Bernard Shaw

Dukore, Bernard F.

Published by ELT Press

Dukore, Bernard F.
Bernard Shaw: Slaves of Duty and Tricks of the Governing Class.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/16290.
AFTER JESUS addressed the multitudes, his disciples asked why he spoke to them in parables. “Because,” came the reply, “it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” The multitudes “seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand” (Matthew 13: 10–13). Through parables, he intended to give them an understanding of what his disciples understood. Shaw too wanted his plays to speak to multitudes. He wrote his plays, both parables and others, for the most part by means of realistic characters in comically credible situations, to give the multitudes an understanding of political, social, and ethical issues on earth.

While he did not begin to employ parables or allegories only in his later years—*Back to Methuselah* comes immediately to mind as an earlier Shavian parable that aims to reveal universal truths—the first part of the title of this chapter is a notable feature of three of his seven late plays, which are very different from each other, that treat the subjects with which this book deals: *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* (1934), *Buoyant Billions* (1947), and *Farfetched Fables* (1948). The second part of this chapter’s title characterizes three others—*The Millionairess* (1934), *The Six of Calais*, and “In Good King Charles’s Golden Days” (1939)—in which Shaw dramatizes these themes far more playfully than he did earlier in his career, with the exception of *The Music-Cure*. The remaining work, *Cymbeline Refinished* (1936), a revision of the last act of Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, is *sui generis*.¹ One should of course recognize that the nouns in this chapter’s title are not mutually exclusive. *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*, an allegory about judgment day, is very playful (for example, a Pacific islander kicks an English Emigration Officer into the sea, from which he emerges unharmed and spiritually renewed) and the playfulness that is a distinctive feature of *The Six of Calais*, which is set in the fourteenth century, has a moral that is applicable to the twenty-first.

*The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*

The first scene of the Prologue to Shaw’s parable *The Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles* takes up the subject of slaves of duty. Set in the Emigration Office of a tropical port somewhere in the British Empire, it has a frustrated Emigration Officer break down in tears and whine that he is ready to drown himself in the harbor: “This climate is hell: you cant stand it unless
you drink til you see blue monkeys.” Wilks, an overworked clerk whom he bullies, explains to a visiting young woman that the Officer, like everyone else there, is under mental stress. In tears, the Officer complains, using a racial insult that is realistic language for an Englishman in the tropics during the Great Depression, that “A man’s a slave here worse than a nigger. Spied on, reported on, checked and told off til he’s afraid to have a pound note in his pocket or take a glass in his hand for fear of being had up for bribery or drinking. I’m fed up with it.”

Like Wilks, he is a slave of duty, for if he is to earn a salary he must perform the obligations of his job no matter where that job is located. In the next scene he tries to commit suicide by drowning himself, but succeeds only in getting a dunking, which becomes a symbolic baptism that is the start of a new life.

Left alone, Wilks bemoans his frustrated life. Unlike the administrator in charge of the office, Wilks does not recognize he is a slave of duty. Instead, he considers himself unlucky in not having been able to fulfill the British dream. To his mind, he is by nature a potential millionaire and empire builder like Cecil Rhodes, whereas in actuality he is a lowly white-collar worker, a clerk whose worldly possessions consist of two shirts, who has no prospects of advancement, and who wonders why he must put up with his boss’s wiping his dirty shoes on him for doing work the boss is incapable of doing. In Wilks’s view of history, Rhodes’s accomplishment was to find diamonds in his back yard. From Wilks’s school days he had the idea that the “whole world should be England and that Englishmen should govern it.” Not dreaming that this notion, a received idea, is a rough paraphrase of Rhodes’s famous contention that “the more of the world we [the English] inhabit the better it is for the human race,” which Wilks does not remember having heard or read—and an idea not dissimilar to the view of the typical Englishman expressed by Shaw’s Napoleon in *The Man of Destiny*—Wilks is convinced, “Nobody put that into my head: it came of itself.” What he found in his back yard was not diamonds but a dead cat, and there was no way he could make himself a Rhodesian millionaire and empire builder with a dead cat. Lacking the gumption to join the young woman, who invites him to do so, he excuses himself on the basis that he is indispensable to running the office. Alone, he expresses the truth with a religious slur similar to the racial slur used by his boss. He knows that “nobody neednt be in the office and that any Jew boy could do all I do here and do it better.” He puts a pistol to the back of his head and sings the first line of the refrain from James Thompson’s and Thomas Arne’s patriotic song “Rule Britannia” (1740): “Rule, Britannia! Britannia, rule the waves!” Frustrated at having been unable to measure up to the standards of a bona fide Englishman, he blows his brains out. True to his view of England, the line he sings glorifies British imperialism.
He does not live long enough to sing the second line of the refrain: “Britons never, never, never shall be slaves.” Ironically, the truth that belies the second line—that he is in fact a slave of duty—is the reality for the vast majority of his countrymen, and it makes possible what the first line enshrines. Enslaved not only by duty but also, as he does not recognize, by the bogus view of boundless rewards that are possible for every Englishman (and, we might add, every American), however lowly his station, his life ends in oblivion. As Morgan observes, this soliloquy “neatly conveys the mixture of the squalidly vulgar and naively idealistic in the imperial idea itself....”

