Symbolism in the Novels and in the Ballad of the White Horse of G.K. Chesterton

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SYMBOLISM IN THE NOVELS AND IN THE BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

OF G. K. CHESTERTON

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of English
Loyola University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Sister Mary Patricia Cullen, O.S.F.

July, 1949
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BIBLIOGRAPHY
INTRODUCTION

There is little doubt in the minds of most fair-minded critics that Gilbert Keith Chesterton was a sincere man, a profound thinker, and an ardent propagandist. Although many criticize his manner of writing, few can justly say that he was not a man of high ideals and of penetrating vision. The frequency with which he is mentioned in connection with English literature offers ample proof that he was a writer of talent and a thinker of unusual originality.

However, despite Chesterton's varied talents, it seems that most writers discuss the same subjects in connection with him as a writer. There is no dearth of information about his philosophy of life, his propagandizing for the Catholic Church, his use of the paradox, and his marked rhythms and love of the grandiose in poetry. In almost any article about Chesterton these are the highlights touched upon.

As outstanding as these qualities are, there are others which might be investigated with equal profit. Any one reading Chesterton cannot help remarking how frequent is his use of symbolism. This use is evident in every form of his writing, whether it be in the essay, biography, poem, or novel. The symbol seems to be every bit as much a part of his makeup as his famous cape. Therefore, it should be of as much interest as the paradox, the martial spirit in his poetry, or his tendency to propagandize.

Since investigation has shown a decided lack of material on this topic, the special aim of this thesis will be to investigate Chesterton's
use of symbolism. An effort will be made to show that the symbol does hold an important place in his life and in his art. In this regard, many of the points stressed will be the result of an intensive study of Chesterton's own works. This procedure will be necessary because there has been so little written about this topic.

By way of introduction the initial chapter will be devoted to the general topic of symbolism. Various definitions will be examined, and the term as it will be used in this investigation will then be made clear. Brief attention will be given to the French Symbolists in order to illustrate how Chesterton's symbolism deviates from that commonly thought of in connection with this particular school.

In the second chapter the particular emphasis will be on Chesterton's early background, his mental makeup, and his particular interests. This study of early influences is necessary in order to discover the factors that made it almost second nature for him to think and speak in terms of the symbol.

A detailed consideration of four Chesterton novels — The Ball and the Cross, The Napoleon of Notting Hill, The Man Who Was Thursday, and The Flying Inn — will be the primary aim of the third chapter. The symbolic significance of these novels will be the central pivot of discussion.

After it has been shown that the symbol was used consistently in Chesterton's prose, as exemplified in the above works, a study of its use in poetry will be the topic discussed in chapter four. Here The Ballad of the White Horse will be studied as representative of one of his richest symbolic poems.
The thesis will conclude with a discussion of Walter de la Mare's title for Chesterton — "Knight of the Holy Ghost." Appropriately enough, this tribute is couched in symbolic terms; and it emphasizes the source of that deep spiritual vision that made G. K. Chesterton an outstanding Christian symbolist of the twentieth century.

The work of this investigation has been facilitated by the excellent material found in The Autobiography of G. K. Chesterton, Cecil E. Chesterton's G. K. Chesterton: A Criticism, Maurice Evans' G. K. Chesterton. Various magazine articles by J. P. de Fonseka, Theodore Maynard, and W. F. R. Hardie were also of considerable help. Other materials, too numerous to mention, were of great assistance in furnishing rich "leads" to source material and in stimulating thought on the topic.

Special gratitude is due Reverend Norman Weyand, S.J., for his kindly suggestions and his guidance. The librarians of the Cudahy Library of Loyola University, Chicago, the Newberry Library of Chicago, and the Minneapolis Public Library have also been most helpful. Their consideration and kindness in offering all the facilities at their disposal were of great assistance in the work of this thesis.
CHAPTER I

SYMBOLISM

To the average reader the word "symbolism" can take on various shades of meaning; therefore, it is important in this initial chapter to set down its various connotations and to make clear the meaning that the term will have in this study. In addition, brief mention will be made also of the origin of the symbol, of the type of symbol that will be considered, and of the French School of Symbolists.

It is common knowledge that all words are symbols and that without them there would be no language. Adam, endowed with power from God, gave us our first symbols when he named every living thing as it passed before his eyes in the Garden of Eden. However, this was only the beginning, and the word "symbol" has since taken on added meanings. In his Sartor Resartus, Carlyle states that in the symbol there is concealment and at the same time representation, and that in every symbol there is some revelation of the Infinite through the finite.\(^1\) Comte Goblet d'Alviella in his book The Migration of Symbols very tersely says that the symbol is a representation which does not aim at being a reproduction.\(^2\) The poet

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Blake who was immersed in symbols once wrote:

"What to others a trifle appears
Fills me full of smiles and tears;
For double the vision my Eyes do see,
And a double vision is always with me."\(^3\)

In these words he was expressing his conviction that all things are symbols and that even the simplest reality has an outer and an inner side, and that the exterior merely embodies the inner meaning. In less poetic terminology the New International Dictionary gives the following definition:

**Symbol** - "That which stands for or represents something else; a visible sign or representation of an idea or quality, or of another object, by reason of natural aptness, of association, or of convention."\(^4\)

In an article on symbolism in the Dictionary of World Literature, the author indicates the following four levels of symbolism as outlined by Paul Elmer More:

1. **Significative** - the arbitrary, conventional sign which often has all emotion removed, i.e., H\(_2\)O.

2. **Metaphoric** - a conventional sign plus a natural association still felt, i.e., pure as a lily.

3. **Commemorative** - the conventional sign plus a natural association and the recollection of a literal occasion, i.e., "For each man has his cross to bear."

4. **Sacramental** - the symbol is the thing symbolized,

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\(^3\) Quoted by Father James (O.F.M. Cap.) The Music of Life (Westminster, Maryland, Newman Bookshop, 1944), p. 126.

\(^4\) W. T. Harris, editor, Webster's New International Dictionary (Springfield, Massachusetts, Merriam, 1933), p. 2097.
i.e., "To eat of this bread."\(^5\)

After pointing out these various levels of symbolism, More remarks that the first two listed are principally literary, while the last two are primarily religious.

Varied as are these numerous definitions of the symbol they are all similar in agreeing that there is an intellectual quality about the symbol and that it is a significant sign. Taking these two ideas as basic factors, the term symbol as it will be used in this investigation will mean a spontaneously expressive sign which reveals a reality beyond the material object immediately signified. The word will be used in its large, inclusive sense and it may embrace any indefinite symbolic form, including the following:

1. Allegory: "A trope in which a second meaning is to be read beneath and concurrent with the surface story."\(^6\)

2. Symbolic description: The use of description to foreshadow some happening; as for example, a storm foreshadowing some dire event.

3. Symbolic image: "The image is neither identified with a subject nor likened to it, but is a parallel, a representation of some subject which is unnamed, and which may or may not be implied."\(^7\)

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6 Ibid., p. 21.

4. **Metaphor:** "A figure of speech based on comparison which is implied rather than directly expressed."\(^8\)

5. **Simile:** "The comparison of two things essentially unlike, on the basis of a resemblance in one aspect, ..."\(^9\)

It is well to note that the word "spontaneously" makes it evident that the symbol used is one which can be understood by any intelligent reader with an adequate background for interpreting the prose or poetic passage. The word "spiritual" includes any psychological, intellectual, metaphysical, or religious reality. From these statements and definitions it is clear that the term "symbolism" is not meant in any narrow, restricted sense.

Frequently when the words "symbol" and "symbolism" are used there is an immediate association which links it with the Symbolist Movement of the nineteenth century, the chief exponents of which were French writers. However, it is only the word that is related to that movement. The symbolists were not discoverers of the symbol any more than we can say that the naturalists discovered the natural. Symbols were employed extensively in the early Christian culture as can be seen from the walls of the catacombs, the early Christian mosaics, the murals of the Byzantine period, and the first churches of Rome. The Middle Ages were a period rich in symbols because they had a firmly established culture and, since there were common ideas, common beliefs, and common attitudes, neither the symbol

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9 Ibid., p. 413.
nor its meaning presented any problem to the medieval mind. Never since
that time has there been this common understanding of the symbol nor has
any age since used it so successfully.

The French Symbolist Movement was a reaction against naturalism
and materialistic realism in literature. The age in which the symbol again
came into focus was an age of science, an age interested in material things.
Writers of this period aimed to say things so well and so completely that
there was nothing left to the reader's imagination. Those who rebelled
against this type of writing held that to name an object outright sup­
pressed the enjoyment of the reader to conjecture the meaning for himself.
The objectors to realism wished to raise literature to a higher imaginative
level only in the sense that they wished to suggest the meaning and allow
intellectual activity on the part of the reader.

