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CHESTERTON'S HEROES

by

REBECCA JANE BURKE

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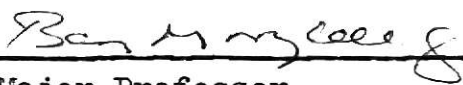
Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Manhattan, Kansas

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Approved by:


Major Professor

In glancing over a bibliography of Chesterton's writing, a reader is particularly struck by its length. From 1900 when his first book was published until 1936 when he died, Chesterton published one hundred books--"novels, biography, poetry; collections of essays, of short stories, of detective stories; books on religion, on sociology, on politics; travel books, volumes of literary criticism, a couple of plays, polemics, and a history of England."¹ Alongside this immense authorship Chesterton was a journalist, writing, among many other articles, a weekly essay column in the Illustrated London News.² Chesterton's love for discussion and argument controls not only these essays but also the remainder of his writing. Some have named him "a thinker-entertainer,"³ others a "great moral philosopher."⁴ But all agree that his intention is to teach and to persuade. He is essentially an essayist, and his fiction does not escape this didacticism. "In his fantastic novels you never for a moment leave the weekly column or the debating-hall; it is simply that the whole universe becomes a debating-hall, and the argument happens to be continued on the dome of St. Paul's or the pantomime battlefield of Notting Hill."⁵

To convey his beliefs Chesterton used the parable, as Belloc observed:

He saw that the weapon to be used against this mortal state of affairs was perpetual influence

by illustration and example upon the individual.

. . . His unique, his capital genius for illustration by parallel, by example, is his peculiar mark.

. . . Always in whatever manner he launched the parallelism, he produced the shock of illumination. He taught. He made men see what they had not seen before. He made them know. He was an architect of certitude, whenever he practised this art in which he excelled. The example of the parable in Holy Writ will at once occur to the reader. It is of the same origin and of similar value.⁶

Chesterton undoubtedly would agree with all these judgments, for he occasionally calls his novels parables--for example, The Return of Don Quixote--and he even has one character (Gabriel Gale in The Poet and the Lunatics) state that "I doubt whether any of our action is really anything but an allegory. I doubt whether any truth can be told except in a parable."⁷ This character and all other Chestertonian characters are allegorical incarnations of their author's beliefs. They embody Chesterton's consistent philosophical stance, and share similar attributes. Chesterton's heroes, however, represent his own beliefs more completely and forcefully than his other characters. And hence the similarities are particularly evident among

these eccentric protagonists.

Innocent Smith (Manalive) is a blue-eyed, blonde-haired, abnormally large man. Gabriel Gale, the poet-painter and healer of lunatics has blonde hair and "dreamy blue eyes"⁸; he is also unusually tall. The infamous pig-smuggler, Captain Hilary Pierce (Tales of the Long Bow) has long untidy yellow hair and a "roving blue eye."⁹ Adam Wayne (The Napoleon of Notting Hill) later described as a "huge figure," is the youthful Provost of Notting Hill, a "red-haired young man . . . with bold blue eyes."¹⁰ Patrick Dalroy (The Flying Inn) also has red hair, blue eyes, and large stature. Evan MacIan (The Ball and the Cross) although dark-haired, has blue eyes and is very tall, and James Turnbull, MacIan's adversary, has "fiery, red hair"¹¹ and blue-gray eyes. The president of the European Dynamiters, Sunday, (The Man Who Was Thursday) is incredibly large; he also has blue eyes. It is not difficult to see immediately that these characters have obvious physical similarities. All have blue eyes; most have red or gold hair; many are unusually large.

But beyond these likenesses, the heroes are all tremendously active, and because of this, in constant disarray. Innocent Smith, "his yellow hair standing out all ways like Struwpeter's,"¹² swings himself up and down trees,

bounds over walls, and scrambles onto the slate roof above his attic room. Gabriel Gale--the name is certainly applicable--his hair standing up "in erratic wisps and tufts,"¹³ his felt hat stuffed into a loose knapsack, enjoys standing on his head and turning cartwheels. And Hilary Pierce, dressed as an old lady motorist, smuggles pigs wrapped in shawls and dressed as invalids until he decides to parachute them into the countryside. Small wonder he is an undignified, "Shock-Headed Peter."¹⁴ Adam Wayne, his red hair like a lion's mane, leaps onto walls, rips trees out of the ground, and successfully combats thirty men at a time. The "two wild-haired men,"¹⁵ Turnbull and MacIan flee across England, intermittently duelling and arguing. And, finally, Sunday bounces down streets like an India-rubber ball, leading his pursuers on a hansom cab-elephant-balloon chase, all the time his hair whistling in the wind. Now, if one tallies all of these traits, he finds the typical Chestertonian hero to be a red or yellow-haired, blue-eyed man of larger than normal size. This character is also rather disorderly and very energetic. (Chesterton himself had golden hair as a child and chestnut-colored hair as a man. He was also a very large man, standing well over six feet and weighing over three hundred pounds.¹⁶)

These similar physical attributes, however, are but

manifestations of the protagonists' inner qualities. For example, Adam Wayne's red hair suggests his passion, which can be seen in his fanaticism. And these point out another element in his personality: rebellion. Wayne lives in a barren, mechanical age (interestingly in 1984) in which everything is "very quiet. That vague and somewhat depressed reliance upon things happening as they have always happened . . . had become an assumed condition. There was really no reason for any man doing anything but the thing he had done the day before."¹⁷ Wayne wants "to break up the vast machinery of modern life."¹⁸ With his sword, "this fairy wand,"¹⁹ he forces romance and adventure back into his sterile, unbelieving society. But he is only one of Chesterton's redheads who embodies rebellion. Patrick Dalroy, an Irish nationalist, fights his government's new law banning the sale of all liquor except under the original sign of an inn. Chasing Dalroy all over the countryside to recapture a stolen sign and to quell the peasantry's rising morale, the police and government officials suddenly find they face a revolution. Turnbull is another fiery rebel; he prints blasphemous, scorching diatribes against the Bible. "All the forward men of his age discourage Turnbull"²⁰ because of their indifference. And soon he is fleeing a national police-hunt for fighting for his beliefs. When he says rather shortly that "'one

would think we were a Revolution,'" his opponent replies, "'So we are.'"²¹

This same fanatical rebelliousness can be found in the gold-haired heroes as well. Mr. Herne, the librarian in The Return of Don Quixote, proclaims a New Regime and sets up The League of the Lion. Not until Lord Ivywood finds a long arrow quivering above his head with an attached proclamation for the League does he realize "a revolution had taken place outside the door of his own study."²² Also helping in a revolt against the government, Captain Pierce defies the new law prohibiting pig-raising. He smuggles pigs into the countryside in motorcars as pet pugs, in train cars as invalids, and in circus cages as wild animals. He and other companions, equally rebellious, finally launch a great agrarian attack against the government, defeating them in the Battle of the Bows of God.

Another interesting interpretation of the heroes' hair color that goes beyond rebellion is Ian Boyd's explanation that red hair represents chivalry.²³ And because gold can also be heraldic, the same can be said of gold hair. All of the Chestertonian heroes are chivalric, some in a literal sense. For example, when Auberon Quin issues a proclamation recalling medieval pageantry, Wayne is the only one who takes the joke seriously. When he comes to court, his halberdiers alone march with dignity

and discipline. And Wayne alone is girt with a sword which he flourishingly throws to the ground upon paying homage to the king. Librarian Herne is equally chivalric. After playing the role of Richard Coeur de Lion in a short play, he refuses to change his costume, preferring to remain in his hooded green forester's dress. After very few weeks, he has managed to reinstate a medieval society.