Ironically, the man who does not recognize that he is a slave of duty succeeds in killing himself, whereas the other man, who does recognize that he is, fails to do so.

The Millionairess

As the title The Millionairess suggests, its eponymous character, playfully named Epifania Ognisanti di Parerga Fitzfassenden, is like Andrew Undershaft a member of the governing class. She belongs to “the only real aristocracy in the world: the aristocracy of money.” She excels only in making money, which she loves to do since “money is power. Money is security. Money is freedom.” Furthermore, “there is the continual pleasure of making more of it, which is quite easy if you have plenty to start with.” Whereas Shaw has the millionaire Undershaft explain how his wealth enables him to use the power of his money to exploit political and religious organizations, and dramatizes his doing the latter, Shaw does not have the millionairess Epifania articulate or do either. Instead, he has her animatedly, vigorously, and oxymoronically deride a man who insults her father—“You infinite nothingness!”—and use judo to throw him over her shoulder, onto the floor. Whereas Undershaft considered himself dangerous until he had his will, after which he became useful, beneficent, and kindly, notes Margot Peters, “Epifania remains dangerous because she has always had her will and is ignorant, in fact, that life has any other mission than its fulfillment.”

The tricks of the governing class displayed in The Millionairess consist of how to make money and how to avoid lawsuits. Shaw shows Epifania enabling the owners of a sweat shop, who are themselves poor, to become rich through bribery that permits them to bypass middlemen who sweat them just as they sweat their laborers, and to deal directly with wholesalers; and he has another character give an account of the ruthlessness and business expertise that enable Epifania to transform a dreary inn into an elegant riverside hotel. Although she admits that her millions “are in themselves an injustice,” the play deals with injustice only in passing. Instead, it light-heartedly shows a dynamic, self-confident, and intelligent woman wielding the power her physical strength and her money give her. When a character
threatens to sue her, she knows that her pockets are, or pocketbook is, deep enough to keep him in the courts long enough and often enough for her to outlast him, and she knows exactly how far she can dare to go without risk of losing. In short and in essence, *The Millionairess* is a sprightly romantic comedy, the major action of which revolves around Epifania winning a man by making money: “Her sexual aggressiveness is a reflection of her economic power. Men are objects: when she sees a man who strips well, she wants him; when he dissatisfies her, she tosses him out.”

To be sure, the Egyptian doctor who is the object of her desire during the course of the play does not strip at all, much less strip well, as her former husband did, but her acquisitive instincts and actions are at work with both men.

**The Six of Calais**

Set outside the walls of Calais, France, on 4 August 1347, which was the last day of an eleven-month siege by the British King Edward III, *The Six of Calais* takes place well before the industrial revolution, after which the governing class consisted of capitalists who controlled the nominal governments of their countries. In the mid-fourteenth century the burghers, members of the prosperous middle class, did not control their rulers. Edward III places the comedy’s title characters, six burghers of Calais—bourgeois, as Rodin translates the term in the title of his sculpture, or burgesses, as Shaw anglicizes it in his dialogue (and we may recall that Candida’s father, a businessman, is named Burgess)—under arrest and is preparing to execute them. Perhaps surprisingly, although for this playwright it may not be so surprising, Shaw makes comic capital of a situation that is literally one of life and death for these merchants, who at that period of history were subjects, not citizens. His punch line—or more accurately the play’s sidesplitting payoff—is literally a trick, this time a playful trick, of the governing monarch and is one that Shaw portrays more lightheartedly than he does in perhaps any other of his comedies.