Jean Moreas introduced the term symbol in an article in the Figaro,
September, 1886, to describe a type of literary expression which would be
faultless in form, would pull away from the effusiveness of romanticism,
and would introduce an indirect, imprecise element. Poe was a major in­
fluence in lending impetus to this movement; and Wilson in his Axel's
Castle, says that Poe's critical writings were the first scriptures of
the Symbolist Movement because he had formulated practically a new
literary program which corrected the Romantic tendency toward looseness
and extravagance and aimed at ultra-Romantic effects in contrast to any­
thing naturalistic. 10

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10 Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle: A Study in the Imaginative Lit­
The most outstanding symbolist and the most capable expounder of its tenets was Stephen Mallarmé (1842-1898), a poet who was influenced by Baudelaire and Poe. In his small Paris apartment Mallarmé gave his poetic credo to a devoted group of young men. The whole idea of art which he emphasized was centered about the idea of abolishing exact pictures of reality.

Although there were numerous other symbolists, Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) is the most unique, for he went to the extreme in symbolism. In his disgust for civilization he went to Africa, where he used his talent in escape. It was his boast that he had invented new flowers, and a new language, in which he devised the following colors for the vowels: A, black; E, white; I, red; O, blue; U, green.11

Thus it can be seen that the movement in France had conservative and radical groups. However, despite this difference, all French symbolists of that time held the following as their tenets:

1. To employ a confusion between the perception of the senses as in Poe's "hearing the approach of darkness"12

2. To intimate things rather than to set them forth plainly.

3. To make poetry even more a matter of emotions than the Romanticists had done.

4. To try to make the effects of poetry similar

12 Wilson, op. cit., p. 19.
to the indefinite effects produced by music.

5. To invent, if necessary, a special language to express their personality, even though their thoughts might be incommunicable to any reader. 13

There is an evident divergence between these principles of symbolism and the type of symbol to be discussed in relation to Chesterton and his works. In fact, even a mild type of symbolism in England made little progress except with a few aesthetes and with no writer did the theory reach the extreme as exemplified in the work of Rimbaud. The type of symbol used by Chesterton is natural to him and although its use may make his writing obscure at times, he never consciously set about to produce a certain artistic effect. Chesterton's symbol, on the whole, is clear, conventional, logical, and definite. On the other hand, the symbols used by the Decadents were frequently intelligible only to the poet's own coterie of followers. This fact is stressed by Edmund Wilson, and he states that there is a decided difference in the conventional and fixed symbol and that of the French symbolists. In proof of his point, he defines the symbol of the latter as "a complicated association of ideas represented by a medley of metaphors to communicate unique personal feelings." 14

The men of this school were interested in "art for art's sake," and with such a philosophy Chesterton wished no part. In fact, in a number of his works he makes caustic remarks about such devotees of art.

13 Ibid., pp. 19-21.

14 Wilson, op. cit., p. 22.
In conclusion, symbolism in the sense in which it is used in Chesterton is conscious, but it has not been used for the sake of novelty or for a select group of readers. To him it is a way of spiritualizing all that passes before him. As in the Middle Ages, his symbols do not interpret subjective ideas but serve rather to reveal ultimate realities which have spiritual and moral implications. To the average Christian there is no great confusion in Chesterton's meaning as there would be in the reading of the works of James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, or of any one of the French symbolist poets.
CHAPTER II

G. K. CHESTERTON IN RELATION TO HIS USE OF THE SYMBOL

Looking at Chesterton's early environment, one need not marvel that the symbol became so definitely a part of his mental equipment. His Autobiography, written shortly before his death, is rich in materials which provide the answer as to how a writer, living in the materialistic twentieth century, which reared slaves to reality, could be so completely different from many of his contemporaries in his philosophy. From his life story, two broad topics -- Factors in Chesterton's early Environment and Factors in Chesterton's Intellectual Endowments -- serve as foundation stones upon which may be erected the whole structure of the various influences which, working together, were instrumental in making Chesterton a symbolist and a writer of fantastic tales.

Factors in Chesterton's Early Environment

Gilbert Keith Chesterton was born May 29, 1874, on Campden Hill, Kensington, and was baptised in the Anglican Church of St. George. His father, Edward, was the head of a real estate concern. Business man though he was, it is he who fostered a sense of wonder in his small son. From what Gilbert writes of his father in his Autobiography, it is apparent that his tastes were more literary and artistic than commercial. Of him Chesterton writes:
His den or study was piled high with the stratified layers of about ten or twelve creative amusements, water colour painting and modelling and photography and stained glass and fret work and magic lanterns and medieval illumination. I have inherited, or I hope I imitated, his habit of drawing; ..."¹

With such creative tendencies inherent in his father, it is not surprising that Chesterton was heir to a rich, creative imagination.

The senior Chesterton also seemed to possess that happy faculty of creating a wonderland of delights in his home for his children. In the early pages of his Autobiography, Chesterton speaks of his father as the man with "the golden key," a magician who opened for him the gates of an unreal world of fairies and goblins.² Recalling the first things in his life, he has a vivid mental image of a scene which includes a man with a golden key, a tower, and a beautiful girl — all figures in a toy theater constructed by his father. Of this recollection, which he claims to be his first childhood memory, Chesterton remarks, "...if early impressions count considerably in life — I recognize a sort of symbol of all that I happen to like in imagery and ideas."³

Traits of an entirely different nature were the result of the in-


² Ibid., p. 35.

³ Ibid., p. 25.
fluence of his mother. In his book, Cecil Chesterton points out that a few moments' conversation with Mrs. Chesterton is convincing proof that Gilbert received his wit from her. Nevertheless, Chesterton has never, to this writer's knowledge, commented on the source of his gifts of wit and humour. However, in Orthodoxy he pays tribute to his mother when he refers to her as a prophetess under whose authority he was most full of flame and adventure, because when she said it would snow it did, and in this way the whole world became for him an enchanted wonderland of fulfillments. He comments that the garden, a stray rake, or a cat were all fascinating to him because his mother had provided him with a clue to their identity. Therefore, as his father opened for him the world of imagination and imagery, so his mother awakened in him a sense of wonder at the ordinary things of the world. This attitude of mind is aptly summed up in the Autobiography when Chesterton remarks, "What was wonderful about childhood is that anything in it was a wonder. It was not merely a world full of miracles; it was a miraculous world."

Without question Wordsworth's observation, "the child is father of the man," is apropos in this instance. A perusal of Chesterton's childhood indicates that his interests, schooling, recreation, and reading were such as to stimulate his mind to be of a romantic and imaginative nature.

5 G. K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy (New York, Lane, 1908), p. 289.
6 Chesterton, op. cit., pp. 31-2.
In his *Autobiography* he tells of his delight in taking a book written and illustrated by his father and looking at the pictures of old Dutch houses. Instead of passively admiring the scenes, he would imagine what was not on the picture — streets, homes, and unknown corners. He further comments that this activity is a sport of the imagination which he has played all his life.7

Further on in the same book he relates his love for Punch and Judy shows. Lest his readers should be inclined to think that he lost himself in a dream world as a child, Chesterton explains that he was perfectly aware that the figures were merely wood, which fact did not mar his enjoyment of Punch and Judy; as he expresses it,

> I not only knew that the figures were made of wood, but I wanted them to be made of wood. I could not imagine such a resounding thwack being given except by a wooden stick on a wooden head. But I took the sort of pleasure that primitive man might have taken in a primitive craft, in seeing that they were carved and painted into a startling and grimacing caricature of humanity . . . That did not mean that the drama of wood, like the other drama of cardboard, did not reveal to me real ideas and imaginations, and give me glorious glimpses into the possibilities of existence. Of course, the child did not analyze himself then; and the man cannot analyze him now. But I am certain he was not merely tricked or trapped. 8

West in his study speaks of Chesterton as being the type of child

7 Chesterton, G. K., *op. cit.*, p. 33.

8 Chesterton, G. K., *ibid.*, p. 44.
who was not surprised at impossible things happening. As a little boy he walked the streets of Kensington and imagined houses developing wings and flying, the Waterworks Tower of Kensington lengthening into a huge sea serpent, and homes opening as some huge fish and devouring its occupants. Numerous other childish imaginings were a part of his play life, but since those already mentioned give some proof of their effects on his fancy, a glance at his reading will provide additional evidence of the forces that played a part in the formation of his romantic temperament.

Discussing his brother's cultural background, Cecil Chesterton says, "Reading, no less than discussion, was in the air of his home, and from childhood he was a voracious reader." Perhaps the first books that became a part of his life were fairy tales. It is possible to venture this conjecture, for in the chapter entitled, "The Ethics of Elfland" in Orthodoxy, Chesterton speaks of Macdonald's "The Princess and the Goblin," the reading of which made ordinary staircases, doors, and windows into magical things for him. In another chapter of Orthodoxy, Chesterton claims that fairy tales left him with two convictions — "First, that this world is a wild and startling place, which might have been quite different, but which is quite delightful; second, that before this wildness and de-


11 Ibid., p. 10.
light one may well be modest and submit to the queerest limitations of so queer a kindness. Remarks similar to this occurring not only throughout his own writings but also in those of writers about him show that Chesterton regarded a love for the fairy tale as healthful and a logical and natural approach to belief in the supernatural.

As he approached his adolescent years, Chesterton's reading tastes tended toward the romantic and adventurous. Sir Walter Scott appealed to his boyish imagination, and at times when others thought he was muttering to himself he was, in reality, telling himself stories of a feudal siege in imitation of his romantic ideal. It may be that through reading Scott, he developed his love of armour and weapons. However, Maisie Ward, in her study, makes it clear that Chesterton differed from Scott in this matter because he loved these things not only for their sakes, but also because he saw in them symbols of freedom, adventure, and personal responsibility.