One chivalric and romantic trait of the Chestertonian heroes is their love for weapons. Herne carries around his boar-spear; Wayne swings the "great sword of Notting Hill";²⁴ Innocent Smith packs his revolver wherever he goes; Basil Grant (The Club of Queer Trades) decorates his lodging with swords and armour; Turnbull and MacIan choose two rapiers to duel with during their flight across England; Gabriel Syme (The Man Who Was Thursday) carries both a revolver and, like Chesterton,²⁵ a sword-stick wherever he goes. All of these heroes love adventure and their weapons represent possible escapades.

This love for adventure is certainly a child's quality, and all Chesterton's heroes are child-like, as symbolized by their blue eyes, the blue eyes of a baby's innocence and purity. Herne is described as an "infant in arms."²⁶ Basil Grant, an eccentric but rather proper judge, after a lusty battle with two gentlemen and their footmen, declares, "'Now this . . . is what I call enjoying

oneself," his eyes "brilliant with pleasure, like those of a child heated by a favorite game."²⁷ Professor Green, a seemingly mad astronomer in Tales of a Long Bow, stares at some hollyhocks and suddenly the flowers remind him of a story--"the story of Jack and the Beanstalk."²⁸ The red-haired Turnbull escapes the tracking of the police, and when it is time for sleep, "kicked his legs about like a schoolboy and said he did not want to go to sleep."²⁹

The size of some of Chesterton's heroes also can be related to the child in these men. Innocent Smith and Sunday are inordinately tall; they are also fat, like overgrown, pudgy babies. Innocent Smith has the "speech of a newborn babe,"³⁰ the boarders note while they watch him unpack his luggage. They are struck with "the real childishness of this creature. For Smith was really, so far as human psychology can be, innocent. He had the sensualities of innocence; he loved the stickiness of gum, and he cut white wood greedily as if he were cutting a cake. To this man wine was not a doubtful thing to be defended or denounced; it was a quaintly-coloured syrup, such as a child sees in a shop window. . . . He had somehow made a giant stride from babyhood to manhood, and missed that crisis in youth when most of us grow old."³¹ When Dr. Bull in The Man Who Was Thursday explains his conception of Sunday, he says, "I don't care who knows it, I always had a sympathy for

old Sunday himself, wicked as he was. Just as if he was a great bouncing baby. How can I explain what my queer sympathy was? It didn't prevent my fighting him like hell! Shall I make it clear if I say that I liked him because he was so fat?"³² Whereas some of Chesterton's protagonists are abnormally heavy, others are overly tall. All of the heroes, upon entering the novel, control the rest of the novel. For example, although Innocent Smith sits silently in the background for over 200 of the 375 pages of Manalive, he still remains the dominating figure throughout these pages. It is thus fit that the heroes be dominating physically also. Another possible explanation of Chesterton's use of great height is that many of these characters are involved in battles of various sorts. They must, of course, win these battles for they fight for Chesterton himself. Height is a definite advantage. Adam Wayne, Patrick Dalroy, Evan MacIan--all fight and win their battles.

Another trait all these characters share is their disarray, a quality Chesterton certainly had in common with them.³³ Their general disorderliness represents their overall personality: these men are poets busy with rebellious ideas, with visionary plans. They have not the time or concern for impeccable appearance. But partly because these men have blazing eyes and hair that flies in all directions, their observers consider them insane.

They look and they act insane. Lawyers try to decide whether Innocent Smith is "mad as well as wicked."³⁴

When Wayne visits his Notting Hill grocer, speaking to him of the romance of his shop--"Your dates may come from the tall palms of Barbary, your sugar from the strange islands of the tropics, your tea from the secret villages of the Empire of the Dragon"--the grocer says,"' What a nice fellow he is. . . . It's odd how often they are nice. Much nicer than those as are all right.'"³⁵ Basil Grant is also called mad when he begins to counsel criminals to "get a new soul." And he finally retires after delivering this verdict: "'O Rowty-owty tiddly-owty.'"³⁶ When Colonel Crane in Tales of the Long Bow wears a cabbage on his head, he is called insane. When Gabriel Gale pins a curate to a tree with a pitchfork, he is called insane. It seems that a hero cannot be a Chestertonian hero unless he appears to be a bit of a lunatic.

The heroes' disarray and abnormal size represent another quality. These men are outcasts and misfits, whose peculiarities stand out in a crowd. But this is only further representative of their seemingly unorthodox thoughts and behavior. Some of the characters are actual outlaws: Turnbull and MacIan who try to escape the police, Hurrel and Gale who together break out of an asylum, Dalroy and Humphrey Pump who race their illegal rum

around the countryside, and Smith who has supposedly married and murdered many wives. But then there are those who are simply alone or isolated. Gabriel Syme must face the frightening Anarchists Council alone. Braintree (The Return of Don Quixote) finds he does not fit in with the common people he represents. Auberon Quin's friends do not understand his humor. All of these heroes are alone in society because they represent revolutionary ideas.

The first characteristic that links them is their ebullience seen in their ceaseless activity. They are constantly seeking something, whether it be adventure, political improvement, or solutions to crimes. And in this restless questing, the heroes demonstrate their rebellion once again. In The Return of Don Quixote, Olive Ashley sends "Monkey" Murrel out to hunt for a cake of red paint-- a "fine fourteenth century red"³⁷--she uses in painting her illuminations. But this ordinary errand becomes an adventure for Murrel. "He took out a considerable sum of money from the bank; he stuffed his pockets with tobacco and flasks and pocket-knives as if he were going to the North Pole. Most intelligent men play this childish game with themselves in one form or another; but he was certainly carrying it rather far and acting as if he expected to meet ogres and dragons when he walked up the street."³⁸ Murrel and the other heroes revolt against the common idea

that life is boring by making life exciting. Later Herne and Murrel travel around England in a hansom cab like a modern day Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. They give lifts to tramps, and use the cab as a coffee-stall, and later as a bathing-machine. Murrel arranges lectures for Mr. Herne from the top of the cab. And the two fight "a number of people in private life, but mostly people who badly wanted fighting."³⁹ Innocent Smith also travels around England, bringing badly needed freshness and adventure to tired-out wardens, boarders, and curates. Gabriel Syme joins the Last Crusade in an attempt to stop anarchy. In the end he and five other detectives are chasing after Sunday, the head of the Anarchists Council. This ceaseless activity, besides evidence of rebellion, is another indication of the child-like qualities of these men. Like children they are constantly restless and busy. During his trial, Innocent Smith is "carefully fenced in with a quadrilateral of eight bedroom chairs, any of which he could have tossed out of the window with his big toe. He had been provided with pens and paper, out of the latter of which he made paper boats, paper darts, and paper dolls contentedly through the whole proceedings. He never spoke or even looked up, but seemed as unconscious as a child on the floor of an empty nursery."⁴⁰ This child-like quality is definitely important to Chesterton's

heroes; but equally important are their rebelliousness and their chivalry.

