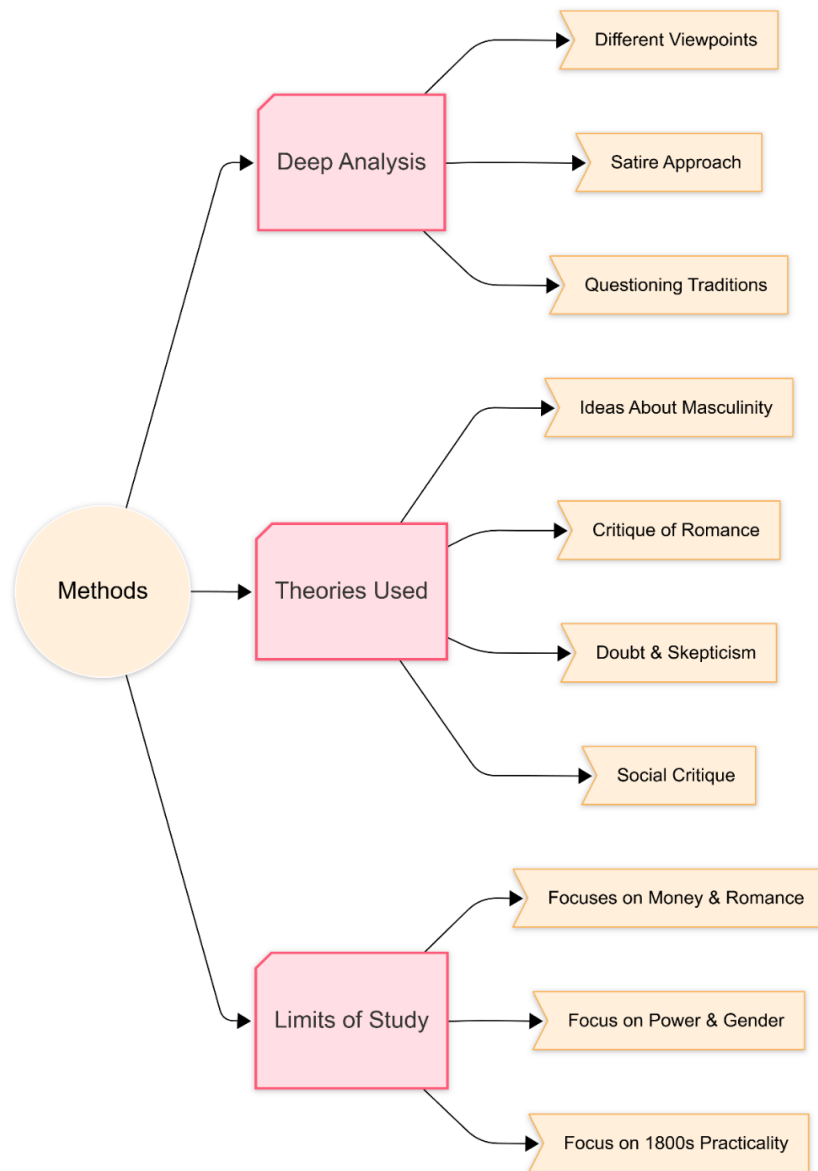


**Figure 1:** The overall research objective diagram.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

In the research methodology section, the overall flowchart has been described in figure 1 where the different types

of analysis, theories and limitations have been established with graphical interface.



**Figure 2:** The flow chart of research methodology.

**Materialist Hermeneutics and Deconstructive Satire**

Adapting a materialist hermeneutic, this research re-reads George Bernard Shaw’s *Arms and the Man* as an emergent site of ideological disarticulation. Going beyond aesthetic or formalist approaches, the approach draws on Critical Satiric Analysis to investigate how Shaw’s dramatic irony operates as a deconstructing device against the Romantic warrior myth. Instead of empty humour, satire is reimagined as a “corrective lens” that fuses contradictions long latent in Victorian chivalry’s superstructural illusions into the base materialism of modern professional warfare. This strategy emphasizes the dialectical tension between what the abstract alliterates as “imperial nationalism” and “the depressing business as usual of making ends meet economically.”