Other writers favored by Chesterton included Shakespeare, Dickens, Macaulay, and Walt Whitman. In discussing Whitman, Cecil Chesterton mentions that *Leaves of Grass* had a decisive influence on Gilbert, and he believes it was only after reading Whitman that Gilbert set out to proclaim the democracy of all things. It is also significant that Whitman viewed the universe with the perceptive insight of a symbolist. The use

12 Chesterton, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
14 Ibid., p. 152.
of symbolism, however, did not furnish the criterion for Chesterton's acceptance of an author, for although he expressed the greatest admiration for Materlinck's dealing with the spiritual, he actually disliked Ibsen intensely as a writer and could not in the least appreciate his type of symbolism. Belloc in his brief critical work, On the Place of Chesterton in English Letters, remarks that no one that he can recall in the whole English literature has Chesterton's almost superhuman capacity for parallelism. He also stresses the fact that this quality was likewise peculiar to his conversation, and that he had a remarkable ability for adding illustration upon illustration in proof of an argument. This characteristic way of speaking and writing leads one to believe that his reading of the New Testament had some influence on his way of thought and his manner of expressing himself. That Chesterton was conscious of literary style in the Bible is evidenced by his comment in Orthodoxy that "the diction used by Christ is quite curiously gigantesque; it is full of camels leaping through needles and mountains hurled into the sea." Peculiarly enough the term "gigantesque" might well be applied to some of Chesterton's own literary images.

16 Ibid., p. 136.
17 Hilaire Belloc, On the Place of Chesterton in English Letters (New York, Sheed & Ward, 1940), p. 36.
18 Ibid., p. 41.
19 Chesterton, op. cit., p. 271.
Apparently Chesterton did not give much attention to contemporary or even to late Victorian writers. As an adolescent, he was influenced stylistically to some extent by Swinburne and Macaulay, as he himself once remarked in speaking of a school publication, "I contributed to it turgid poems, in which bad imitations of Swinburne were so exactly balanced with worse imitations of the Lays of Ancient Rome, that many of my simpler friends fell under the illusion that I had a style of my own."20 Besides this, it is known from his critical study of Browning that Chesterton admired him and his works. This attraction of Browning can be readily understood in the light of the following quotation taken from Fads and Fancies:

My first impulse to write and almost my first impulse to think was a revolt of disgust with the Decadents and the aesthetic pessimism of the nineties. ... I thought that all the wit and wisdom of the world was banded together to slander and depress the world, and in becoming an optimist I had the feeling of becoming an outlaw.21

More direct proof for this influence is found in the Autobiography, where Chesterton admits that his manner of looking at things with gratitude came from reading the writings of Browning and Stevenson.22

However much Chesterton's reading tempered him into a romantic mould, his school days at St. Paul's are treated in his life's story as

20 Chesterton, op. cit., p. 20.


22 Chesterton, op. cit., p. 90.
being a time when he was afraid to appear outstanding in any class and in
which only two masters ever broke down his guard of pretense of stupid-
ity. Of all his school activities the Junior Debating Club evidently
did much in developing his ability to think and his readiness for con-
troversy. The fact that Chesterton won a prize for writing a poem on
St. Francis Xavier while attending St. Paul's is an indication that at
this time, even though he was doing little scholastically as a student,
he, nevertheless, had a love for the romantic, the heroic, and the noble.

After completing his education at St. Paul's, Chesterton attended
the Slade School of Art from 1892 to 1895. Of this period he says very
little except that he wasted time, and that with a friend he frequently
attended English lectures at University College instead of attending his
art lectures. It is more than likely that the type of art then in vogue
had something to do with his apathy in pursuing his studies. Chesterton
himself points out that Impressionism was popular at this time, and that
since its atmosphere contributed indirectly to a mood of unreality and
sterile isolation which almost led him into pessimism, he revolted against
it. It is somewhat significant that the critical works of Chesterton
in the field of painting are concerned with two artists that have tendencies
toward symbolism—William Blake and G. F. Watts. In the latter artist he
sees a man copying the great central realities which are also the subject
matter of philosophy and literature. He answers the objection that pictorial

23 Ibid., p. 65.
24 Ibid., p. 89.
figures in allegorical art are only arbitrary symbols of words by showing how Watt's "Mammon" in its symbolism brings out not only the reality of the crushing power of Commerce, but also portrays the spirit which draws men to destroy and capture when they themselves cannot enjoy. In this same work he spends some time showing how Watts was successful in his use of color as a symbol. As for Blake, there can be no doubt that Chesterton had the highest regard for his mysticism. He speaks of him as being a genuine mystic full of poetry inherited from mystics of all ages and handed down in turn to the mystics of today.

Factors in Chesterton's Intellectual Endowments

Besides these early influences of family life, reading, and schooling, Chesterton was endowed with certain intellectual gifts which doubtless are factors in his tendency to use symbols in his writing. The first and most outstanding of these qualities is his direct, imaginative vision. In his Autobiography he points out that when he contemplates an object he is not imagining it to be something terrifying, as Blake might have done; he is thinking about it, directly perceiving the substance as it is with all its relations. Of this trait Bullett says that the faculty of seeing things, as with the eyes of a child is one that Chesterton possesses in an extraordinary degree, and to it we owe some of his best whimsies. Bullett then

selects from Chesterton's *All Things Considered* the following quotation, which aptly supports the point he has made about Chesterton's embellishing fact, not fiction, with fancy:

...to him to be inside a railway station is to be inside a cavern of wonder and a palace of poetical pleasures. Because to him the red light and the green on the signal are like a new sun and a new moon. Because to him when the wooden arm of the signal falls down suddenly, it is as if a great king had thrown down his staff as a signal and started a shrieking tournament of trains.\(^27\)

A. G. Gardiner is in agreement with Bullett, and in a similar vein remarks that Chesterton has the freshness and directness of the child's vision which enables him to see life in the large with eyes similar to those of Adam on the first day of creation.\(^28\) It was this vision that made Chesterton a creative genius who, despite the fact that he had seen the same things many times, could still glory in them as wonderful and refreshingly new.

With the sense of wonder so much a part of him Chesterton's outlook on the world is usually one of enchantment. His whole philosophy of life is a reaction against excess materialism, and in depicting the real world he used his talents to make it seem fantastic. Always his world is a romantic one, a world resembling a fairy story in which the repetition of things of nature takes on a design and pattern. Miss Ward sums up this


attitude of mind by remarking that "Life was to him a story told by God: the people in it the characters in that story. But since the story was told by God it was, quite literally, a magic story, a fairy story, a story full of wonders created by a divine will."

It is remarkable how Chesterton viewed even the most ordinary things in life with this romantic slant. It was his custom to wear a flopping hat and an ample, flowing cape. In anticipation of some unexpected event he was armed with a swordstick and insisted, even in the well-policed London, on carrying a revolver in his pocket. Very dear to him, too, was a knife which he carried with him always, even taking it to bed with him. In an account of his wedding, he tells how he stopped on his way to the ceremonies to buy a revolver, explaining, "I bought it because it was the great adventure of my youth, with a general notion of protecting her from the pirates doubtless infesting the Norfolk Borders to which we were bound; ..." From this observation, he continues to relate that on the same day he also stopped at a shop to drink a glass of milk, as he had done frequently as a boy, to symbolize his passing from boyhood to the stage of marriage and maturity.

That marriage did not curb the romantic flare in Chesterton is quite apparent from the description of his home in Edwards Square, Kensington. Behind the house beneath a portico, Chesterton had made some very colorful

29 Ward, op. cit., p. 629.
drawings in crayon of knights and heroes. In a letter to Frances, his fiancée, Chesterton had written once, "I have sometimes thought it would be very fine to take an ordinary house, a very poor, commonplace house in West Kensington, say, and make it symbolic...to make a house really allegoric: really explain its own essential meaning." It would seem that these flaming sketches were initial attempts to fulfill his dream. Later on, in his Beaconfield home, which Father O'Connor states was dedicated to the Beloved Apostle, he had on the hearth of a centrally located room an emblem of St. John worked out in its tiles. Similarly, at one end of his room he had hung a portrait of Cardinal Manning as a "symbol of a spiritual state which may be called my second childhood."

Another indication of Chesterton's romanticism was his love of toy theaters. Here was an outlet for his fondness for color and the dramatic. So popular were these puppet plays of his that Mrs. Chesterton had a studio built across the street from their home so that larger audiences of children could enjoy them. Even after the toy theater had been given up, Chesterton used it for acting out charades with a group of interested neighbors. In many instances the characters of his novels are pictured so vividly in certain "set" situations that they seem to be part of this pasteboard world that G. K. had as a hobby for so long a time.