These fundamental inner qualities are significant because they are based on Chesterton's philosophical stance, a reaction to his society which he saw as drugged and lethargic--bored with life and its miracles. This view of society is reflected in his novels. Auberon Quin longs for some excitement to fill this "hell of blank existence."⁴¹ The office of the Club of Queer Trades is located in the midst of the "dim immense hives . . . hidden like a fossil in a mighty cliff of fossils."⁴² The adventures of the League of the Long Bow begin "in the most prim and prosaic of all places, at the most prim and prosaic of all times, and apparently with the most prim and prosaic of all human beings."⁴³ Society, in this somnambulant state, wants waking, and Chesterton saw this as his main task: "'the problem of how men could be made to realize the wonder and splendour of being alive.'"⁴⁴ And this is why Chesterton's heroes are child-like: they view the world with a child's blue-eyed vision.

If anyone of us casts back his mind to his childhood, he will remember that the sense of the super-

natural clung as often as not round some entirely trivial and material object, round a particular landing on the stairs, round a particular tree in the park, round a way of cutting cardboard or the hair of a Japanese doll. The child has no need of nonsense: to him the whole universe is nonsensical, in the noblest sense of that noble word. . . . We are going forth continually to discover new aesthetic worlds, and first of all of our conquests we have discovered this world of nonsense. But he has appreciated this world at a glance, and first glances are best.⁴⁵

Evan MacIvan finds that he can recall these first glances; "the deeper his memory plunged into the dark house of childhood the nearer and nearer he came to the things that cannot be named. All through his life he thought of the daylight world as a sort of divine debris, the broken remainder of his first vision."⁴⁶ The man's child-like vision, thus, is an imaginative vision. He sees the world ideally, "as a man dreaming might remember the world where he was awake."⁴⁷ This explains why Chesterton's heroes stand on their heads. Their vision is topsy-turvy when compared to most men's careless vision. Gabriel Syme explains it to a friend: "'It's a very good thing for a landscape-painter to see the landscape upside down. He

sees things then as they really are; yes, and that's true in philosophy as well as art."⁴⁸ In other words, Chesterton's heroes are aware of the miracles in life, whereas most men are so dulled to these miracles that they no longer notice them. The paradox is that by standing on their heads the heroes are actually upright; by seeing the world differently and freshly, they see it correctly.

The heroes' eyes, beyond their color, are thus usually observed. Pierce has a "wild eye";⁴⁹ Herne has "visionary eyes";⁵⁰ Smith has "eyes blazing like stars";⁵¹ monk Michael (The Ball and the Cross) has eyes that are "bright, blue, and startled like those of a baby."⁵² And what the heroes often see demonstrates their imaginative vision. When Auberon Quin walks behind two government officials wearing coat-tails, he imagines that the coat-tails are "two black dragons . . . walking backwards in front of him. Two black dragons were looking at him with evil eyes. . . . The eyes which he saw were, in truth, only the two buttons at the back of a frock-coat . . . The slit between the tails was the nose-line of the monster; when ever the tails flapped in the winter wind the dragons licked their lips."⁵³ Another hero, MacIan, running across the top of a wall, fancies he is "bestriding a steed; the long, gray coping of the wall shot out in front of him, like the long, gray neck of some nightmare

Rosinante."⁵⁴

This child-like vision creates wonder. And wonder was what Chesterton felt his age needed and what his characters feel and communicate to others. After Basil Grant tells the learned professor, James Chadd, that he knows more about the Zulus than Chadd because he knows more about exuberant living, he asks the professor, "'Why should a man be thought a sort of idiot because he feels the mystery and peril of existence itself?'"⁵⁵ This question forces Chadd to evaluate his banal life. Soon his elderly sisters find him dancing madly in the garden. Innocent Smith pokes his life-dealing revolver in the faces of pessimistic, weary, bored people, these victims suddenly forced to appreciate life because of the threat of imminent death. In order to keep his own marriage a perpetual romance, Smith continually woos and elopes with his wife. He also travels around the world in order to rediscover his home. When monk Michael is hanging from the ball and cross atop St. Paul's dome, "he fancied he had been changed into a child again. . . . in that unendurable instant . . . the whole universe had been destroyed and recreated."⁵⁶ The narrator of The Club of Queer Trades enjoys discovering and joining new organizations. When he discovers the Club of Queer Trades he finds it refreshing. "It made a man feel what he should feel, that he was still in the childhood of

the world."⁵⁷ One of the agencies in this club is the Adventure and Romance Agency, Limited. The president, P. G. Northover, explains that "we give [our client] back his childhood, that godlike time when we can act stories, be our own heroes, and at the same time dance and dream."⁵⁸ It is this adventure and romance man needs to maintain his excitement and wonder about life which Chesterton further explains in Orthodoxy: "But nearly all people I have ever met in this western society in which I live would agree to the general proposition that we need this life of practical romance; the combination of something that is strange with something that is secure. We need so to view the world as to combine an idea of wonder and an idea of welcome. We need to be happy in this wonderland without once being merely comfortable."⁵⁹ Chesterton's heroes search for and create adventure in their attempts to keep their sense of wonder alive and to escape merely comfortable, secure, and vapid lives.

Partially because he dislikes such safe living, Chesterton appreciates fairy tales and legends. The vision of fairy tales "is a vision of something perpetually fresh: always a new heaven and a new earth, which are quite certainly the old ones. 'All the fire of the fairy tales' is derived from the primal vision of the world, perhaps the first vision of childhood, 'an almost pre-

natal leap of interest and amazement.'"⁶⁰ The reason that fairy tales have this vision is that they do not teach that the universe has definite laws.⁶¹ Chesterton's heroes do not claim to understand the universe, which is just as magical and unpredictable as fairyland. They freely participate in and welcome the world's magic. Just before Innocent Smith arrives at Beacon House, a symbolic revitalizing wind stirs up the dark and gloomy day. "Grass and garden trees seemed glittering with something at once good and unnatural, like a fire from fairyland."⁶² Smith is this "something" from a fairy tale. He spreads romance and delight in the lives of the other characters. Adam Wayne also lives "on the border of fairyland. But he was perhaps the first to realise how often the boundary of fairyland runs through a crowded city. Twenty feet from him . . . the red and white and yellow suns of the gaslights thronged and melted into each other like an orchard of fiery trees, the beginning of the woods of elf-land."⁶³ When Humphrey Pump sings a song explaining factually and in detail why roads are curved, Dalroy exclaims, "'Don't be exhaustive! Don't be a scientist, Hump, and lay waste fairyland!'"⁶⁴ In The Return of Don Quixote when Murrel leaves on his quest, "something childish in his memories awoke; and he could almost have fancied that he was a fairy prince and his

