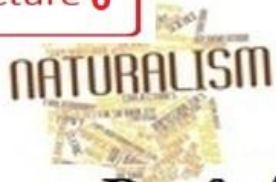


Lecture 6



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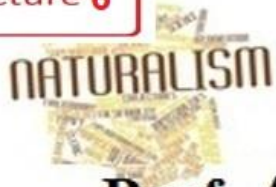
Arms and the Man: Summary & Analysis Two Episodes of Love in Act I

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- ☐ Raina's Relationship to Sergius Saranoff
- ☐ Her Love: True or Fake
-
- ☐ Her Dreams- Idealistic or Romantic
- ☐ Now read the Summary and the Analysis



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Summary and Analysis: The play opens at night in a lady's bedchamber in a small Bulgarian town in 1885, the year of the Serbo-Bulgarian war. The room is decorated in the worst possible taste, a taste reflected in the mistress' (Catherine Petkoff's) desire to seem as cultured and as Viennese as possible. But the room is furnished with only cheap bits of Viennese things; the other pieces of furniture come from the Turkish Ottoman Empire, reflecting the long occupation by the Turks of the Balkan peninsula. On the balcony, standing and staring at the romantic beauty of the night, "intensely conscious that her own youth and beauty are a part of it," is young Raina Petkoff. Just inside, conspicuously visible, is a box of chocolate creams, which will play an important part later in this act and which will ultimately become a symbol of the type of war which Shaw will satirize. (to be continued in Slide 4)





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Summary and Analysis:

Raina's mother, Catherine Petkoff, is a woman who could easily pass for a splendid specimen of the wife of a mountain fanner, but is determined to be a Viennese lady. As the play begins, Catherine is excited over the news that the Bulgarian forces have just won a splendid battle at Slivnitsa against the Serbians, and the "hero of the hour, the idol of the regiment" who led them to victory is Raina's fiancé, Sergius Saranoff. She describes how Sergius boldly led a cavalry charge into the midst of the Serbs, scattering them in all directions. Raina wonders if such a popular hero will care any longer for her little affections, but she is nonetheless delighted about the news. She wonders if heroes such as Sergius esteem such heroic ideas because they have read too much Byron and Pushkin. Real life, as she knows, is quite different. (cont. 6)

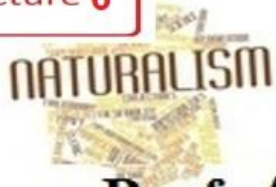


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- ☐ Summary and Analysis Below:
- ☐ Raina's Signs of Change
- ☐ The dialogue with the Strange Soldier
- ☐ The Effect of Her Mother
- ☐ Marriage of Interests & Class Privilege



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Summary and Analysis:

They are interrupted by the entry of Louka, a handsome and proud peasant girl, who announces that the Serbs have been routed and have scattered throughout the town and that some of the fugitives have been chased into the neighborhood. Thus, the doors must be secured since there might be fighting and shooting in the street below. Raina is annoyed that the fugitives must be killed, but she is immediately corrected — in war, everyone can be killed. Catherine goes below to fasten up the doors, and Louka shows Raina how to fasten the shutters if there is any shooting and then leaves to help bolt the rest of the house. (cont., 7)



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Summary and Analysis:

Left alone, Raina picks up her fiancé's picture, raises it above her head like a priestess worshipping it, and calls the portrait her "soul's hero." As she prepares for bed, shots are suddenly heard in the distance and then some more shots are heard; these are much nearer. She scrambles out of bed, rapidly blows out the candles, and immediately darts back into bed. She hears more shots, and then she hears someone tampering with the shutters from outside; there is a glimmer of light, and then someone strikes a match and warns her not to try to run away. Raina is told to light a candle, and after she does so, she is able to see a man in a Serbian's officer's uniform; he is completely bespattered with mud and blood, and he warns her that if it becomes necessary, he will shoot her because if he is caught, he will be killed -(cont., 9)



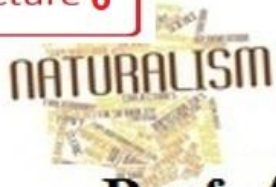


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- ❑ **Raina**: Proud, Seemingly Aristocratic
- ❑ Reads Byron & Puskin, Attends Theatre & Operas, Having a Library
- ❑ - Screams all the time
- ❑ Hides from us the episode of her photo



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Summary and Analysis:

and he has no intention of dying. When they hear a disturbance outside the house, the Serbian officer quickly snatches Raina's cloak that she is about to use to cover herself; ungentlemanlike, he keeps it, knowing that she won't want a group of army officers searching her room when she is clad in only a sheer nightgown. There is more noise downstairs, and Louka is heard at the door; she says that there is a search party downstairs, and if Raina doesn't let them in, they will break down the door. Suddenly the Serbian officer loses his courage; he tells Raina that he is done for. He will shoot the first man who breaks in and "it will not be nice." Raina impulsively changes her mind and decides to hide him behind the curtains. -(cont., 11)