**Interdisciplinary Theoretical Triangulation**

To maintain analytical depth and academic robustness, this work draws on an empirically balanced theory that triangulates across five different critical (overlapping) traditions. The steps have been derived the following sections.

**The Anti-Heroic Turn and Critical Masculinity Studies**

They look to this lens in order to read Shaw’s “alternative conception of masculinity.” This essay compares the performative, ego-driven heroism of Sergius with Bluntschli’s “intellectual honesty” and examines Shaw’s stripping down of manliness from its association with martial aggression. That way of working attends to the “unheroic” features—pragmatism, vulnerability, and

domesticity—as radical redefinitions in male identity within a late-Victorian frame.

### **Marxian Political Economy and Commodity Fetishism**

After the abstract's statement that Shaw's criticism is "at bottom political and economic," the essay employs the concept of Commodity Fetishism. It examines how the soldier, and by extension the chocolate cream he consumes, is stripped of any value as human material, reduced to an emblem of imperial consumption. Why has an entire generation continued to supply lost generations, our sons and daughters, with much prefabrication of their loves: those Hitlerian keepsakes of uniform? That means investigating the value of military medals in contradiction to the use-value of staying alive.

### **Anti-Romantic Literary Theory**

The scholarship concerning literary anti-romanticism informs the investigation into the distortion of the Miles Gloriosus figure. Utilizing this theory, the approach interprets Shaw's satire as an intervention in 19th-century "grand narratives" of war, articulated as an antithetical heroism through teleological means with a materialist emphasis on logistics and professional work.

### **Modernist and Postmodernist Skepticism**

A diachronic method is used to anchor the play in its production as a forerunner to the 20th-century "doubt of moral certainties." This study shows how Shaw's "takeoff on the war hero" just precedes postmodernist attacks upon binary oppositions of all kinds, most importantly for this investigation, valor versus cowardice and idealism over against realism, which characterized Victorian sensibilities.

### **Fabian Socialist Critique**

In light of Shaw's own intellectual evolution, that method includes Fabian attitudes towards nationalization and social efficiency. This triangulation point permits the study to view Bluntschli's professional "competence" not just as a nodal trait, but also as a dramatic proposal that modern social and military service be organized in "a more rational way," which is unromantic.

### **The data corpus and analytical procedure**

As the primary object of analysis, serve Shaw's 1894 play, *Arms and the Man*. To corroborate its findings, the article provides comparative evidence from *Man and Superman* and *The Doctor's Dilemma*. The process of the research is based on a strict five-step protocol:

### **Micro-level Analysis (Linguistic Ruptures)**

A complete analysis of dialogue and stage directions is conducted to uncover "linguistic ruptures" - moments in which rhetorical love is pulled up short by material exigencies. For example, it follows how frequently the language of "honor" is superseded by the language

of "hunger," "fatigue," or the "cost" that indicates the incursion of an economic base into a romantic superstructure.

### **Comparative Level Semiotic and Symbolic Mapping**

This stage involves following the recurring motif of "sweet stuff" and "luxuries" (such as chocolate creams) as class identification factors. In this mapping of the edible symbol, we get a feel for how something like [End Page 317] material use is at issue here: How Shaw is using foodstuffs to keep the play tethered to this "material usefulness," so that it serves as a contrastive touchstone between both the antisepticism of European bourgeoisie and merciless calculus at work in a killing field.

### **Macro-level Analysis of Ideological Deconstruction**

The approach considers organic "dislocation" throughout the play's acts by examining how Shaw artfully constructs standard romantic situations, then undercuts them with "uncomfortable realities". This practice reveals the political challenge Shaw represents to imperial nationalism and the politico-economic basis of militancy.