clumsy walking-stick was a sword."⁶⁵

Part of this wonder and adventure is the result of the awareness of limitations. "It is plain on the face of the facts that the child is positively in love with limits. He uses his imagination to invent imaginary limits. The nurse and the governess have never told him that it is this moral duty to step on alternate paving stones. He deliberately deprives this world of half of its paving stones, in order to exult in a challenge that he has offered to himself."⁶⁶ For this reason Chesterton enjoyed Robinson Crusoe; Crusoe is limited in almost every way and thus discovers an exciting life. Chesterton's heroes like children also have discovered that "self-limitation is one of the secret pleasures of life."⁶⁷ Dorian Wimpole (The Return of Don Quixote) asks Lord Ivywood, "'Don't you see this prime fact of identity is the limit set on all living things?'"⁶⁸ Gabriel Gale agrees with Wimpole that limitation creates identity. "Then I began to think that being oneself, which is liberty, is itself limitation. We are limited by our brains and bodies; and if we break out, we cease to be ourselves, and, perhaps, to be anything.'" Gale explains this concept further later on: "Man is a creature; all his happiness consists in being a creature; or, as the Great Voice commanded us, in becoming a child. All his fun is in having a gift or

or present; which the child, with profound understanding values because it is a 'surprise.' But surprise implies that a thing came from outside ourselves; and gratitude that it comes from someone other than ourselves. It is thrust through the letter-box; it is thrown in at the window; it is thrown over the wall. Those limits are the lines of the very plan of human pleasure."⁶⁹ Understanding this idea, Gale pins Phineas Salt helplessly to a tree when he defies his limits by thinking he can command the weather. He must learn the lesson of human limitation by struggling vainly against a tree. Like Salt, a mysterious Russian professor who has written The Psychology of Liberty, also refuses to accept limitations. He lets a canary out of its cage, breaks a fishbowl so the fish can be free, and finally blows up himself and the house where he has been a guest--all so that he can be outside everything.

This idea of limitation is bound up in another idea, discreteness.⁷⁰ Because Chesterton loves limits-- "the essence of every picture is the frame"⁷¹--he also loves distinctions between all things. These principles of separation and restriction lead to Chesterton's love for small things:

for me all good things come to a point, swords,
for instance. . . . When one is fond of anything

one addresses it by diminutives, even if it is an elephant or a lifeguardsman. . . . I was frightfully fond of the universe and wanted to address it by a diminutive. I often did so; and it never seemed to mind. Actually and in truth I did feel that these dim dogmas of vitality were better expressed by calling the world small than by calling it large. For about infinity there was a sort of carelessness which was the reverse of the fierce and pious care which I felt touching the priceless-ness and the peril of life. They showed only a dreary waste; but I felt a sort of sacred thrift. For economy is far more romantic than extravagance.⁷²

Gale loves small things also. His thinking starts from "any small thing that seemed to him a large thing. What are to most men impressions, or half impressions, were to him incidents; and the chief incidents of the day."⁷³

But this love for small things is related, for many of Chesterton's heroes, to local patriotism, the love for one's own living area; and this love is the foundation for Chesterton's political and economic theory, distributism. Chesterton was essentially a democrat, believing in "the elementary liberal doctrine of a self-governing humanity."⁷⁴ But man has a weakness--pride--and is therefore likely to

err if honored above all others. Man loves and rules well what is his only if it is limited in size. Democracy protects man's equality and his rights,⁷⁵ but distributism limits his property and thus his power. In a debate with Shaw, Chesterton explained his theory: "We say there ought to be in the world a great mass of scattered powers, privileges, limits, points of resistance, so that the mass of the Commons may resist tyranny. . . . We propose to distribute power."⁷⁶ A short advertisement for the Distributist League found in the back of Do We Agree? further explains these principles:

THE LEAGUE stands For the Liberty of the Individual and the Family Against interference by busybodies, monopolies, or the State. Personal Liberty will be restored mainly by the better Distribution of Property (i. e., ownership of land, houses, workshops, gardens, means of production, etc.) . . . Thus THE LEAGUE fights for: Small Shops and Shopkeepers against multiple shops and trusts. Individual Craftsmanship and Co-operation in industrial enterprises. (Every worker would own a share in the Assets and Control of the business in which he works.) The Small Holder and the Yeoman Farmer against monopolies of large inadequately farmed estates.

Distributism is a truly democratic arrangement because

democracy is best when direct, and to be most direct, it must be small.

When Chesterton sought for some model for his theory, he found the mediæval system to be the closest to his ideal system.⁷⁷ He liked the enclosures, the guilds, and the manors because they supported his ideas of limitation and discreteness. They did not allow imperialism, socialism, or capitalism to centralize property and power in very few hands. Wilfred Sheed calls Chesterton a populist because of these views. "He did not, as reputation has it, believe that small men were better; only that in the matter of their own lives they knew more than experts did, and that collectively, they knew more about their communities than outsiders did."⁷⁸ Chesterton's political and economic ideas can be summarized thus: he disliked large organizations of any sort and he called for small, separate organizations--farms, shops, cities, governments--allowing men to rule and control themselves without threat of tyranny.

Chesterton's distributism, or his love for the small, shows up frequently in his fiction, for his heroes are the paladins of true liberty, the result of limitation. In Manalive, Innocent Smith and Michael Moon declare independence for Beacon House:

" I believe in Home Rule for homes . . . It would be

better if every father could kill his son, as with the old Romans; it would be better, because nobody would be killed. Let's issue a Declaration of Independence from Beacon House. We could grow enough greens in that garden to support us, and when the tax-collector comes let's tell him we're self-supporting, and play on him with the hose. . . . Let this be really Beacon House. Let's light a bonfire of independence on the roof, and see house after house answering it across the valley of the Thames! Let us begin the League of the Free Families! Away with Local Government! A fig for Local Patriotism! Let every house be a sovereign state as this is, and judge its own children by its own law, as we do by the Court of Beacon. "79

This same concern for local patriotism, plus worry about imperialism and capitalism, appears in The Napoleon of Notting Hill. As a joke, King Auberon Quin reinstates medievalism: all the boroughs of London are given separate power. Each builds a city wall with gates around it; each has its own banner, coat-of-arms, and gathering cry; each has its own city guards. But because of capitalism--"buying, selling, bullying and bribing"⁸⁰--businessmen are able to buy land in the different boroughs for a new thoroughfare. Suddenly when the old Provost of

Notting Hill, a businessman, dies, the lot for his position falls to Adam Wayne, who takes the Kings' joke seriously. He refuses to give up his borough's Pump Street, a street with nothing on it except a few small shops; he will fight for the liberty the Charter of Free Cities has given him. He inspires his stodgy fellow-citizens with local patriotism and adventure. He points out to each small shopowner the importance and romance of his contribution. The grocer is a cosmopolitan: he has argosies of rich wares sailing from the farthest seas. The chemist's shop is magical and supernatural. The man who sells old curiosities is the "strange guardian of the past."⁸¹ And thus Wayne assembles his army. A great war is fought; all cities ally against Notting Hill for they want the prosperity the new road will bring them. But Notting Hill, through careful planning, wins the war. And medievalism is no longer a joke. Because of the great battles, citizens from all cities have learned local patriotism and have found adventure in their love for the small. Twenty years later, however, Notting Hill has become an imperial city, subjecting other cities to its power. It has "[condescended] to be a mere Empire."⁸² The war for the small must again be fought.