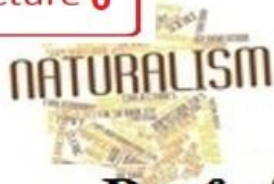


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- ❑ Louka's Relationship to Nicola
- ❑ -Signs of Rebellion
- ❑ -Not a Slave in the Soul
- ❑ -Snobish
- ❑ -Has her Own Ambitions to Change



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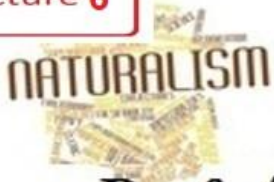


Summary and Analysis:

Catherine, Louka, and a Russian officer dressed in a Bulgarian uniform enter, and after inspecting the balcony and hearing Raina testify that no one came in, they leave. (Louka, however, notices something behind the curtain and sees the revolver lying on the ottoman; she says nothing, however.) Raina slams and locks the door after them.

When the Serbian officer emerges and offers his thanks, he explains that he is not really a Serbian officer; he is a professional soldier, a Swiss citizen, in fact, and he now wishes that he had joined with the Bulgarians rather than with the Serbs. He asks to stay a minute to collect his thoughts, and Raina agrees, deciding to sit down also, but as she sits on the ottoman, she sits on the man's pistol, and she lets out a scream. Raina now realizes what it was that Louka was staring at, and she is surprised that the others didn't notice it.¹¹(cont., 12)





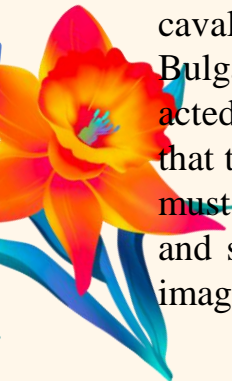
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Summary and Analysis:

She is frightened of the gun, but the soldier tells her there is no need to be — it is not loaded: he keeps chocolates rather than bullets in his cartridge holder. In fact, he wishes he had some chocolates now. In mock scorn, Raina goes to the chest of drawers and returns with a half-eaten box of chocolates, the remainder of which he immediately devours. Raina is shocked to hear him say that only foolish young soldiers or else stupid ones like those in charge of the recent attack on the Serbs at Slivnitsa carry bullets; wise and experienced soldiers carry chocolates. Then he offends her further (and still innocently, of course) by explaining how unprofessional the cavalry charge against the Serbians was, and if there had not been a stupid mistake on the part of the Serbs, the Bulgarians would have been massacred. Then the soldier says that the Bulgarian "hero," the leader of the troops, acted "like an operatic tenor . . . shouting his war-cry and charging like Don Quixote at the windmills." He says that the fellow was the laughingstock of everyone present: "Of all the fools let loose on a field of battle, that man must be the very maddest." Only a stupid mistake carried the day for him. Raina then takes the portrait of Sergius and shows it to the officer, who agrees that this was indeed the person who was "charging the windmills and imagining he was doing the finest thing." -(cont., 14)

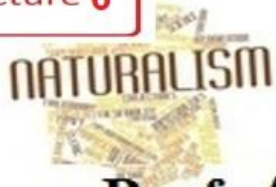


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- ❑ Louka:
- ❑ Her Frequent Threats to Debunk the Secrets of the Families She Works in their Houses.
- ❑ She Spies and Eavesdrops Ever



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Summary and Analysis:

Angry at the derogatory remarks about her "heroic" betrothed, Raina orders the stranger to leave. But he balks; he says that whereas he could climb up the balcony, he simply can't face the descent. He is so exhausted that he tells her to simply give out the alarm — he's beaten. Raina tries to spark some courage in him, but realizes that he is more prudent than daring. Raina is at a loss; she simply doesn't know what to do with him: he can't be caught in the Petkoff house, the richest house in Bulgaria and the only one to have a library and an inside staircase. She then remembers an opera by Verdi, *Ernani*, in which a fugitive throws himself on the mercy of some aristocratic people; she thinks that perhaps this might be the solution because, according to the opera, the hospitality of a nobleman is sacred and inviolable. In response, the soldier tells her that his father is a hospitable man himself; in fact, he owns six hotels in Switzerland. Then falling asleep, he kisses her hand. Raina panics. She insists that he stay awake until she can fetch her mother, but before she can get out of the room, he has crawled into her bed and is asleep in such a trance that when Raina returns with her mother, they cannot shake him awake. His fatigue is so great that Raina tells her mother: "The poor darling is worn out. Let him sleep." This comment arouses Catherine's stern reproach, and the curtain falls on the first act.(cont., 15)