31 Ward, op. cit., p. 98.


33 Chesterton, op. cit., p. 380.
Chesterton's ideas on innumerable small things show his flare for romanticism. Rain had a special meaning for him -- it was something freshening, cleansing like Baptism. In the same symbolic strain an umbrella was a sign of artificiality. Fleet Street, his favorite haunt, was a paradise of unexpected happenings, and all nature was a background for human romance. He once wrote in one of his short poems that democracy had made of men a "million masks of God." This was no idle fancy for Chesterton, but actually seeing God in mankind was the reason for his militant outlook for man and his rights. The same mystic insight enabled him to see the cross in trees and in door posts. It was likewise his custom to make the sign of the cross over a cup of coffee, on a door before entering a room, and with his match as he lit his cigar. Even in naming his weekly paper he chose the title G. K.'s Weekly because "I do not want a colourless name, and the nearest I can get to something like a symbol is merely to fly my own colors." There is one more inclination which must be discussed in connection with Chesterton's romantic spirit and that is his love of the medieval. He avows his stand by declaring, "I will venture to make even of these trivial fragments the high boast that I am a medievalist and not a modern."37

34 Ward, op. cit., p. 57.
35 O'Connor, op. cit., p. 88.
36 Ward, op. cit., p. 491.
Here frequently his attitude is misunderstood or ridiculed as mere fondness for pageantry, color, and merry-making of the Middle Ages. This outlook, however, is erroneous. Naturally, to Chesterton these things had their appeal, but medievalism was not loved because it furnished an escape into a colorful past. Certainly he was no Miniver Cheevy, looking with regretful eyes at the merry days of old. Lea rightly speaks of his medievalism as a "longing for a society in which the human relation between man and nature, and between man and man, had never been obscured by the intermediacy of machinery of 'cash nexus.'"38 Similarly, Valeriu thinks that Chesterton turned to the medieval in rebellion against the danger of "mechanical petrifaction,..."39

Chesterton himself assures us that is the meaning behind the things of the medieval world in which he interested, not the color, when he says in The Uses of Diversity that the medievals splashed bright color everywhere, but it had meaning. Monks dressed in brown signifying the simplicity of earth, and churches were colored with the blood of God. The modern world, in contrast, is full of bright lights and posters, signifying nothing.40 From this then, we can see that he loved the crusades because of their ideal,


the oath of honor because of the nobility it gave man; the cathedrals because they told a colorful story of man's love for God; the medieval thinkers -- St. Francis of Assisi, St. Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Chaucer -- because they found truth; and the spirit of the Age because there was uniformity in religion and in the family.

Closely analogous to Chesterton's imaginative vision is his aptitude for the supernatural. More than one critic has termed him as essentially a contemplative. Before Chesterton's conversion, De Tonquedec, a French Jesuit, termed him a "mystical materialist" for whom "objects have an esoteric signification and speak a language dotted with symbols." 41 Certainly this assertion, though made early in Chesterton's career, was true of him at that time. However with maturity came an interest in and a love for the supernatural. With this turning to the things of the spirit, it is obvious that Chesterton approaches very close to being a contemplative.

Now Chesterton's whole way of thinking resulted in his viewing all material objects as limited beings participating in God. He became accustomed to looking at grass and seeing God. Kenner especially emphasizes this fact in his work and points out that Chesterton gradually withdrew from a perilous position of reading thoughts into things and instead came to concentrate on their "thingness." 42 Lea expresses this idea even more

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clearly when he gives the following view of Chesterton’s way of looking at the things of the world:

Note how this view avoids both pitfalls; the alternative abysses of impotence. The mind is not merely receptive, in the sense that it absorbs sensations like so much blotting-paper; on that sort of softness has been based all that cowardly materialism which conceives man as wholly servile to his environment. On the other hand, the mind is not purely creative, in the sense that it paints pictures on the windows and then mistakes them for the landscape outside. But the mind is active, and its activity consists in following, so far as the will chooses to follow, the light outside that does really shine upon real landscapes.

...In other words, the essence of the Thomist common sense is that two agencies are at work; reality and the recognition of reality; and their meeting is a sort of marriage. Indeed it is very truly a marriage, because it is fruitful; the only philosophy now in the world that really is fruitful. ⁴³

From what authorities say on this matter then, it is clear that Chesterton wrote as he did because it was natural for him to see every thing in terms of analogies.

To the very end, G. K. believed in what was beyond the senses and derided materialists, who refused to admit that there was only one answer to the whole mystery of creation — God. Growing up as he did in the midst of nihilists, Chesterton spent a lifetime fighting them. In an effort to defeat their midnight views and materialistic outlooks he spent his life in being thankful for creation and in being astonished at its wonders. Over

⁴³ Lea, op. cit., p. 95.
and over again in his works he endeavors to awaken in his reader a sense of wonder in things man too often takes for granted, the commonplaces of daily living. His whole philosophy of art is succinctly stated in the following:

The arts exist, as we should put it in our primeval fashion, to show forth the glory of God; or, to translate the same thing in terms of our psychology, to awaken and keep alive the sense of wonder in man. The success of any work of art is achieved when we say of any subject, a tree or of a human character, "I have seen that a thousand times and I never saw it before." 44

To Chesterton, next to the need for wonder was the necessity for a sense of humor. So important was it to him that he regarded it next in importance to the grace of God and looked upon solemnity as being very closely allied to hypocrisy. 45 This same attitude is also exemplified in the two main characters of The Napoleon of Notting Hill, through whom he shows how necessary it is to combine wonder with humor in order to maintain a sane attitude toward life. This was not just a pet theory of Chesterton's, but a conviction that he lived. Even in the gravest discussion he laughed at the evils he was challenging, and in his private life there are several well-known incidents in which he deliberately made himself look foolish in order to avoid some "too-serious" individual.

Undoubtedly, Chesterton saw two aspects of the truth, the serious and the humorous. Since the modern liberals were so "deadeningly" serious, he let his humor become even more dominant in all his works. In his essay,

44 Ibid., p. 108.
45 O'Connor, op. cit., p. 90.
"A Defense of Nonsense," he gives a valuable clue to the reason for his turning to fantasy. After speaking briefly on allegory in literature he says,

Even the vulgarest melodrama or detective story can be good if it expresses something of the delight in sinister possibilities -- the healthy lust for darkness and terror which may come on us any night in walking down a dark lane. If, therefore, nonsense is really to be the literature of the future, it must have its own version of the Cosmos to offer; the world must not only be tragic, romantic, and religious, it must be nonsensical also. And here we fancy that nonsense will, in a very unexpected way, come to the aid of the spiritual view of things. Religion has for centuries been trying to make men exult in the "wonders" of creation, but it has forgotten that a thing cannot be completely wonderful so long as it remains sensible. So long as we regard a tree as an obvious thing, naturally and reasonably created for a giraffe to eat, we cannot properly wonder at it. It is when we consider it as a prodigious wave of the living soil sprawling up to the skies for no reason in particular that we take off our hats, to the astonishment of the park-keeper.46

From this standpoint it is easy to understand why the characters in his books come bouncing out of the trees like balloons, (Manalive), dangle perilously from church towers, (The Ball and the Cross), and hold helpless professors at the point of a gun while the latter cling to the window ledge (Manalive). Although this faculty of combining the humorous with

the serious has made Chesterton very readable and entertaining, at the same time it has caused many not to take him seriously. Even though his opinions are sound and wise, his use of wit and exaggeration brings down upon him the accusation of turning over backwards in an effort to be clever.

"Dullness will however free me from the charge which I most lament;" says Chesterton, "the charge of being flippant. Mere light sophistry is the thing that I happen to despise most of all things, and is perhaps a wholesome fact that this is the thing of which I am generally accused. I know nothing so contemptible as a mere paradox; a mere ingenious defence of the indefensible."47 Thus in his own words Chesterton exonerates himself from the charge of being deliberately clever.

The fact that Chesterton spent most of his life in challenging the thought and trends of his time exemplifies another of his intellectual qualities — his interest in ideas. Even from the most cursory study of his life and writings this trait is obvious. People's names, faces, and dress he forgot quickly, but he had an uncanny memory for the ideas they had expressed.48 In his Autobiography he confesses, "I could not be a novelist; because I really like to see ideas or notions wrestling naked, as it were, and not dressed up in a masquerade as men and women."49 How truly

47 G. K. Chesterton, Orthodoxy (New York, John Lane, 1908), p. 17.
48 O'Connor, op. cit., p. 31.
49 Chesterton, op. cit., p. 298.
he analyzed his own weakness is apparent upon reading any one of his novels. Artist that he was, he was able to paint a vivid picture, portraying scene and characters, but a glance tells us soon enough that this is not a real world and that the men clambering over fences, madly pursued by the law, (The Ball and the Cross) are not flesh and blood but belong rather to the world of abstractions. In Chesterton's works it is not his characters, scenes, and portrayal of concrete objects that are outstanding, but rather his use of imaginative vision that is remarkable, particularly in discussing ideas that are fundamentally philosophical. The very story of his conversion to Christianity, as it is told in Orthodoxy, discloses Chesterton as a thinker. In him, there is the combination of imaginative vision and intellectual acumen which resulted in expressing that vision in terms that are startling and bizarre.