The Return of Don Quixote reveals Chesterton's interest in the medieval guild. After Herne succeeds in setting up

a medieval society, the government uses its romance to counter another movement, Syndicalism, hoping that people will be drawn to the pageantry of medievalism and forget the influential speeches of the Trade Unionists. But after Herne is finally forced to storm Braintree and the striking Trade Unionists to bring them to justice, he rules in their favor. Asked to explain his movement's views, Braintree says, "'The shortest way of putting it, I should say, . . . would be to say that, in our view, the mine ought to belong to the miner.'" And Murrel replies to this, "'Fine feudal medieval motto.'"⁸³ Herne, when he has finished his reign, leaves society to live as a vagabond, for the capitalist government members who own the trade unions will never accept his thinking. His medieval society has been corrupted by the businesses that have simply grown too large.

Have you ever reflected . . . what a good thing it would have been if [Don Quixote] had smashed the windmills? From what I know now of medieval history, I should say his only mistake was in tilting at the mills instead of the millers. The miller was the middleman of the Middle Ages. He was the beginning of all the middlemen of the modern age. His mills were the beginning of all the mills and manufacturers that have darkened and degraded modern life. . . .

You have made your dead system on so large a scale that you do not yourselves know how or where it will hit. That's the paradox! Things have grown incalculable by being calculated. You have tied men to tools so gigantic that they do not know on whom the strokes descend. You have justified the nightmare of Don Quixote. The mills really are giants.⁸⁴

Medieval craftsmen, on the other hand, were creative and felt needed by their society. They felt they contributed directly to their society. The guild system also kept the manufacturers from becoming monopolists.⁸⁵

The Return of Don Quixote shows Chesterton's interest in guilds and Tales of the Long Bow shows his interest in enclosures. When a wealthy American, Enoch Oates, bribes the English government to ban pig-keeping so that he can control the whole market, Hilary Pierce rebels against this big business and big government decision by smuggling pigs into the countryside. Later he even manages to convert Oates to distributism. Oates purchases land covering over a quarter of the county and then gives this land to his tenants, contrary to the government's plans. The Prime Minister retaliates by nationalizing all land, and The League of the Long Bow organizes strikes and rebellions, especially when the government starts regulating farmers' living habits, even their dress and diet. To

symbolize the rural uprisings of the Middle Ages, members of the League wear Lincoln green, use bows and arrows, and hide in the woods. In fact, Robert Owen Hood, one of the instigators, is called Robin Hood. After the decisive Battle of the Bows, the agrarian movement saves English agriculture by returning land to its owners. Chesterton in this novel stresses "the small, independent farmer because this was the element in society most weakened by modern developments, and its total disappearance would seriously reduce that human diversity which makes for freedom."⁸⁶

Because Chesterton and his heroes are always fighting socialism, imperialism, and capitalism, revolutions exist in many of the novels. In The Flying Inn Dalroy leads angry peasants against a government which is slowly abolishing the peasantry's rights and destroying the English spirit. And, as already seen, there are revolutions in Tales of the Long Bow, The Return of Don Quixote, and The Napoleon of Notting Hill. Somewhat quieter revolts against boredom occur in Manalive and The Club of Queer Trades. But to really understand these rebellions, it is necessary to discover the underlying causes. According to Chesterton, man needs revolution for he has fallen and is constantly trying to recover his ideal state. "My sense that happiness hung on the crazy thread of a condition did mean something

when all was said: it meant the whole doctrine of the Fall. . . . And my haunting instinct that somehow good was not merely a tool to be used, but a relic to be guarded, like the goods from Crusoe's ship--even that had been the wild whisper of something originally wise, for, according to Christianity, we were indeed the survivors of a wreck, the crew of a golden ship that had gone down before the beginning of the world."⁸⁷ The doctrine of the Fall does appear in Chesterton's novels, and his heroes are aware of man's Fall. Herne is especially aware of it: "You all love change and live by change; but I shall never change. It was by change you fell; it is by this madness of change you go on falling. You had your happy moment, when men were simple and sane and normal and as native to this earth as they can ever be. You lost it; and even when you get it back for a moment you have not the sense to keep it. I shall never change."⁸⁸ Even Humphrey Pump's "Song of Quoodle" reflects man's fallen state. "They haven't got no noses / The fallen sons of Eve, / But more than mind discloses, / And more than men believe."⁸⁹

The Fall of man has caused man to lose his balance: "A certain balance or proportion of elements must occur in man's experience, in the body politic, and in the ethics which man uses to shape his life."⁹⁰ And in order to recover his ideal state man must recover his sense of

proportion. Man and his relationships, religions and institutions that allow and foster this balance are therefore closest to the ideal state. (This, incidentally, seems to be one of the reasons for Chesterton's use of paradoxes.) For instance, "Christianity got over the difficulty of combining furious opposites, by keeping them both, and keeping them both furious."⁹¹ And the Roman Catholic Church, in particular, allows proportion. It encompasses all ideas but keeps these ideas in balance. Heresy, for example Quakerism, results when one of these ideas is exaggerated. "It is the Quaker meeting-house that is inside the Catholic cathedral; it is the Catholic cathedral that covers everything like the vault of the Crystal Palace . . . In other words, Quakerism is but a temporary form of Quietism which has arisen technically outside the Church as the Quietism of Fenelon appeared technically inside the Church. But both were in themselves temporary and would have, like Fenelon, sooner or later to return to the Church in order to live."⁹² Like the Catholic Church, then, all mankind and its institutions need balancing.

Because the idea of proportion is so important to Chesterton, one may rightly expect to find it embodied in his heroes. Auberon Quin is the detached, reasoning humorist and Adam Wayne is the impassioned, mystical fanatic.

"You and I, Auberon Quin, have both of us throughout our lives been again and again called mad. And we are mad. We are mad, because we are not two men but one man. We are mad, because we are two lobes of the same brain, and that brain has been cloven in two."⁹³ In Manalive, Innocent Smith is the idea of wonder and Michael Moon the idea's advocate. Although some of Chesterton's heroes, like Smith, have male counterparts, others have female counterparts. For example, Turnbull falls in love with a devoutly religious woman, and MacIan falls in love with a sceptical woman. Innocent Smith's wife, Mary Gray, is a practical woman who simply plays along with her husband's wild schemes. The women in Tales of the Long Bow also balance their husbands. Dignified, correct Colonel Crane marries an artist. Impractical Owen Hood marries a practical woman. Professor Green, busy with his scientific theories, marries a country girl who enjoys her farm duties. This man/woman balancing echoes Chesterton's own beliefs that the man and woman are essentially different and therefore equalized: the man is wasteful, the woman thrifty; the man is gregarious, the woman less sociable; the man is suited for public life, the woman for the home.⁹⁴ It is particularly interesting to study Sunday, for if he represents God, he must be in balance. First, he is described as a child, a baby, and yet at other times, he is described as a father. He is

both head of the Anarchists Council and head of The Last Crusade, which battles anarchy. He represents goodness to Syme and yet diabolism to other detectives. Sunday is the peace of God and yet the terror of men. He is the unknown, yet each detective knows something about him. He is the joy of a bouncing rubber ball, yet he is the sorrow of the suffering of Christ. He is man and God. Sunday is everything.