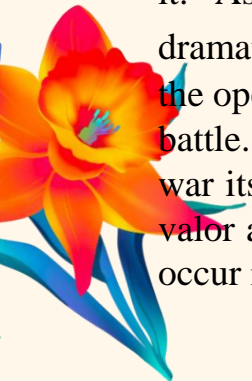
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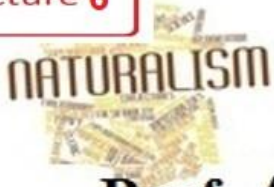
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Analysis

In reading a Shavian play, one should pay attention to Shaw's staging directions at the beginning of the act. The stage directions here call for the scenery to convey the impression of cheap Viennese pretentious aristocracy incongruously combined with good, solid Bulgarian commonplace items. Likewise, since Raina will ultimately be seen as a person who will often assume a pose for dramatic effect, the act opens with her being (in Shaw's words) "intensely conscious of the romantic beauty of the night and of the fact that her own youth and beauty are part of it." As we find out later, she even listens at doors and waits until the proper moment to make the most effective, dramatic entrance. As noted in the "Introduction" to these notes, the title of this play is ironic since it comes from the opening line of Virgil's *Aeneid* ("Of arms and the man I sing. . ."), an epic which glorifies war and the hero in battle. Shaw will use the idea of the hero (Sergius) in war (the Serbo-Bulgarian war) in order to satirize not merely war itself, but the romantic glorification of war. In addition to this goal, he will also satirize romantic notions of valor and courage, affectation and pretense, and most important, misguided idealism. The dramatic shift that will occur in the play involves two romantic idealists (Raina and Sergius) (cont., 16)





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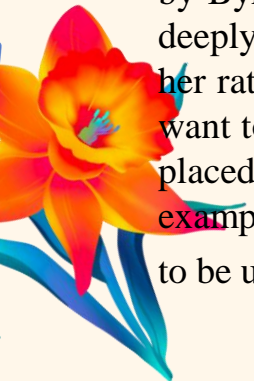
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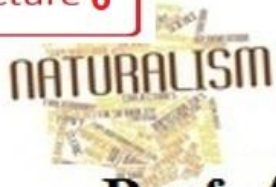


Analysis

who, rejecting their original positions instead of marrying each other, will each become engaged to a practical realist — Sergius to the practical and attractive servant, Louka, and Raina to the professional realist, Captain Bluntschli.

Raina is seen, at first, as the romantic idealist, but she is also characterized as being a fleeting realist when she wonders if her idealism and Sergius' idealism might be due simply to the fact that they have read so much poetry by Byron and other romantics. Likewise, Raina wants to glory in the noble idealism of the war, but she is also deeply troubled by its cruelty: "What glory is there in killing wretched fugitives?" In this early comment, we have her rationale for her later hiding and, thus, her saving Bluntschli's life. Before meeting Bluntschli, Raina seems to want to live according to the romantic idealism to which she and Sergius aspire. She knows that he has, in effect, placed her on too high a pedestal, but she does want to make an effort to live "up to his high standards." For example, after hearing of his heroic feats, she holds up his photo and "elevates it, like a priestess," vowing never to be unworthy of him. This vow, however, as we soon see, will not last too long. . (cont., 17)





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Analysis

Captain Bluntschli's arrival through the balcony doors is, in itself, a highly melodramatic and romantic stage entrance. In fact, almost everything about Act I is contrived — the lady's bedroom, the concealment of the fugitive behind a curtain, the threat of a bloody fight, the matter of chocolate creams, and, finally, the enemy soldier falling asleep in the lady's bed — all of this smacks of artificiality and is juxtaposed against Captain Bluntschli's realistic appraisal of war and his matter-of-fact assertion that, from a practical viewpoint, Sergius' military charge was as foolish as Don Quixote's charge on the Windmills. And actually, while Raina ridicules Captain Bluntschli for his cowardice, for his hiding behind a woman's curtains, for his inordinate fear (he has been under fire for three days and his nerves are "shot to pieces"), and for his extraordinary desire for chocolate creams, she is nevertheless attracted to him, and even though she pretends to be offended at his comments about Sergius, she is secretly happy that her fiancé is not as perfect as we were earlier led to believe that he was. (cont., 18)



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Analysis

At the end of the act, Raina returns to her artificial pretensions as she tries to impress Bluntschli with her family's aristocratic aspirations, bragging that her father chose the only house in the city with an inside stairway, and a library, and, furthermore, Raina says, she attends the opera every year in Bucharest. Ironically, it is from romantic operas that Raina derives many of her romantic ideals, and she uses one of Verdi's romantic operas as her rationale for hiding this practical Swiss professional soldier. The final irony of the act is that the professional man of war is sleeping as soundly as a baby in Raina's bed, with her hovering over him, feeling protective about him.



Thank you!

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