Glancing back over the factors of environment and the native gifts which contributed to the development of Chesterton's personality and character, one can now more readily understand his tendencies toward the symbolic and his propensity to indulge in fantasy. Into his writings he carried that romantic outlook which kept him young in spirit and eternally grateful for the gifts of life, love, and laughter.
CHAPTER III

THE SYMBOLIC NATURE OF G. K. CHESTERTON'S NOVELS

G. K. Chesterton's novels have baffled many simply because they have not understood the man who wrote them. In the preceding chapters an attempt has been made to show Chesterton as a man of strong convictions, a man of dynamic imagination, and a man of definite tendencies toward combining the nonsensical with the serious. Although these qualities are becoming to journalistic and controversial writing, they seldom result in successful novels. However, this study is by no means an attempt to reveal G. K. as a first-rate novelist. On the contrary, the primary interest in the novels with regard to Chesterton is his use of symbolism. Thus the following brief remarks will deal primarily with the technique and structure of his novels as a whole before considering the symbolism in each of the novels chosen for detailed study.

Various critics have volunteered definitions of Chesterton's novels, but perhaps the most penetrating is his own admission that he cannot call his works novels but rather narratives.¹ Theodore Maynard refers to them as essays in fiction, all of which, with the exception of The Napoleon of Notting Hill, branch out from one pivotal thought -- God.²

¹ Bullett, op. cit., p. 219.
Kenner, who is interested chiefly in the paradoxes of Mr. Chesterton says that the Chestertonian novel constructs a "web of analogies" which are the products of a philosopher, not of a dramatist. In his work, Williams terms his novels as "excursions into satiric and didactic fantasy." Lastly, Las Vergnas in referring to them says, "They are not so much literary productions as the enfevered paroxysms of a Faith, of an Intuition in travail to create."

Almost any one of these comments will serve to illustrate one salient point; namely, that Chesterton's use of fiction was primarily one of furthering a cause or propounding a thesis. Placing truth above art, he uses allegory simply because his purpose is to instruct rather than to delight. The appeal of his novels then is chiefly to the intellect rather than to the emotions. It is this purpose that many critics overlook when reviewing Chesterton's books. To understand his novels, one must have an acquaintance with his ideas and his philosophy of life, for without this background, the reader finds himself without a key to the meaning Chesterton sought to convey.

A cursory glance at Chesterton's novels in regard to plot, charac-

3 Kenner, op. cit., p. 133.


terization, and style seems essential before assuming the study of any individual novel. It is a little difficult to discuss plot simply because Chesterton's novels are basically weak in this respect. They are not dramatic but more on the level of allegory or myth. The conflict in the stories always involves contradictory philosophical ideas as, atheism versus Catholicism; the man of common tastes versus teetotallers; the man of faith versus sceptics; the spiritual versus scientific materialism.

This conflict is treated in Chesterton's typical journalistic style, so there is no doubt which group Chesterton is opposing. Although the arguments "for and against" advanced by Chesterton are brilliant, it is just this interest in his thesis that makes his works outstanding in their moral message, but lacking in the true-to-life background necessary for a novelist's imaginative conceptions. Bullett refers to Chesterton's novels as dramatized versions of Orthodoxy, and this tells the story of his emphasis on ideas, rather than on life.

Just as his plots center on the conflict of ideas, so Chesterton's characters are not human beings, but ideas thinly veiled as people. He is not interested in his characters as complete personalities but as embodiments of some religious, social, or political idea. However, in his characterization Chesterton is entirely different from other writers who employed this device of using a character for a symbol in that, unlike writers such as Bunyan, he permits his characters to go off at times on

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6 Bullett, op. cit., p. 149.
their own adventures as ordinary people. At such times their actions have no ulterior significance. In other words, Chesterton in his novel fails to keep on one plane of reality but is constantly shifting from one plane to another. This, of course, is a recognized weakness in his characterization.

In *Prophets and Poets*, Andre Maurois remarks that it is curious that Chesterton, so fond of the ordinary man, is incapable of depicting one in his novels, and that nearly all his heroes are, or become, philosophers and theologians. It is evident, too, that Chesterton has a group of stock characters who seem to repeat themselves. In several of his novels — *The Man Who Was Thursday*, *The Flying Inn*, and *The Ball and the Cross* — people in flight from society are presented. In another group — *Manalive*, *The Ball and the Cross*, *The Poet and the Lunatics* — are portrayed men who are branded as insane because they have rebelled against science. His fighting heroes — Dalroy, Turnbull, and Adam Wayne — have red hair. Character portrayal of women in his novels is very vague. His women are mere shadows who have red hair as their only distinguishing quality. In several of his novels women play so small a part that he does not take time to picture them for his reader at all. Perhaps Chesterton's high ideal of womanhood kept him from involving them too deeply in his philosophical conflicts and in plunging them into the grotesque situations which he creates for his men characters. In his realm of fiction it is evident that women should be inspirations, not prime movers. To repeat then, Chesterton's

imaginative gifts have enabled him to draw interesting personages on his canvas of fiction, but practically always the reader is aware that they are only figures, personifications of some idea.

Admittedly, the novels of Chesterton are interesting for their wit, excitement, and brilliant dialogue; nevertheless, they will never gain a place of importance in literature simply because they deal with philosophies, not the feelings of men. New philosophical problems arise but human nature remains constant. The result is that the men and women who face the new philosophical problems are possessed of the same dominant emotions which have characterized men from the beginning of time. Many of the problems of so paramount importance to Chesterton are no longer a source of conflict in the world of today. How many people are worried now about evolution, Mohammedanism, and prohibition? Aside from this, Chesterton's obscurity, obtained through the use of the symbol, has proved a stumbling block to many. His religious position is always presented from the Roman Catholic standpoint, and in the case of non-believers much of the significance of his communication is almost wholly lost.

With this introduction serving as a background, the novels selected for special research will be examined for their symbolic significance chronologically according to the year in which each was written. Thus, The Napoleon of Notting Hill, published in 1904, will be the first novel analyzed, and The Flying Inn, written ten years later, will conclude the chapter. Between these two will occur The Man Who Was Thursday, published in 1908, and The Ball and the Cross, published in 1910. In discussing each
novel, the characters, action, and descriptive detail will be considered from the standpoint of the symbolism revealed.

**The Napoleon of Notting Hill**

The Napoleon of Notting Hill was written in 1904 when Chesterton was thirty years old. It is full of the romance, high spirits, and humor of a man who delights in the flash of swords and the excitement of battle. One might wonder what prompted Chesterton to write such a fantastic tale; thus, a consideration of the various factors which brought it into existence is necessary to a complete understanding of its meaning, for to some its adventures might seem mere indulgence in romantic skirmishes.

In his Autobiography Chesterton narrates how he first conceived the idea of the story. He relates that he was walking in North Kensington one day, telling himself stories of feudal sieges, when he had the idea that London was too large a city to be a citadel. It seemed to him that a city block with its various shops would be ideal in size either to defend or to attack. The Waterworks tower in the distance could be a military objective, since its water supply would be a means of flooding the valley, and this would insure certain victory. Chesterton concludes by saying that with the rushing waters "the first fantastic notion of The Napoleon of Notting Hill rushed over my mind."  

A street of shops and a water tower furnished the stimuli for Chesterton's imaginative conception of this novel, but the Boer War pro-

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8 Chesterton, op. cit., p. 106.
vided the ideas on which he wished to take his philosophical stand on the questions involved. He was struck by the insincerity and injustice of the national claim against the Boers, and he hated the confidence and anticipation of victory over them. In speaking of Belloc's attitude toward the war, Chesterton says,

Though his military imagination flung its battle-line far across history from the Roman Legions to the last details of the guns of Gravelotte, and mine was a parochial fancy of an impossible skirmish in Notting Hill, we knew the fable and the facts were the same, and when I finished my Cockney fantasy, I dedicated it to him.9

Beneath the flash and color of The Napoleon of Notting Hill the basic ideas at conflict are the following: 1) nationalism against imperialism; 2) the decadents against a man who takes his rights seriously; 3) the small shop keeper against collectivism,10 and the small land owner, science;11 4) romance against dull modernity, and 5) the humorist against the fanatic. Each one of these conflicts is veiled in the story, but the symbolism is not difficult to detect, provided the reader is familiar with Chesterton's social philosophy. Cecil Chesterton in his work remarks that "none of his political essays sum up his view of politics so completely as

9 Ibid., p. 115.

10 Chesterton, Cecil op. cit., p. 185.

this extravagant romance of King Auberon Quin and Adam Wayne.  

The scene of the romance is set in the late twentieth century. The great nations have absorbed all the small ones, peace reigns over the world, and men have grown dull and disillusioned with their prosaic existence. The King of this empire is selected from an alphabetical rotation of the ruling class. When the kingship falls to Auberon Quin, he resolves, by way of a joke, to force all his subjects to change his kingdom to medievalism and to adopt flags, guards, uniforms, and halberds. The empire is divided and each section is made a borough with a Lord High Provost in charge. All the men comply reluctantly, but Adam Wayne, the Provost of Notting Hill, takes the affair seriously. When an attempt is made to drive a new road through his district, he rallies his patriots around him and declares war on the other boroughs. Immediately enthusiasm is aroused and battles rage. Adam Wayne hurls back his enemies and inspires other London districts with patriotism. Wayne is finally victorious and establishes his empire. Later, when that empire becomes insolent, it is crushed by the neighboring boroughs which now have a strong patriotism of their own. Finally, a conversation between Adam Wayne and Auberon Quin reveals that together they have remedied a great evil and that together they make up laughter and love, which every common man has to the right degree.