### **Comparative Archetypal Assessment**

The analysis is modeled as a cross-textual comparison of the heroes and heroines of the three chosen plays. Comparing the "Pragmatic Soldier" (Bluntschli) to the "Philosophical Man" (John Tanner) and the "Materialist Artist" (Louis Dubedat), this analysis uncovers a recurring model of an 'economic personhood' that constitutes the Shavian anti-hero.

### **Methodological Scope and Limitations**

The focus of this research is then narrowly defined, limited to the conjunction between the economy and anti-romanticism. The play's generic status is acknowledged, but the argument centers on the political-economic critique. This research acknowledges that, although Shaw constitutes an alternative model of manliness, the model appears within specific 19th-century confines of instrumental use-value and critical exploitation, rather than applying current 21st-century measures to a 1894 text.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **Marxist Literary Theory and Base-Superstructure Analysis**

Marxist Literary Theory argues that literature both reflects and critiques the economic base (the material conditions of production) of a society. According to Marx, the base (the economic system) shapes the superstructure (the culture, ideology, politics, and social institutions). Shaw's play *Arms and the Man* can be interpreted through this lens, as Shaw critiques not just the romanticized idea of the warrior hero but also the social structures that support and perpetuate these myths.

In applying Marx's base-superstructure model to Shaw's

critique, one can analyze how Shaw uses the figure of the “chocolate cream soldier” to expose the contradictions between the idealized, valorous warrior and the pragmatic, self-preserving man who rejects those romantic ideals. The soldier in Shaw’s play challenges the narratives imposed by the ruling class that romanticize war and heroism as self-sacrificial and noble. Shaw’s portrayal of war heroes reveals them as commodities for imperial agendas, reinforcing the idea that class interests, rather than honor or valor, dictate the narratives surrounding war. The symbolism of chocolate in the play is an example of commodity fetishism, a Marxist concept that describes how commodities (like chocolate) are imbued with social and cultural meanings that obscure their economic origins. The character of the soldier, who enjoys the luxury of chocolate, embodies this idea: his seemingly mundane, material desires conflict with the heroic, self-sacrificing image of a soldier that is propagated in society. The commodity, like the soldier’s role, is detached from the realities of labor and exploitation.

Finally, the play’s critique of false consciousness is evident in its exploration of romantic military idealism. Shaw challenges the narrative that soldiers are heroes by showing that they are often manipulated by ideological forces, such as nationalistic and imperialist agendas, to perform duties that serve the material interests of the ruling classes. Through the character of the soldier, Shaw exposes the false consciousness that leads individuals to accept glorified representations of military service without understanding the true nature of war and its costs.

### **Economic Materialism and Historical Materialism**

Economic materialism and historical materialism focus on how material conditions shape social, political, and economic systems. Historical materialism, a concept developed by Marx, posits that society progresses through different stages, each determined by the dominant mode of production, such as feudalism, capitalism, or socialism. In Shaw’s play, the transition from feudalism to capitalism is implicitly critiqued as the characters’ attitudes toward war, honor, and military service reflect capitalist, imperialist values rather than the older, more traditional values of chivalry or nationalism.

After examining the use value (the intrinsic utility of something) and exchange value (the value something holds in the marketplace), Shaw reveals the economic forces at play behind the construction of military heroism. In traditional representations of soldiers, their use value is often defined by their ability to perform heroic deeds, while their exchange value is defined by the economic and social benefits their military service provides to the state. Shaw critiques this duality by portraying a soldier whose true value is seen not in his heroic image, but in his materialist outlook and self-preservation instincts. The labor theory of value can also be applied to the military service in *Arms and the Man*. Marx argued that the value of any commodity is determined by the amount of labor

needed to produce it. Shaw applies this theory to military service by exposing how soldiers, much like workers in a capitalist system, are exploited for their labor (i.e., their participation in war) for the benefit of those in power. The soldier’s true value, in this view, is not the glorified heroic image but the labor he provides to the imperial system.