The play’s structure consists of two parallel sequences. The first reveals the raging, vindictive, murderous king to be a henpecked husband easily manipulated by his queen; the second dramatizes how King Edward, whose wife, with sweet and loving consideration, has just nagged him into total submissiveness, uses her techniques to turn the tables on her. This ploy by the ruler, which is a trick that might be played by a member of any class, frolicksomely parodies the theme of tricks of the governing class.

When the comic play begins, Edward—whose forces failed to win Calais by fighting—has managed to starve its residents into submission. He is enraged not only because the citizens of Calais withstood his assault for almost a year, which ruined his plans and exhausted his treasury, and
because the commander of the Calais fortress had the temerity to demand terms of him, but more importantly because his queen, about whose health he is concerned since she is pregnant, arrives before he has completed his business. Self-righteously, the class-conscious ruler prides himself on not having threatened any knight and on having agreed that no nobleman would be denied mercy or ransom. His anger is directed at the merchants. He curses them as rebels, usurers, and tradesmen who are damnably proud of having made money and who—assuming the air of barons—have undutifully dared to battle their superiors, an action he considers disloyal to him, to knighthood, and even to Christendom. He has demanded that the six worst burgesses be brought before him wearing no more than their shirts and yoked with halters around their necks, so that he can hang them like dogs in sight of the people of Calais, to whom they would serve as examples of the fruits of defiance.

Before they are conveyed to him, Queen Philippa arrives. Instantly, he stops ranting and becomes solicitous of her health and the well being of their unborn child. She treats him as one who needs more pampering and fussing over than any of the eleven children she has borne him. Her first question is whether he has remembered to wear his flannel bellyband to protect him against the cold. Before he can get her out of the way he receives the announcement that six old burgesses in their shirts, with ropes around their necks, are about to arrive. Telling him not to keep the old men out in the cold for too long—an admonition that considering the condition in which he had them transported is a comic non sequitur—she enters his pavilion.

Reverting to his mode of anger, he curses the six burgesses as bloodsucking swine. Whereas five of them kneel humbly before him, one burgess—Peter, the only man without a white or grey beard—insolently returns the king’s insults as if he were a hound, with a contemptuous verbal barb that he is not of the king’s kennel, and he calls Edward III by the nickname Neddy. Impertinently, arrogantly, and needlessly to say undutifully, he identifies himself as a free citizen who takes commands from no one. Ironically, this proud burgess, who tries to draw a distinction between himself and the king, reveals that he is of the king’s kennel when he cries that if he had his way he would, as a monarch might do, have burnt the entire town—and with it every man, woman, and child—rather than surrender to this king. Edward has his men pull Peter to his knees, use his halter to tie his ankles and wrists together, fling him on his side, and, when he begins to bark at his fellow-dog, the monarch, tear a strip of linen from his shirt to silence him by gagging his mouth.
The other burgesses, who offend Edward by calling themselves free citizens, beg for mercy even while, in the words of one, “my teeth chatter: the few I have left.” Impervious to their pleas, Edward orders them to be hanged, except for the insolent Peter, for whom, in his view, hanging would be too comfortable a punishment.

Before the king’s orders can be carried out, Queen Philippa returns. Although he implores her not to meddle, she ignores him, treating the old, almost naked, and nearly frozen burgesses—whose dire condition she amusingly fails to comprehend—as invalids who should be put in their beds and asking them to join her in the pavilion, where they will be clothed and where they will partake of hot wine after the king has concluded his business with them. While Edward almost chokes with anger, Philippa assures the burgesses that her husband, whom she calls the very flower of chivalry, is incapable of vengeance. After one of the burgesses begs to differ, the king becomes even more furious that the man has dared to contradict the queen. When she starts to cry and covers her face with her hands, Edward knows that as a husband he is in trouble.