Auberon Quin is a symbol for an aesthete and for humor incarnate. "He is," says Knox," representative of a placid, effete humanitarian im-

12 Cecil Chesterton, op. cit., p. 178.
perialism." After describing his physical appearance as seeming to have been designed by nature with a compass, so round were his head and eyes, Chesterton brings Quin's description to a close by saying that frequently he was mistaken for a boy until he spoke -- then they realized that a boy would have been more intelligent. His only interest is personal enjoyment, and Quin tells his companions -- Lambert and Barker -- that a sense of humor is the new religion of mankind. Chesterton speaks of him as a man gone mad because civilization has made of him an utterly idle man.

To make all State affairs one good, roaring joke is his burning desire when he is made King. As he walks the street, thinking of how his dream can be realized, he meets a young boy who inspires him with the right plan. (This child, Adam Wayne as a little boy, is a symbol for romance.) The next day Quin makes his Proclamation which returns modern London to its medieval splendor. Chuckling at his joke, he now has a purpose in life and is engrossed in devising symbolic head gear, uniforms, and coats-of-arms for the municipalities of London.

Nevertheless, Quin's plan for convulsing the world into one great joke did not take into account the nature of Adam Wayne grown to man's

13 Knox, op. cit., p. 353.


15 Ibid., p. 52.

16 Ibid., p. 55
estate, now the Provost of Notting Hill. Here Wayne is a symbol for the fanatic. As a little child, Wayne had been unwittingly inspired by Quin to extreme patriotism with his remark to the youngster about defending Notting Hill with his very life. Now, Wayne is the only man who takes the King's Proclamation seriously, and he will defend his borough to the shedding of blood, so important has the idea of local patriotism become to him. Typically a Chestertonian hero, he is large, has red hair, and carries a great sword. From his first speech — "I bring homage to my King. I bring him the only thing I have, my sword." all recognize that here is a man with whom to cope.

Besides being a fanatic, Wayne is a symbol for the poet, the mystic, and the patriot. As a poet he lived, spoke, and acted lyrically in the heraldic vision created by Quin. With the spiritual insight of a mystic, his thoughts are always very close to the supernatural. Colored lights look to him like fiery trees, and iron fence railings are invulnerable protection for homes. His imagination could have conjured up the following lines taken from Chesterton's dedicatory poem to The Napoleon of Notting Hill:

For every tiny town or place
God made the stars especially;
Babies look up with owlish face
And see them tangled in a tree:
You saw the moon from Sussex Downs,
A Sussex moon, untravelled still,

17 Ibid., p. 113.
18 Ibid., p. 132.
I saw a moon that was the town's
The largest lamp on Campden Hill.19

It is his patriotism, however, that is the moving force in the novel. He loves the smallness of Notting Hill and enjoys defending it as he would have enjoyed a crusade.

Although these two, Wayne and Quin, are the two predominating symbols, there are others. James Barker is a symbol for the politician who is looking only to the advancement of himself. Auberon Quin says to him, "You are mad, because you care for politics, as mad as a man who collects tram tickets."20 As a symbol for the capitalist who has a lust for gold and a distorted vision of the universe, Chesterton introduces Lord Buck and castigates the harm such an individual does to men's souls. To the unimaginative and materialistic Buck, war was just a matter of having the stronger force, something merely mathematical and physical. Since he failed to take cognizance of the Christian virtues of courage and fortitude in his appraisal, Buck was proved to be entirely wrong at the Battle of the Lamps. Cecil Chesterton refers to both Barker and Buck as "the civic type,"21 a type held in particular scorn by his brother.

Wilson is introduced as a symbol for the intellectually proud modern who thinks himself above error. When Wilson is most confident of himself, Wayne captures the Waterworks Tower, forces a surrender, and establishes

19 Ibid., p. 7.
20 Ibid., p. 105.
21 Cecil Chesterton, op. cit., p. 184.
the Empire of Notting Hill. Before the conclusion Wilson is killed by Adam Wayne, a symbol of humility. However, the great sword that kills him is broken at the hilt, and this occurrence might symbolize the Satanic power of pride and the necessity of humility to die to itself before triumphing over so strong an adversary.

Mr. Mead, the grocer of Notting Hill, is in one instance a symbol of all monopolists, and in another he is a symbol of romance. The chemist, Mr. Bowles, is a symbol for the supernatural, the superhuman power which should inspire others with fear of God. The irascible barber symbolizes a practical, unimaginative pacifist. On the other hand, the toy shop owner, Mr. Turnbull, represents the militarist and the medievalist. He had, says Chesterton, "the rational and deliberate preference for a short life and a merry one."23

In one respect, the city of London also stands as a symbol. When the book begins, it is a symbol of modernity. Everything is prosaic, dull, and insipid. Sheer monotony has gripped men's souls, and they are bored believers in automatic evolution. Completely atrophied by their mechanical civilization, they no longer believe in revolution because they have lost faith in any truth or ideal. After Adam Wayne is successful in teaching his enemies patriotism, London represents medievalism. The dull city is transformed to meaningful splendor. King Auberon in noting the change in the various landmarks of London comments, "Old Wayne was right in a way.

23 Ibid., p. 162.
The sword does make things beautiful. It has made the whole world romantic by now. In the new regime, men dress in robes adorned with symbols befitting their occupation. With the changed city, men, too, have been transformed. On seeing Barker in the last battle, Wayne comments, "How Barker has improved; how handsome he looks! It is not all having plumes; it is also having a soul in one's daily life." Each man now has awakened to a new interest in living, and each views the prosaic past as a period of madness.

Symbolic detail is introduced as soon as the ex-President of Nicaragua expounds on the symbolism of color. Whenever he sees red and gold, regardless of the objects — blood and a splash of mustard — he sees Nicaragua. This is his heraldry and he searches for it everywhere. In assuming medieval costumes and weapons, each section of the city is given a symbolic color and a symbol which has some relation to its past history. The halberdiers of Bayswater, for instance, wear a green uniform, and their banner is silver with a green bay-wreath on it because of its residents' interest in glory. Throughout the entire novel, the sword is referred to as a fairy wand of fear with the power to transform. To Chesterton, the sword was always a sign of man's supremacy over the creation placed beneath him by God. "The touch of it," says Adam Wayne, "is the finger of a strange perfection." To Wayne also the street is more poetic than a

24 Ibid., p. 261.
25 Ibid., p. 281.
26 Ibid., p. 118.
meadow because it is going some place, the shops are arsenals, an area is a moat, and corners of balconies are points for placing archers.

In the following quotation, which pictures a triumphant Wayne, can be seen several examples of symbolism:

Adam Wayne, the conqueror, with his face flung back, and his mane like a lion's, stood with his great sword point upwards, the red rainment of his office flopping around him like the red wings of an archangel. And the King saw, he knew not how, something new and overwhelming. ... This was normal, this was sanity, this was nature; and he himself, with his rationality and his detachment and his black frock coat, he was the exception and the accident — a blot of black upon a world of crimson and gold. 27

Here reference is made to the lion, a symbol of strength, worked in red on the yellow banner of Notting Hill. The uniform worn by this group is red — the color of the martyrs, those men who were courageous enough to love their convictions so dearly as to willingly shed their blood. Adam Wayne, as victor and conqueror, represents the nobility of man as a human being who is important because he is made according to the image and likeness of God. Auberon Quin, on the other hand, with his emphasis on intelligence and correct manners, is the broad-minded dilettante, the spot of evil which threatens to blot out the crimson and gold record of a humanity that has ideals and is willing to fight to preserve them.

Perhaps the best example of a symbolic incident is the Battle of the Lamps as it is recorded in Book IV. Pump Street is the military objective,
and the following description tells of the enemy's moving on the foe:

Before it was a slope of street, long, straight, and shining in the dark. It was a sword pointed at Pump Street, the heart at which nine other swords were pointed that night. 28

The nine swords are a symbolic expression for the other nine districts of London. These nine represent the "head" which has calculated in scientific coolness a victory over the district of Notting Hill, symbolically referred to as the "heart." Chesterton has with forethought designated it as "the heart," for in the swift battle that follows, it is victorious. Scientific warfare has forgotten to account for the heart of one man -- Adam Wayne, who is fired with fervor and patriotism. The nine materialistic sections are plunged into darkness when the lights are extinguished by Wayne and, without the light of the medieval spirit of love of truth, the moderns turn their own weapons on themselves. In the chaos that follows they encounter one another and butcher the men of their own forces.