### **Archetype Theory and Mythological Criticism**

Archetype Theory, especially in the context of Jungian analysis, offers a deeper psychological understanding of Shaw’s characters. Jungian psychology explores how universal archetypes, like the warrior archetype, shape human behavior and culture. In *Arms and the Man*, the soldier can be seen as a subversion of the typical warrior archetype. Instead of embodying valor, strength, and honor, the soldier in Shaw’s play represents pragmatism and self-preservation. His journey is not about triumphing in battle but questioning the societal myths surrounding heroism and military honor.

Shaw also plays with Campbell’s monomyth structure, the idea that heroes go through a standard series of stages, including a call to adventure, trials, and transformation. However, Shaw subverts this structure by presenting a soldier who rejects the call to adventure and challenges the notion of personal transformation through warfare. This subversion aligns with Shaw’s broader critique of romanticized ideals of heroism. Instead of following the monomyth, Shaw’s characters expose the flaws and contradictions of traditional heroic narratives.

The trickster archetype also plays a key role in Shaw’s critique. The trickster subverts social norms and disrupts established values. In Shaw’s play, the soldier can be seen as a trickster figure, he defies the traditional notion of the soldier as a heroic, noble figure, instead adopting a more cynical and pragmatic view of war. This anti-heroic mode destabilizes the binary opposition between valor and cowardice, forcing the audience to reconsider their own understanding of heroism and valor in relation to the realities of war.

### **Synthesis: Dialectical Materialism and Literary Form**

In this section, dialectical materialism is used to analyze the tensions between opposing social and ideological forces in *Arms and the Man*. Dialectical materialism suggests that historical development occurs through the conflict of contradictions, leading to transformation and synthesis. In Shaw’s play, the thesis of the romantic warrior (the idealized image of the soldier) is confronted by the antithesis of pragmatic materialism (the soldier who values self-preservation over honor). This dialectical opposition leads to the synthesis of economic heroism, where heroism is redefined in terms of material reality and practical survival rather than romantic ideals.

This dialectical framework helps integrate the literary form of the play (its structure, character development, and themes) with its social critique. Shaw’s characters

are not simply individuals caught in personal conflicts but symbols of broader ideological struggles. The play's subversion of traditional binaries (such as valor and cowardice, idealism and realism) challenges the audience to reconsider their understanding of heroism and its relationship to economic and social forces.

### Methodological Integration

The methodological integration of Marxist aesthetic theory with formal literary analysis allows for a nuanced understanding of Shaw's critique. Marxist aesthetics involves not just analyzing the economic conditions reflected in the text but also examining how literature functions as both a product of and a critique of societal norms. Shaw's work, therefore, is not only a reflection of his historical context but a social critique aimed at challenging the economic and ideological structures that support outdated ideals of military heroism. By combining formal literary analysis with Marxist social critique, this framework provides a comprehensive approach to Shaw's plays.

### Theoretical Limitations and Scope

While this framework offers a robust method for analyzing Shaw's play, there are limitations. One of the challenges of applying Marxist theory is the potential for reducing complex characters and themes to mere reflections of economic forces. Shaw's plays, rich in their engagement with psychological, cultural, and historical dimensions, resist simple reduction. Furthermore, archetype theory may overlook the historical specificity of Shaw's critique by focusing too narrowly on universal patterns of myth and psychology. Finally, while Marxist analysis emphasizes class and economic factors, it may not fully address other significant aspects of Shaw's critique, such as gender, race, or the individual's personal psychology.

### Discussions

In George Bernard Shaw's *Arms and the Man*, the figure of the "chocolate cream soldier" emerges as a critical subversion of the romanticized notion of the heroic soldier, challenging conventional depictions of masculinity and heroism. Shaw uses this figure, particularly embodied by the character of Bluntschli, to critique the idealism that permeates traditional literature and to explore the complex relationship between economic pragmatism and personal morality. This textual analysis will delve into how Shaw's subversion of the romantic warrior archetype in *Arms and the Man* not only challenges heroism as an ideal but also reveals the stark realities of war, class, and economic survival.