In a conventionally submissive, womanly, and wifely manner, she reminds him that although she has always been impatient, ungrateful, and a source of great trouble to him, he has been wonderful in never having refused her anything. He grouses that he is never permitted to have his own way, but he avoids assigning blame to her by using the passive voice. Ignoring his complaint, she employs endearments, insisting that he should refuse her when she asks for something important so that his rejection would teach her a lesson, but adds, in a heartbroken voice, that now she is making such a small request that she could not bear his denying her this trifle. Flattering him as a great king who holds at his disposal thousands of lives, from the noblest to the commonest, she reminds him that he once promised to bring ten kings to her feet as captives but that she never asked for them. Now, she sweetly pleads, she asks only for six old merchants, who are nothing to him, as her share of the spoils of his victory. If he were to ransom them, they would not fetch the price of a new girdle, which, she adds, he knows she needs. What he really knows is that he will not be allowed to get what he wants in this matter. Like a child deprived of a toy, he starts to cry. Throwing her arms around him, she pets him and reminds him—like the sort of womanly woman of the nineteenth-century drama that Ibsen and Shaw helped to dethrone—that she would sooner die than cause him distress. Babyishly, he blubbers that he can never do as he pleases and chides her for treating him like an infant—one recalls that moments after her initial entrance she referred to him as a bigger baby than any of her actual children—which she denies, calling him
the greatest and noblest king ever, and the person she loves more dearly than anyone else. On her knees, she complacently declares that she will say no more and ask for nothing. Accustomed to her treating him in this manner, he recognizes that the reason she will ask for nothing is that, as she is well aware, she will get everything. Resigned, he orders the yoked burgesses to be removed and sarcastically tells his men to give them food, the clothes from his back, his crown, and even his kingdom if only they will be got rid of. The five burgesses leave.

However, he has neglected Peter, whom he orders to be fetched before him. Edward, whose outburst of tears has relieved his temper, is now smiling. Through Peter, it has just occurred to him, he may have an opportunity to even the domestic score with Queen Philippa for having thwarted him with the other burgesses. True to form, she pities the poor man, whose shirt is torn. Edward informs her that Peter defied him, spat at him, and insulted him by speaking to him as if he were a servant, even to the point of addressing him by the nickname Neddy; but she feels sorry for this burgess, who is obviously cold, and orders that he be untied and the gag removed from his mouth. Once these have been done, the unrepentant Peter calls Edward henpecked; boasts of his own grand clothing, which the king has ruined, and of his social status as a master textile dealer; derides the royal couple by reprimanding Philippa for wearing the pants in the family; and tells her to leave so that he may settle his affairs with the nominal head of their household. Incensed, she vows to make him suffer for his insolence and asks if Edward will stand by and permit a haberdasher to speak to her as Peter has done. Still grinning, Edward jestingly imitates her manner in the matter of the other burgesses, telling her that he is in a merciful mood and that the shivering burgess standing before her is a figure of pity that should be forgiven his outburst. When Peter barks at Edward, the king, remarking that he too is a dog of Champagne, returns the bark, chin to chin, as if they were battling each other in a dogfight, until Philippa separates them. She swears to have Peter muzzled, but Edward pleads with her to be merciful and makes fun of her by using the arguments she used with him. As he reminds her, he has asked many favors of her, which she has granted. Getting her angrier by the moment, he begs her not to deny him this one. Calling Edward a baby and Philippa a shrew, Peter professes admiration for her, since he prefers her spunk to Edward’s sniveling. In a rage, she submits to her husband, whom she asks to have the churl taken away. Finally, the reigning monarch is so pleased that his jesting trick worked, he takes her in his arms while laughing so exuberantly that the entire camp joins him in his merriment, and he stops her arguing with a kiss.
To be sure, as previously noted, this type of domestic trick is not as such confined to a member of the governing class, even if he is the sole supreme ruler. In this play, with the consequences consisting literally of life and death, the trick is a playful parody of Undershaw’s insight.

**Cymbeline Refinished**

In *Cymbeline Refinished*, Shaw makes numerous changes to Act V of Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, but what is pertinent to our subject are passages he does not change, and these relate to the notion of duty. The Foreword to the refinished fifth act gives Shaw’s opinion that Posthumus may be a Shakespearean anticipation of an Ibsenite character, since “after being theatrically conventional to the extent of ordering his wife to be murdered, he begins to criticize, quite on the lines of Mrs Alving in Ghosts, the slavery to an inhuman ideal of marital fidelity which led him to this villainous extremity.” Consequently, Shaw leaves most of Posthumus’s lines unrevised and his monologue survives intact, including his realization that a good servant’s conscience should have priority over dutiful obedience to a superior’s orders if the orders are not just.