Perhaps The Ball and the Cross best represents Chesterton's desire for balance. First, the symbols are significant. The ball of St. Paul's represents the lack of balance because it is limited reason without temperance. The cross, however, is balanced: "The very shape of it is a contradiction in terms." It is the "conflict of two hostile lines, of irreconcilable direction."⁹⁵ It represents man who is both superior and close to divinity and yet inferior because of the Fall. Turnbull and MacIain's relationship is also a contradiction. Turnbull is an atheist, MacIain a Catholic. Turnbull is concerned with contemporary issues, MacIain with a return to tradition. Nevertheless both men share fanaticism. When Turnbull prints an article blaspheming the Virgin Mary, MacIain breaks his printshop window and attacks Turnbull. The two men agree they must fight for their beliefs. Because the government wants no disruptions to society's order,

MacIan and Turnbull must flee to a remote area in order to duel without interruption. In sharing danger they discover they are brothers-in-arms, and they find something is removing their hatred for one another; they are beginning their movement toward balance. Lucifer takes both men on a journey in a dream to see what each has always longed for in society. But what each sees shows him his own lack of balance. MacIan, who reveres traditional authority and law, sees a well-ordered medieval state in which society is more important than the individual; order and regulation, which become all-important, need tempering by reason. MacIan also realizes he represents fanatical religion: "'The Church has had her madnesses, and I am one of them. I am the massacre of St. Bartholomew. I am the Inquisition of Spain.'"⁹⁶ Turnbull in his dream sees the revolution he has always longed for. Reason prevails in this revolt to the extent that all unemployable people are destroyed. Turnbull is shocked by this policy which certainly seems rational to the madman Lucifer. Turnbull begins to realize that life is sacred. His fanatic reason needs tempering by MacIan's mystical beliefs. MacIan is the first, however, to accept that his mysticism needs reason, although reason is subordinate to mysticism. "'There must be some round earth to plant the cross upon. . . . we cannot trust the ball to be always a ball; we cannot trust reason to be

reasonable. In the end the great terrestrial globe will go quite lop-sided, and only the cross will stand upright.'"97 Turnbull is brought into balance with MacIan at the end when both men attempt to save Father Michael from the fire which surrounds his cell. Turnbull shouts, "'Fool, come out and save yourself!'" but MacIan corrects him: "'Father, . . . come out and save us all!'"98 The flames part and a small, child-like man walks down the path singing as if he were walking in the woods. Turnbull seeing this miracle gives up the "certainties of materialism"99 and he kneels before the little old man. And in looking among the ashes of the fire, MacIan finds "two shining things that had survived the fire, his sword and Turnbull's fallen haphazard in the pattern of a cross."100 Balance between reason and mysticism is restored.

This particular balance seems more important to Chesterton than other balances because imbalance between reason and mysticism (or imagination) leads to insanity. True insanity is "reason without root, reason in the void. . . . But we may ask in conclusion, if this be what drives men mad, what is it that keeps them sane? . . . Mysticism keeps men sane. As long as you have mystery you have health; when you destroy mystery you create morbidity."101 Elsewhere Chesterton says, "Imagination does not breed insanity. Exactly what does breed insanity is reason. Poets do not

go mad; but chess-players do. . . . Poetry is sane because it floats easily in an infinite sea; reason seeks to cross the infinite sea, and so make it finite. The result is mental exhaustion . . . The poet only desires exaltation and expansion, a world to stretch himself in. The poet only asks to get his head into the heavens. It is the logician who seeks to get the heavens into his head. And it is his head that splits."¹⁰²

The only problem with the truly sane man is that others consider him insane. And this is what happens to Chesterton's heroes. Called insane because they are mystics and use their imaginations, paradoxically they are the sanest of men. Basil Grant, President of the Club of Queer Trades, is a mystic, his blue eyes "unusually full of dreams."¹⁰³ He holds that "facts obscure the truth," and when Rupert Grant insists on factualizing, he exclaims, "'Are you still so sunk in superstitions, so clinging to dim and prehistoric altars, that you believe in facts? Do you not trust an immediate impression?'"¹⁰⁴ When Rupert and the narrator attend the Club's dinner in order to find out who is the Club's president--the "maddest in this world of madmen,"¹⁰⁵--they discover their friend Basil Grant. Although he is a mystic, he always determines the truth in his detective stories because he trusts intuition and reason instead of reason alone. The same is

also true for Gabriel Gale, the poet who knows how to cure lunatics because he understands their reasoning. "I have a talent for [understanding lunatics]--a sort of psychological imagination. I generally know what they're going to do or fancy next. I've known a lot of them one way or another--religious maniacs who thought they were divine or damned, or what not; and revolutionary maniacs, who believed in dynamite or doing without clothes; . . . But of all the maniacs I have tried to manage, the maddest of all maniacs was the man of business."¹⁰⁶ But because Gale is imaginative and intuitive, he is considered mad. After he fastens Herbert Saunders to a tree with a pitchfork, two doctors interview him to discover if he is mad. But in telegraphing Saunders for his reactions to the incident, they receive an incredible answer: "'Can never be sufficiently grateful to Gale for his great kindness which more than saved my life.'"¹⁰⁷ Gale finally explains that the curate went mad with power, thinking himself greater than all else. He forgot his limitations. So Gale pinned him to a tree so that he might realize he was just a man. This action certainly seems insane but it is the action of an unpractical, sane man; "'you see, you want an unpractical man for finding out this sort of thing.'"¹⁰⁸ And the unpractical man, the mystic, is the man in proportion. He sits in the middle and balances the teeter, whereas

others choose one side or the other and fall heavily to the ground. Instead of discussing the "eccentricities of genius," Gale says, men should speak of the "centricities of genius."¹⁰⁹ And for this reason Wayne and Quin are insane--they are two parts of a brain riven apart, as are MacIan and Turnbull; together, however, they balance each other.

The truly insane man is the purely reasonable man, the man of "defecated intellectuality."¹¹⁰ Manalive's Dr. Warner is such a man. He has destroyed the child in Inglewood with his "pulverizing rationalism."¹¹¹ Warner is so lost in his scepticism and silence that Smith, shooting him through his hat, is unable to cure him. In The Napoleon of Notting Hill, Buck and Barker are two rationalists. Buck, a business magnate, finds no romance in war; "'Fighting, when we have a stronger force, is only a matter of arithmetic.'"¹¹² And Barker, a government official, has a great "intellectual capacity . . . which raises a man from throne to throne and lets him die loaded with honours without having either amused or enlightened the mind of a single man."¹¹³ Wayne and Quin bring these men to sanity. By the end of the novel, they are swinging a scimitar and dagger in defense of their city. Perhaps the best example of madness is cleft-chinned Professor Lucifer in The Ball and the Cross. He represents

the nightmare of science and intellection--the ball of St. Paul's dome--and owns an asylum where he locks up anyone who has beliefs, for he plans to take over the world. He locks up Father Michael, MacIan, and Turnbull. Then he locks up everyone who has seen MacIan and Turnbull duel because these observers have seen men with firm beliefs. He continues his takeover by denying all superstitions and legends. MacIan, finally understanding who the professor is, calls the garden in which they are imprisoned "the world gone mad."¹¹⁴

But the world only goes mad if it forgets its traditions--its superstitions and legends. The tools Professor Lucifer uses "were the ancient human tools gone mad, grown into unrecognizable shapes, forgetful of their origin, forgetful of their names."¹¹⁵ And Lord Ivywood in The Flying Inn is forgetful of his "old obligations and loyalties."¹¹⁶ In fact, he destroys traditions: he outlaws public houses; he supports an insane rational oriental thinker, Misyra Ammon; he establishes what might have become a harem in his own home; and he imports Turkish troops to support his policies. In contrast, throughout this novel, Chesterton's heroes exalt the common traditions--casks of cheddar cheese, beer, road songs, inn signs, and honesty and courage. By the end of the novel, Lord Ivywood, who has defied all limitations and has forgotten all traditions, has gone mad.