Lest the reader miss the symbolic character of the battle, a song is composed in which Chesterton re-emphasizes the various symbols given in the prose account of the battle. These are its words:

When the world was in the balance, there was night on Notting Hill,
(There was night on Notting Hill): it was nobler than the day;
From the seas and from the deserts came the thing we did not know,
Came the darkness, came the darkness, came the darkness of the foe,

And the old guard of God turned to bay,
For the old guard of God turns to bay,
    turns to bay,
And the stars fall down before it ere its
banners fall today:
For when armies were around us as a howling
    and a horde,
The darkness came upon them like the Dragon
    of the Lord,
When the old guard of God turned to bay. 29

The expression, "The world was in the balance," signifies the struggle
between the powers of good and evil so apparent in this century. "Night"
has reference to the effect produced by various Godless philosophers who
see their pulling away from the Son of God as progress. Of course, its
opposing symbol, "day," refers to the state of the world under Christian
teaching. "On the cities where the lights and the firesides glow" pertains
to the Church with its light of faith and safeguarding of the home. These
two objects are aimed at by the enemy, since they are the foes of Godless-
ness. The darkness coming from the seas and the deserts symbolizes the
nature of the darkness—philosophies which are foreign, destructively
cruel, and devastating. By the expression, "And the old guard of God turned
to bay," is symbolically expressed the idea that the followers of truth
turned in defense of the truth. By further symbols, Chesterton tells that
before the close of the battle God sent additional darkness upon the lovers
of darkness. Within this darkness the "stars," leaders of the Godless
hoardes, fall and the banners of the Christian are left standing.

After Wayne's triumph over the other boroughs, there are various

29 Ibid., p. 271.
emblems of victory erected in the city. At Ossington Gate of Notting Hill is mounted an immense lion, wrought in red copper. At its side a guard in red and gold salutes him. In memory of the Battle of the Lamps, each great lamp of the city is surmounted by a veiled figure with a sword, holding over the flame an iron extinguisher as if ready to let it fall if the armies should attack again. A gigantic silver hammer stands in the center of the main street of Broadway, a gigantic bronze figure of a knight upon Knightsbridge, and a great black raven commemorates the battle at Ravenscourt Park. Of course, each of these figures is symbolic of some victory over the materialists.

Besides giving the city character and interest, Wayne also changes the attitude of its occupants. The shopkeepers become romantically medieval. Mr. Mead, the grocer, dresses in a long robe on which are woven obscure symbols and pictures, representing his wares passing from nation to nation. He wears a blue argosy in turquoise on a chain around his neck, an emblem testifying that he is the Grand Master of the Grocers. His wares are stored in symbolic containers decorated with a form—shell, horn, fish, apple—to indicate what they contain.

In the incident in which Wayne wages his last battle, ideas are made significant through a continuous symbol. When Wayne meets Buck in combat, Wayne's sword is broken. However, with the branch of a tree Wayne fells Buck, who has a dagger of steel. Symbolically, the weapons used represent the poet and the materialist. At Buck's defeat, Wayne salutes him and refers to heaven in symbolic phrases by concluding his tribute to him as a
brave man with the words, "there is good wine poured in the inn at the end of the world." After this, the whole mob of men, thirty or more, rush at Wayne and for security he grasps an oak tree. In vain do they try to tear him away. Suddenly his adversaries realize that the tree is falling and Adam Wayne then cries out in the fast-approaching darkness,

I am clinging to something. Let it fall, and there let it lie. Fools, you go about and see the kingdoms of the earth, and are liberal and wise and cosmopolitan, which is all that the devil can give you—all that he could offer to Christ, only to be spurned away. I am doing what the truly wise do. When a child goes out into the garden and takes hold of a tree, saying, 'Let this tree be all I have,' that moment its roots take hold on hell and its branches on the stars. The joy I have is what the lover knows when a woman is everything. It is what a savage knows when his idol is everything. I have a city. Let it stand or fall.

As he concludes, the tree is uprooted and all are killed in its fall. Here the approaching darkness is the chaos that will result in the clash between materialism and Christianity. The oak to which Wayne clings represents strength and the deeply rooted traditions and truths for which the Christian is willing to die. When these principles are endangered and assaulted, the whole world will be in a state of darkness. If error persists in its efforts to destroy truth, men will find their world crashing about them and destroying them just as the oak crashed to earth when Adam Wayne was attacked.

30 Ibid., p. 288.
31 Ibid., p. 289.
by his enemies.

Of the novels studied for this research, *Napoleon of Notting Hill* is more typically Chestertonian than any of the others because of its romantic character and its hurried action. Maisie Ward cites Auberon Quin and Adam Wayne as the best examples of characterization in G. K.'s books simply because these two individuals are the two lobes of Chesterton's own brain individualised.32

**The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare**

In the introduction to *The Man Who Was Thursday* is a dedicatory poem to Edmund C. Bentley which gives the clue to the symbolism used in the novel. Although the rhymes of the poem are simple and the rhythm rollicking, the words and ideas expressed are important. The following few verses tell the story of how it was that this particular novel took on the subtitle, *A Nightmare*:

>This is a tale of those old fears, even of those emptied hells,
And none but you shall understand the true thing that it tells--
Of what colossal gods of shame could cow men and yet crash,
Of what huge devils hid the stars, yet fell at a pistol flash.
The doubts that were so plain to choose,
so dreadful to withstand--
Oh, who shall understand but you; yea, who shall understand?33

32 Ward, op. cit., p. 177.

From additional verses of this poem and from remarks made in his Autobiography, it is evident that Chesterton clearly meant this novel to be one of revolt. The whole pessimistic picture painted by the decadents of the fin de siecle made him struggle for a brighter view of the world, one more wholesome but not necessarily completely optimistic. In writing The Man Who Was Thursday, he discloses that he had two facts in mind—

First, I was trying vaguely to found a new optimism, not on the maximum but the minimum of good. I did not so much mind the pessimist who complained that there was so little good. But I was furious, even to slaying, with the pessimist who asked what was good of good. And second, even in the earliest days and even for the worst reasons, I already knew too much to pretend to get rid of evil. I introduced in the end one figure who really does, with a full understanding, deny and defy the good.

Chesterton aspired then to show that things are not so bad as they seem, and that we frequently fail to realize that there is only one in favor of complete evil and that is Satan. Symbolically, the plot portrays the conflict of a man who represents good as he sees it against other men who are likewise fighting for good as they see it. All are proved wrong by the only Right, God, but each has had the glory of fighting for something he holds dear.

The plot around which Chesterton constructs his argument against the


of. also G. K.'s introduction to a dramatization of The Man Who Was Thursday in G.K. as M.C., ed. by J. P. de Fonseka. (London, Methuen, 1929), Pp. 204–205.
pessimists is simple, and the adventures, many of which are not symbolic, are at times realistic. Briefly, the novel opens with a conversation between two poets, Syme and Gregory. Suddenly the fantastic is introduced when the table at which Syme is sitting in a cafe sinks with him through the floor. While underground he gets into the hands of a ring of anarchists, each member of which bears the name of one day of the week. By trickery, Syme substitutes himself for the man called Thursday, and, in this way, he hopes to discover the enemy's plots. The president of the group is Sunday, a mysterious, powerful person who is regarded by the other six members with fear. After many surprising adventures, Thursday finds that his fellow anarchists are, like him, in favor of peace and order and that in reality they are members of the police force. Immediately they decide to unite and combat Sunday, the real anarchist. However, the latter uses his strange power and eludes their every toil. Following numerous adventures, Sunday finally confesses that he is the Chief of Police whose laws have made them willing to fight for their ideals. Thus Syme, although in the beginning he thought he was fighting the battle for good single-handed, discovers that others, too, are interested in the same ideal only in a different way.

The symbolic aspect of the characters involved in these strange happenings is made evident from the outset. Mr. Lucian Gregory, the red-haired poet, is a symbol of the Nietzschean man. He is the champion of the cant of lawlessness. The opening pages of the novel find him in a heated argument with another poet in which he says, "An artist disregards

35 Evans, op. cit., p. 82.
all governments, abolishes all conventions. The poet delights in disorder only."36 Here then is the man who is to symbolize evil without tinge of goodness. He is the only real anarchist—Satan. In some measure this can be inferred from Chesterton's description of him which concludes with the remark, "He seemed like a walking blasphemy, a blend of the angel and the ape."37 However, this fact is made perfectly evident in the last chapter when Gregory intrudes on the meeting of the six philosophers. He is dressed in a close fitting suit of black and makes the astonishing boast, "I am a destroyer. I would destroy the world if I could."38 Following this, he proclaims his philosophy of hate which confirms his true character as the Prince of Evil.