**“In Good King Charles’s Golden Days”**

The only trick of the king of England, as the title character of *“In Good King Charles’s Golden Days”* sportively states, is the use of his brains. Charles II knows that unless he keeps his wits about him he will meet the fate of his father, who was beheaded. His brother, the future King James II, thinks that at present “England is governed by its mob instead of by its king,” a horde that, he tells Charles, “your Protestant Republicans and Presbyterians and Levellers [a political movement during the English Civil Wars, which advocated rule by the lower classes through extension of voting rights and equality under the law] call the people of England,” a state of affairs he intends to change when he assumes the throne. Although Charles quips that “the English will not be ruled; and there is nothing they hate like brains,” he informs his brother—with a perception that recalls Undershaw’s speech to his son—that the English people have nothing to do with choosing who governs them. “The real Levellers today, Jamie,” Shaw playfully has Charles II tell his brother, although both author and character are serious, “are the lords and the rich squires—Cromwell’s sort—and the moneyed men of the city.”

Later, Charles complains that every country is bound to have, several times over, people who are capable governing it, but as no one has found a way to select them, “that is why the world is so vilely governed.” As history has demonstrated, he recognizes, noble birth is not a criterion. He himself may be capable, but since his wife herself admits that her brother, the king of
Portugal, “was dreadful. He was barely fit to be a stable boy,” she reinforces his conclusion that “Heredity is no use.” When his queen suggests that perhaps the people should choose their own king, he rejects the notion in terms reminiscent of Old Hipney in *On the Rocks*: “Not the English people. They would choose Titus Oates” (who in 1678 fabricated a Catholic conspiracy, a so-called “Popish plot,” to kill Charles II). He himself is popular, Charles quips, because he is lazy: “I enjoy myself and let the people see me doing it, and leave things as they are, though things as they are will not bear thinking of by those who know what they are.” The reason people like him for doing what he does is that “It is what they would do if they were kings.”

**Buoyant Billions**

One of the usual tricks of members of the governing class—in this respect Andrew Undershaft is an exception—is to try to persuade their sons to follow in their business, keeping and increasing their family’s wealth. In *Buoyant Billions*, this is essentially The Father’s gambit when he asks what The Son wishes to do with his life. Although there is no hope for their civilization, The Son has concluded, a person can still make money in it. The problem he has with his father’s hope for him is that he does not feel compelled to succeed in either business or a conventional profession.

The vocation he has chosen is one that has always been unsuccessful, that of world betterer, which he claims is the profession of a Shavianly idiosyncratic gaggle of examples, including Marx, Lenin, Ruskin, Plato, Gautama Buddha, Jesus, and Mahomet. To his father’s objection that whereas prophets and poets have their place they are not practical men, which is what the world needs, The Son retorts that the world does not need ambitious windbags or proletarians who regard money in terms of shillings rather than millions and think in terms no higher than trade unions. As one who aims to better the world, he is aware that he will spend most of his life hiding from the police and may wind up on the gallows. The Father dismisses such talk as romantic nonsense, for his son lives in a free country and can advocate any politics he wishes as long as he does not break the law. However, The Son wants to break the law, not simply to amend it by parliamentary means, which are too slow. Such shibboleths as liberty, peace, and democracy will not do the job; what is wanted is political reconstruction.

In The Father’s view, there is no need to take so drastic an action, for the only people who are discontented are those who are poor, which is the reason for their discontent. Since he is rich, he is content. Not so the son, who is discontented precisely because others are poor and for all he knows he and his father might one day fall into poverty. In words that still ring true, The Father tries to reassure him by explaining that thanks to the business ability
of one of his grandfathers and to a social and legal system that enables the family’s business affairs to expand, the family acquired a fortune that has grown. Under the economic system in which they live—thanks, the play later makes clear, to an income tax code that does not tax profits on the sale of stocks, a provision that is a trick of the governing class, whose members have influenced the legislature to write income tax laws which benefit them at the expense of those who are not wealthy—the rich get richer, not poorer. Naturally, The Father does not see any inducement to change the system. By contrast, The Son recognizes that nothing remains the same. Like the author of this play, he is also aware that revolutionists are always unscrupulous. He knows that although the French Revolution aimed at liberalism and parliamentarianism, it ended with the guillotine and Napoleon; and that although the Russians abolished the czarist regime, they wound up killing counter-revolutionists, after which they killed most of their fellow revolutionists—a perception that should make one pause before considering Shaw to have been permanently uncritical of the Soviet Union. According to The Son—who articulates a similar Shavian perception—there must be a superior method of improving the world. He leaves to go his own way as a world betterer. His father’s trick has not worked.