### Deconstructing Romantic Warrior Archetype

In *Arms and the Man*, George Bernard Shaw creates a satirical contrast between the idealized hero and his ineffectual opposite when he presents us with the "chocolate cream soldier" personified in Captain Bluntschli. Bluntschli is an anti-idealized model of the

strong fighter found in culture and literature during the 19th century. Where the traditional hero is defined by selflessness, dignity, and gallantry in wartime, Bluntschli's matter-of-fact approach to his own self-preservation highlights the folly of such aspirations.

Bluntschli's initial appearance in the play ensures that he can never be taken as a mere soldier. Instead of glorifying the armed pursuit of glory, Bluntschli is portrayed as a man who "runs away" from danger in the face of other valiant soldiers in related war stories of the time. His pragmatic attitude toward war, bolstering survival instincts over feats of heroism; is an implicit censure of the romanticized idealizations of warrior-heroes. When, for instance, in Act 1, Bluntschli says, "For I am a professional soldier. I am no fool, and I do not do anything foolish" (Shaw, 1894/2006, Act 1). Shaw has Bluntschli articulate the difference between romantic ideals of heroism and practical considerations for staying alive in a real war.

The iconic "chocolate cream" scene is also the symbol of Bluntschli (representing) modern man as opposed to archaic valour. As noted by Satran (1994), the chocolate represents a bourgeois luxury that counters the stark images of traditional war stories. Chocolate is not only a comfort of the bourgeoisie and a luxury of decadence for Western elites, but it also counters iconic images in traditional war stories with their stark expose of elegance and abundance. Bluntschli's embedded reference to chocolate creams in the play suggests that his line of sight is not on high principles or the emancipation of persecuted peoples, but on daily survival, immediate needs, and his unity with other commoners. His preference for "grub" over "ammunition" suggests that heroism is often a fantasy serving imperial matrices rather than the soldiers themselves. In this sense, too, heroism, as imagined by empires back home, is a fantasy that serves those dominant matrices far more than it honors them. The "chocolate cream soldier" therefore becomes a metaphor for realistic, unheroic life survivalism, as opposed to romantic idealistic heroism.

### Pragmatic Economics for the Hero: Redefining The Heroic

The Shades not only undermine the romantic myths that surround heroes but also examine the economic rationale behind these figures. Like Ion, Bluntschli is also a character who deflates the stereotype of the warrior and represents the economic truth behind military service. He is not a crusader, but an indentured fighter; like most of us, he is motivated not by principles but by money. Moreover, this economic rationality debunks more traditional varieties of soldierly selflessness, be it in service as a self-sacrificing patriot or as a noble protector of honor.

Moreover, in Bluntschli's dealings with the upper-class characters, Shaw both reveals the contradictions of honour and heroic ideals in relation to class and financial politics. When Bluntschli is asked what he does in the

army, his response is financial without any concern for nationalism or idealism: “Oh, I have to fight—nobody pays me if I do not. This statement exposes the fact that soldiers are at work, workers in a system which exploits their labour to serve the interests of the ruling class. In doing so, Shaw debunks the dehumanization that comes with war by exploring how soldiers become instruments of the state, not as honourable people in their own right, but instead for practical purposes (to be sacrificed or rewarded).

Bluntschli’s economism raises an issue not just of shifting from romance to realism, but also of why war is for the benefit of the few. Shaw contrasts the soldier’s down-to-earth, mercenary rationale with that of the others in their entourage, who are burdened by old-world concepts of honor and duty. The contradiction in these sentiments reveals how the economic interests of the ruling class of capitalist warmongers have skewed and falsified what war really is: an ostensibly glorious enterprise that amounts to a business deal satisfying imperial aims.

### Shaw’s Class and Ideology in Bluntschli

Shaw’s critique of class and imperialism is somewhat lost in Bluntschli’s character. Bluntschli’s brutal pragmatism in the face of war’s insanity is also a critique of class structures that celebrate war and soldiers as noble entities. Bluntschli, being of bourgeois origin, presents a clear contrast to the romanticized aristocratic soldiers, who are depicted as motivated by honor or duty. The class gap separating Bluntschli from the aristocrats makes it clear that this myth of heroism is one that those in power have created for themselves.