"He sat playing with a pale, reposeful face, with scraps of flower and weed put before him on a wooden table."¹¹⁷

If in forgetting tradition one goes mad, then in remembering tradition one may stay sane. Tradition is mankind's memory of a better time, of his more balanced state. And this is why Chesterton appreciates superstitions, legends, and fairy tales. They are what remains of and recalls better days. Chesterton's heroes thus glorify tradition. Patrick Dalroy's songs exalt the Englishman and his traditions.

St. George he was for England,
And before he killed the dragon
He drank a pint of English ale
Out of an English flagon.
For though he fast right readily
In hair-shirt or in mail,
It isn't safe to give him cakes
Unless you give him ale.

St. George he was for England,
And right gallantly set free
The lady left for dragon's meat
And tied up to a tree
But since he stood for England
And knew what England means,
Unless you give him bacon,

You mustn't give him beans.

St. George he was for England,

And shall wear the shield he wore

When we go out in armour,

With the battle-cross before;

But though he is jolly company

And very pleased to dine,

It isn't safe to give him nuts

Unless you give him wine.¹¹⁸

Owen Hood is also saturated with the traditions of England. His heart is "with that old English country life" and he is "fond of the legends and less-known aspects of the English country-side."¹¹⁹ His friend, Colonel Crane, is "something of a survival. . . . It would be quite unjust to call him a dug-out; indeed, it would be much truer to call him a dug-in. For he had remained in the traditions as firmly and patiently as he had remained in the trenches. . . . One of his excellent habits was to go to church at eleven o'clock, and he therefore went there; and did not know that there went with him something of an old-world air and a passage in the history of England."¹²⁰

Gabriel Gale also finds tradition necessary, and in particular superstitions. When he happens to dine with men who disregard and disdain superstition, he questions one of the men, a traveller who has lived with "'people who

had real superstitions; black towering, terrific superstitions . . . Were they not happier men than you? . . . That was because they believed in evil. In evil spells, perhaps, in evil luck, in evil under all sorts of stupid and ignorant symbols; but still in something to be fought. They at least read things in black and white, and saw life as the battlefield it is."¹²¹ Evan MacIan like Gale is "brazenly superstitious"¹²² and his friend Turnbull the rationalist finds he is growing nearer and nearer to superstition as he begins to understand Professor Lucifer's plans.

Like superstitions and legends, fairy tales are remnants of the ideal. "The things I believed most then, the things I believe most now, are the things called fairy tales. They seem to me to be the entirely reasonable things. They are not fantasies: compared with them other things are fantastic. . . . But I deal here with what ethics and philosophy come from being fed on fairy tales. If I were describing them in detail I could note many noble and healthy principles that arise from them."¹²³ Elsewhere Chesterton describes what good fairy tales hold for man. "If I did not put my faith in the Gospel, I should not put it in Haeckel. I should put it in Jack the Giant Killer. I should put it in these enduring human stories, with their celebrations of hope, surprise, courage, the fulfillment of contracts, and the natural

relations of mankind."¹²⁴ Chesterton includes references to fairy tales throughout his fiction because the tales not only create wonder in their readers' minds, but also teach ethics.

Because Chesterton loves both tradition and revolution, he seems to contradict himself. But this is only another of his many paradoxes: he believes in revolting for tradition. Chesterton believes that tradition represents an ideal state man had before he fell--Eden. And this state is a fixed state--the ideal, the perfect does not change. "God has given us not so much the colours of a picture as the colours of a palette. But he has also given us a subject, a model, a fixed vision."¹²⁵ And man must constantly strive to return to this state. "To the orthodox there must always be a case for revolution; for in the hearts of men God has been put under the feet of Satan. In the upper world hell once rebelled against heaven. But in this world heaven is rebelling against hell. For the orthodox there can always be a revolution; for a revolution is a restoration."¹²⁶ Although this revolution may cause wide destruction, it is still necessary for possible reconstruction.

Chesterton's heroes echo this paradox. Innocent Smith exclaims to a Frenchman, "'Why, blast it all, that's just where we all want to be--back where we were before! That

is revolution--going right round. Every revolution, like every repentance, is a return.'"¹²⁷ Another time he calls himself "'a revolutionist. But don't you see that all these real leaps and destructions and escapes are only attempts to get back to Eden--to something we have had, to something at least we have heard of?'"¹²⁸ This paradox also explains Herne's statement that "it was by change you fell."

But one revolution is not enough because "things naturally tend to grow worse. . . . An almost unnatural vigilance is really required of the citizen because of the horrible rapidity with which human institutions grow old."¹²⁹ MacIain realizes the world's tendency, for he also says that the "world left to itself grows wilder than any creed."¹³⁰ The action in the novels supports this need for "the eternal revolution."¹³¹ Twenty years after Notting Hill has won its war for autonomy it has become an empire, and so another war must be fought to destroy this empire and restore limitation. Innocent Smith must constantly fight boredom. He must always be busy with adventures to forestall tedium and maintain his sense of wonder. The heroes "have not any need to rebel against antiquity; they have to rebel against novelty"¹³² continually.

This revolt for tradition also helps to explain Chesterton's interest in medievalism. He felt that the

Middle Ages had great potential politically and economically because its systems protected men's rights by accepting their limitations.¹³³ But what underlay this was his belief that "that medieval religion was more realistic than modern idealism and optimism."¹³⁴ It realized the Fall of man and therefore set up a society reflecting the paradox of man--his superiority and his inferiority. And the medievals found joy in this: "ancients and moderns have both been miserable about existence, about everything, while medievals were happy about that at least."¹³⁵ Medieval society, in other words, was based on firm religious beliefs. This is one reason that Herne's medievalism fails: "we never went back to the Thing itself. The Thing that produced everything else."¹³⁶

This Thing--God--is the basis for all Chesterton's thought which begins with the Creation. "All creation is separation. . . . According to most philosophers, God in making the world enslaved it. According to Christianity, in making it, He set it free."¹³⁷ All men were created separate. This was essential to give man his free will, which in turn gives him adventure: "a story is exciting because it has in it so strong an element of will, of what theology calls free will."¹³⁸ Man made his initial choice and fell. But man still can make choices to struggle for the "fixed vision" he relinquished. And

this struggle is Chesterton's revolution: "All moral reform must start in the active not the passive will."¹³⁹ In fact, this revolution is one of the great romances of man's life: "being good is an adventure far more violent and daring than sailing round the world."¹⁴⁰ The Fall thus leads to joy.