Nevertheless, he does not during the course of the play break any laws, hide from the police, or end on the gallows. Rather, this self-proclaimed world betterer becomes engaged to marry the daughter of a billionaire. Whether this means that the trick of The Son’s father will eventually work, the play—that in his preface Shaw disarmingly and perhaps insincerely calls “a trivial comedy which is the best I can do in my dotage.”—neither dramatizes nor states. What it does show, regardless of any character’s words, is that the profession the idealistic Son adopts—and which he tells his future father-in-law remains his profession—is either short lived or deferred. Perhaps the moral of the tale is that falling in love trumps a young man’s actions as a world betterer.

**Farfetched Fables**

In the first fable of Shaw’s parable *Farfetched Fables*, a newspaper announces that the United Nations has abolished war. With the United States, the Soviet Union, China (the following year, proclaimed the People’s Republic of China), and every other world government and agency in agreement, according to the headlines, the world is at last at peace. The Young Woman skeptically asks the Young Man whether armies have been eliminated, military academies closed, and military conscription abolished. He finds a paragraph reporting that in future armies will be called World Police and that conscription has been abolished. He too is skeptical—not because World
Police may be a euphemism for an umbrella organization of national armies (Shaw does not have anyone say this) but because he believes it to be in the nature of men always to fight and of women to encourage them to do so. According to the article, this truce, which the newspaper attributes to God, launches a new chapter in the history of mankind. Because the atom bomb threatens victors, vanquished, and neutral nations alike, it has made war pointless.

Still skeptical, the Young Woman asks if the Young Man believes any of this. To the contrary, he is convinced that the potential of atomic warfare for global destruction will not end war. Because both the Germans and the English, who had used poison gas during World War I, banned its use after the armistice, he points out, they did not avail themselves of it in World War II but used other weapons. Similarly, he predicts, atom bombs will not be used after World War II, but this will not prevent another war. Agreeing with him, the Young Woman supposes that someone will invent a poison gas that is lighter than air so that while it would kill those who live in a city, it would leave the buildings intact and usable after the gas rises and evaporates (in 1956, a multi-megaton, non-fissionable, so-called “clean bomb,” designed to kill people but leave buildings intact, was invented, but as it was less destructive than a “dirty bomb” it was apparently not deployed). The Young Man, who is a chemist, thinks the Young Woman has a good idea and aims to work on it.

Are the newspaper headline and story a trick of the governing class, using the press to calm down the world populace—most of which comprise the governed classes—or do they reflect the self-delusion of the governing class? Shaw does not say. However, the Second Fable validates the Young Man’s view of warfare.

By the time the Second Fable takes place, he has invented the type of poison gas imagined by the Young Woman and has offered it for sale to the British War Office. After this government agency shortsightedly turned him down, he sold his invention to a South African dictator, who drops a bomb containing this gas on the Isle of Wight in order to demonstrate to the rest of the world that it is at his mercy. Unfortunately for the inventor, not to mention the rest of the world, after he earned a great deal of money from the transaction, he chose to live in the Isle of Wight, which he considered the world’s safest civilized locale, and has been killed by what he wrought.

Since he was a middle-class man whose sole goal was to make a great deal of money, he also sold his invention to other countries. The result of his entrepreneurial initiative occurs at the end of the scene. One of these countries bombs England. As the bombs fall the English Commander-in-Chief
drowsily sings the first line of the refrain from the World War I song “Your King and Your Country Want You”—“Oh we don’t want to lose you, but we think you ought to go”—in which Englishwomen exhort Englishmen to enlist in the army, and a lord from the Foreign Office begins to sing “It’s a Long Way to Tipperary,” from the same war. Apparently, the moral of both fables is that when the profit motive is paramount and people strive to make money by dominating others, even through warfare, nothing changes. The remaining fables take place in the future, but these two, set in the then-present, immediately post-Hiroshima and Nagasaki era, depict values and attitudes of Shaw’s last years as well as the follies of the governing class, which seem to succeed in destroying the world.