When we talk to people of other countries dreaming of repaying a blood debt with more blood, this is what we stress about heart’s truth: it is not all some hot young soldier fumbly-dances into—his wife chose him; it is worth contemplating if only so that he not be just housing for the gulls. (“[Raina] That was how I used to think.”) For example, in Shaw’s play, Raina, our heroine, falls under the spell of her heroic fiancé and gallant officer, Sergius, early on, perceiving him as the ideal man. She is carried away by the romantic military ideals he embodies. However, Bluntschli’s presence shatters this façade, exposing Sergius as merely an egomaniac and a slave to social convention, rather than possessing real courage or honor. Bluntschli’s focus on utility over heroism reveals the weakness of these values and forces Raina to reconsider her notions of manliness, battle, and honor.

Shaw’s play, therefore, is not only his own criticism of the romantic warrior but also an indictment of how those in power construct the stories we construct about heroism to support their economic and political interests. Through Bluntschli, Shaw asks the reader to question whether these ideals are worth anything at all and the social systems that uphold them.

### Deconstructing Heroism: Shaw’s Anti-Romanticism

Shaw’s anti-romantic attitude is evident in *Arms and the*

*Man*, most notably in his subversion of the hero figure. Bluntschli’s refusal to assume the typical heroic attributes of courage, selflessness, and honor is intentionally subversive on Shaw’s part – he aims to undermine the basis of the romantic military hero. Shaw does not simply portray Bluntschli as a buffoon to be laughed at or with, though; instead, he allows Bluntschli to become his voice, articulating what Shaw despised about the glorification of war and heroism.

Bluntschli’s pragmatism upsets the valor-cowardice dichotomy. In the game, that seems so cowardly; I would never do it, as it makes him look weak on a personal level, not tactical at all. The use of comedy by Shaw in this place is calculated to bring out the absurdity of heroism, not only making us laugh and then wince at our laughter, but also leading us to question what redeeming value lies in ideals that end up in human destruction. In this subversion, Shaw asks the audience to consider the actual price of war – as measured not only in human lives lost or maimed but also in the economic systems that benefit from it. Bluntschli’s unheroism thus serves as a potent means in Shaw’s hands to challenge the morality and ideology of war through portraying these “common psychological disorders” (Ahmed, 2022).

In the end, Shaw’s “chocolate cream soldier” not only mocks the romantic idealization of warriors but also connotes, on another level, that this self-contradictory ethos is perfectly ridiculous. In the guise of his character, Shaw subverts ideas of what it means to be a hero and masculine indicates an ironic interrogation into how these concepts is culturally constructed, as much to do with world finance and economic systems as they are with brute force. Bluntschli’s practical nature and refusal to conform to conventional expectations have subversive qualities, but can also be seen as a criticism of the political order that perpetuates such myths.

### CONCLUSION

*Arms and the Man* is George Bernard Shaw’s piercing satire of the glamorized myth of war and gallantry. Using Captain Bluntschli as the “chocolate cream soldier”, Shaw critiques conventional notions of courage, male gender roles, and honour. Bluntschli embodies the practical, self-preserving soldier as opposed to the idealistic notions surrounding the heroic soldier and exposes how romantic views of military power are simply not consistent with the lived experience of war.

In utilizing Marxist economics with archetypal criticism and historical materialism, this research illustrates the ways in which Shaw criticizes the social and economic underpinnings of state-sanctioned imperial nationalism that romanticize war. Bluntschli, is a hero of a different kind: one not forged by sacrifice and glory but survival, reason, and realism. Shaw reinterprets masculinity as intelligence over empty honor and pragmatism over machismo.

In the end, *Arms and the Man* offers a literary political critique of romanticized war and imperial values. But a price is paid for these myths, which the author uncovers

through humor and irony; not least by working-class men who carry such tales on their bruised shoulders.

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