The Christian optimism is based on the fact that we do not fit in to the world. I had tried to be happy by telling myself that man is an animal, like any other which sought its meat from God. But now I really was happy, for I had learnt that man is a monstrosity. I had been right in feeling all things as odd, for I myself was at once worse and better than all things. The optimist's pleasure was prosaic, for it dwelt on the naturalness of everything; the Christian pleasure was poetic, for it dwelt on the unnaturalness of everything in the light of the supernatural. . . . I know now why grass had always seemed to me as queer as the green beard of a giant, and why I could feel homesick at home.¹⁴¹

To return to the ideal, man has to find a balance, and tradition can point out ethics that lead to this balance. And for these reasons, primarily, Chesterton saw the Catholic Church as the church. Catholicism, "the great

dome,"¹⁴² encompasses and balances all beliefs. It is a religion "that is right where we are wrong."¹⁴³ It revolts against ideas that are wrong; here Chesterton finds its paradox. It is a new religion because it is "treated as a new religion; that is, a revolution."¹⁴⁴ And yet it has hundreds of years of tradition, of experience with man. It knows how to bring man back to his balanced state, for a "thing as old as the Catholic Church has an accumulated armoury and treasury to choose from; it can pick and choose among the centuries and brings one age to the rescue of another. It can call in the old world to redress the balance of the new."¹⁴⁵

MacIain can thus say, paradoxically, in The Ball and the Cross, that only two things have progressed: "'The first is strictly physical science. The second is the Catholic Church. . . . I say that if you want an example of anything which has progressed in the moral world by the same method as science in the material world, by continually adding to without unsettling what was there before, then I say that there is only one example of it. And that is Us.'"¹⁴⁶

Some have said Chesterton held these religious beliefs long before his actual conversion.¹⁴⁷ And one critic even maintains that Chesterton considered himself a Catholic from 1904 until his death.¹⁴⁸ But regardless of these statements, Chesterton's philosophical stance, and his

representation of it through his heroes, is certainly consistent throughout his novels. He himself once said in G. K. C. as M. C. (1929), "'I am rather surprised to see how little my fundamental convictions have changed.'"¹⁴⁹ His biographer, Maisie Ward, states that "going round the world, Gilbert was finding his way home; the explorer was rediscovering his native country."¹⁵⁰ The beliefs the Chestertonian heroes represent are continuous threads binding together all the romances. What Lea says about Chesterton's works is generally agreed upon: "Each of his works is an organic unity: the whole is implicit in each of its parts."¹⁵¹ One can therefore call his consistent, all-embracing beliefs a Chestertonian viewpoint. "If a man proclaims himself a Marxian, he has given you a line on his political and economic beliefs; a Wesleyan, he has named his theological creed; a Freudian, you know something of his approach to the problems of the unconscious. If he should call himself a Chestertonian, you would see his whole attitude to life mapped out."¹⁵² Green summarizes this attitude by stating that Chesterton's main thesis is "that the age was--and indeed is--rudderless."¹⁵³ But this is only part of it, for Chesterton is an optimist, although his optimism is qualified by his recognition and acceptance of man's Fall. His basic thesis seems to be that with correct vision--not the "colour-blind"¹⁵⁴

vision of most society, but the vision that sees truth and allows wonder--and with action taken by the will, one can solve society's rudderlessness. All of Chesterton's heroes, with their visionary blue eyes, their cartwheels and headstands, their wild hair and sword-sticks, embody their author's consistent and coherent viewpoint.

Footnotes

¹ Dudley Barker, "A Brief Survey of Chesterton's Work," in G. K. Chesterton: A Centenary Appraisal, ed. John Sullivan (London: Paul Elek, 1974), p. 3

² Barker, "A Brief Survey," p. 3.

³ Wilfrid Sheed, "The Thinker-Entertainer," The New York Times Book Review, 9 Oct., 1977, p. 13.

⁴ Hugh Kenner, Paradox in Chesterton (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1947), p. 1.

⁵ P. N. Furbank, "Chesterton the Edwardian," in G. K. Chesterton: A Centenary Appraisal, ed. John Sullivan (London: Paul Elek, 1974), p. 16.

⁶ Hillaire Belloc, On the Place of Chesterton in English Letters (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1940), pp. 9, 40.

⁷ G. K. Chesterton, The Poet and the Lunatics (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1929), p. 125.

⁸ Chesterton, The Poet and the Lunatics, p. 48.

⁹ G. K. Chesterton, Tales of the Long Bow (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1925), p. 85.

¹⁰ G. K. Chesterton, The Napoleon of Notting Hill (London: The Bodley Head, 1904), p. 192, 69.

¹¹ G. K. Chesterton, The Ball and the Cross (London: Wells Gardner, Darton & Co., Ltd., 1910), p. 29.

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- 13 Chesterton, The Poets and the Lunatics, p. 6.
- 14 Chesterton, Tales of the Long Bow, p. 91.
- 15 Chesterton, The Ball and the Cross, p. 60.
- 16 Dudley Barker, G. K. Chesterton: A Biography
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- 24 Chesterton, The Napoleon of Notting Hill, p. 191.
- 25 Barker, G. K. Chesterton, p. 70.
- 26 Chesterton, The Return of Don Quixote, p. 262.
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- 28 Chesterton, Tales of the Long Bow, p. 139.
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- 30 Chesterton, Manalive, p. 40.
- 31 Chesterton, Manalive, p. 43-4.
- 32 G. K. Chesterton, The Man Who Was Thursday (New York:
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- 33 Barker, G. K. Chesterton, p. 70.
- 34 Chesterton, Manalive, p. 112.
- 35 Chesterton, The Napoleon of Notting Hill, pp. 94-5.
- 36 Chesterton, The Club of Queer Trades, pp. 9-10.
- 37 Chesterton, The Return of Don Quixote, p. 84.
- 38 Chesterton, The Return of Don Quixote, p. 100.
- 39 Chesterton, The Return of Don Quixote, p. 301.
- 40 Chesterton, Manalive, p.166.
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REBECCA JANE BURKE

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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From 1900 until 1936 Chesterton published one hundred books, and besides this authorship he wrote essays; one of his life-time tasks was to write a weekly essay for the Illustrated London News. His love for polemics certainly surfaces in these essays, as well as in the remainder of his works. Chesterton is essentially a teacher, an opinion-shaper. His fiction, highly didactic, takes the form of the parable. Because his characters are allegorical incarnations of his beliefs, they strongly resemble one another. Because his heroes in particular represent his philosophical stance, they are even more evidently similar. First, they are similar in appearance and manner, sharing red or gold hair, blue eyes, above average size, ebullience, and disarray. But these traits are merely outer manifestations of the characters' inner qualities. The red or gold hair suggests their passion and rebellion. The blue eyes represent their child-like characteristics. Their large size symbolizes their influence in the novels, their constant activity, their rebellion and child-like personalities. Their disarray, the result of their activity, implies their seeming insanity and their greater concern for ideas rather than appearance. These qualities derive from Chesterton's own beliefs. The heroes are child-like because of their sense of wonder--their fresh vision; they are fascinated with the miracles

of life. But they are also child-like because of their love of limitations. This is directly related to Chesterton's political and economic theory, distributism, which is based on man's love for the small. The best model for this theory, medievalism, with its guilds, enclosures, and manors, appears throughout his novels. Often characters try to reinstate this medievalism through revolution, which Chesterton feels is necessary because man must try to return to the ideal state he left after his Fall. Because of the Fall, man is out of balance and his only hope to return to his ideal state is to believe in and fight for traditions which are remnants of Eden. Through a constant struggle to return, man finds needed adventure and excitement in life. All these ideas form a consistent and coherent thesis embodied in Chesterton's fiction and also in his heroes.

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