Gregory's antagonist, Syme, is also introduced in the opening chapter. From the outset, Chesterton is careful to establish him as a symbol of law and order. Syme is the poet who stands alone and fearless in the midst of danger in an attempt to solve a problem. He, according to Chesterton, "defended respectability with violence and exaggeration."39 In many respects he is very similar to Chesterton in his mode of attire and particularly in his manner of consistently thinking in symbols. At one time, a woods, half light and half shadow, seems to him a perfect symbol of the world in which he is living. Again, in the mad hurry of pursuing Sunday,

36 Chesterton, The Man Who Was Thursday, p. 16.
37 Ibid., p. 12.
38 Ibid., p. 325.
39 Ibid., p. 22.
he stops to wonder why the pelican is a symbol of charity. In the opening argument with Gregory, Syme sees man's will choosing right as a tremendous victory, and he cries out passionately, "I tell you that every time a train comes in I feel that it has broken past batteries of besiegers, and that man has won a battle against chaos."40 At the conclusion of the novel when Gregory comes into the meeting of the philosophers with Sunday, he singles out Syme especially by proclaiming, "I thought I hated every thing more than common men can hate anything; but I find that I do not hate everything so much as I hate you."41 After Syme's election as Thursday, the desparity between the two is emphasized by Syme's remark to Gregory, "...what we think right is so damned different that there can be nothing between us in the way of concession."42

Although the allegorical character of Gregory and Syme is apparent, there is some confusion concerning the symbolism of Sunday. It is significant that to each of the policemen he means something different. Monday regards him as menacing and cruel; Tuesday looks upon him as a destroyer of faith; Thursday views him as a combination of the Beauty and the Beast; while Saturday sees him as essentially joyful. Diverse as these opinions are Syme remarks it is odd that each man compares him to the universe.43 The following words spoken by Sunday account for these various interpreta-

40 Ibid., p. 17.
41 Ibid., p. 326.
42 Ibid., p. 65.
43 Ibid., p. 301.
tions of his nature:

"You want to know what I am, do you. Bull, you are a man of science. Grub in the roots of those trees and find out the truth about them. Syme, you are a poet. Stare at those morning clouds. But I tell you this, that you will have found out the truth of the last tree and the topmost cloud before the truth about me. You will understand the sea, and I shall be still a riddle; you shall know what the stars are, and not what I am. Since the beginning of the world all men have hunted me like a wolf — kings, and sages, and poets, and law-givers, all the churches, and all the philosophies. But I have never been caught yet, and the skies will fall in the time I turn to bay."44

From this we conclude that the anarchists were correct in connecting Sunday with the universe.

The most satisfactory answer to "What is the meaning of Sunday?" is given by the author himself in an interview when The Man Who Was Thursday was adapted for the stage. At that time Chesterton said,

People have asked me whom I mean by Sunday. Well, I think, on the whole, and allowing for the fact that he is a person in a tale — I think you can take him to stand for Nature as distinguished from God. Huge, boisterous, full of vitality, dancing with a hundred legs, bright with the glare of the sun, and at first sight, somewhat regardless of us and our desires.

There is a phrase used at the end, spoken by Sunday: "Can ye drink from the cup that I drink of?" That is the only serious note in the book; the face of Sunday changes, you tear off the mask

44 Ibid., p. 276.
of Nature and you find God.45

In dealing with the various other men who are the days of the week, Chesterton made little attempt to differentiate the characters of the five detectives. In general he probably wished the entire group to represent all mankind. However, from various allusions made throughout the novel, each man is meant to symbolize a particular group which in its philosophy is subtly and differently wrong.

Monday, the pale, austere secretary for the anarchists, represents the extreme rationalist who is conscientious to a painful degree, cold and almost inhuman in his love of truth. Tuesday, bearer of the name Gogol, symbolizes a sincere optimist, childlike in his simplicity. Wednesday, the Marquis de St. Eustache, a wealthy sensualist, is something of an aesthete. His rich soft garments are described in detail. Chesterton, through Syme, remarks about him, "...the man carried a rich atmosphere with him, a rich atmosphere that suffocated. It reminded one irrationally of drowsy odours and of dying lamps in the darker poems of Byron and Poe."46 Friday, Professor de Worms — pale, grave, and colorless — is a destroyer of faith and admires wax figures instead of reality. Chesterton labels him as a German nihilist in advance stages of decay and corruption.47

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45 Ward, op. cit., 192.
   cf also G. K. as M.C. op. cit., p. 204-205.

46 Chesterton, Man Who Was Thursday, p. 101.

47 Ibid., p. 156.
Dr. Bull, is a young man who wears dark glasses and represents the scientific type. Commenting on himself, the Doctor says, "...smile and big shoulders and short hair, made me look a perfect little devil." On first seeing him, Syme is puzzled and concludes that perhaps he might be "the wickedest of all these wicked men."

In the beginning each man thinks he is fighting for law against criminals conspiring to destroy civilization, but before the end they recognize one another as friends. In this instant they cease to be detectives, and, now stripped of their disguises, they lose all individuality and become embodied points of Chesterton's views. They are together when Sunday tears off his mask of Nature and reveals himself as God. At last, they all realize how inscrutable His ways have been and how distorted their ideas of right have been.

Rosamond, the beautiful young girl whom Syme loves, plays no part in the story. Despite this fact, the thought of her keeps recurring to him through all his mad adventures, and for this reason she is looked upon as a symbol for the inspiring influence woman has on man.

Besides this larger use of symbolism for plot and characterization, there are several notable uses of it in incidents and descriptive detail. Pregnant with meaning is the fact that Syme, crusader for orthodoxy, carries with him a sword-stick and revolver and wears an old-fashioned cape similar

49 Ibid., p. 104.
50 Cecil Chesterton, op. cit., p. 212.
51 Ibid., p. 157.
to Chesterton's. In speaking of the sword-stick and a brandy flask, Chesterton explains that the former became almost the sword of chivalry and the latter, the wine of the stirrup cup.52

The struggle against the powers of darkness, of which Chesterton was so constantly aware, is brought out graphically when Syme is pursued up and down the streets of London by the Professor de Worms who symbolizes spiritual negation. After unsuccessfully evading the Professor, Syme finally comes to St. Paul's Cathedral. Here with the touch of the artist, Chesterton has the landscape symbolize the condition of the world in the clutches of pessimistic philosophers and the cross symbolizes faith and courage. Particularly outstanding is Chesterton's use of color as a symbol in the narration of this incident:

Under the white fog of snow high up in the heaven the whole atmosphere of the city was turned to a very queer kind of green twilight, as of men under the sea. The sealed and sullen sunset behind the dark dome of St. Paul's had in it smoky and sinister colours -- colours of sickly green, dead red or decaying bronze, that were just bright enough to emphasize the solid whiteness of the snow. But right up against these dreary colours rose the black bulk of the cathedral; and upon the top of the cathedral was a random splash and great stain of snow, still clinging as to an Alpine just so fallen as to half drape the dome from its very topmost point, and to pick out in perfect silver the great orb and the cross. When Syme saw it he suddenly straightened himself, and made with his

52 Gilbert Chesterton, The Man Who Was Thursday, p. 86.
sword-stick an involuntary salute.

He knew that the evil figure, his shadow, was creeping quickly or slowly behind him, and he did not care. It seemed a symbol of human faith and valour that while the skies were darkening that high place of the earth was bright. The devils might have captured heaven, but they had not yet captured the cross.

The chapter entitled, "The Earth in Anarchy," presents the same symbolism in a somewhat different form. Pursued by a score of men in black masks, the policemen remark at the sudden dusk. After viewing the darkness as a sign of a storm, they express the wish for a light by which they may see in order to escape the impending danger. At this crucial moment, Colonel Ducroix brings them a lighted, old-fashioned iron lantern with a cross on one of its sides. Ducroix had obtained it from a friend who had torn it out of the beautiful arched ceiling of his front hall for him. In this incident it is obvious that again the darkness is the situation of a world without faith and that the approaching storm is the chaos which will result from the anarchy of modern thought. Obviously, the lighted lantern represents faith, the only possible means of directing modern thought into spiritual channels. To make this symbolism perfectly lucid, Chesterton has Syme cry out to the Secretary,

"Do you see this lantern?" cried Syme in a terrible voice. "Do you see the cross carved on it, and the flame inside? You did not make it. You did not light it.

53 Ibid., p. 134.
Better men than you, men who could believe and obey, twisted the entrails of iron and preserved the legend of fire. There is not a street you walk on, there is not a thread you wear, that was not made as this lantern was, by denying your philosophy of dirt and rats. You can make nothing. You can only destroy. You will destroy mankind; you will destroy the world. Let that suffice you. Yet this one old Christian lantern you shall not destroy. It shall go where your empire of apes will never have the wit to find it."

Somewhat akin to this same struggle, Chesterton in a discussion held by the anarchists emphasizes the idea that the most dangerous criminals are the intellectuals. He compares the effect of their thought to that of dynamite in the following excerpt spoken by Monday, the Secretary of the organization:

"The knife was merely the expression of the old personal quarrel with a personal tyrant. Dynamite is not only our best tool, but our best symbol. It is as perfect a symbol of us as is incense of the prayers of the Christians. It expands; it only destroys because it broadens. A man's brain is a bomb," he cried out loosening suddenly his strange passion and striking his own skull with violence. "My brain feels like a bomb, night and day. It must expand! It must expand! A man's brain must expand, if it breaks up the universe."

As a contrast to this rationalist and his view of warfare, Chesterton

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54 Ibid., p. 266.
55 Ibid., p. 112.
delineates the character of a French peasant, owner of a small tavern, as a symbol of a fundamentally good man. Everything about him suggests peace, order, and contentment with his small possessions of land, pipe, and beer. Very subtly after making this observation, Syme looks up and sees the sword upon the wall. Before concluding this incident, Chesterton has Syme look back at the innkeeper and then he gives his usual symbol of good and evil in the following description:

And as he stared, over the top of the down behind the innkeeper, there appeared an army of black-clad and marching men. They seemed to hang above the good man and his house like a black cloud of locusts.56

Although realism and symbolism are interchanged throughout the novel, the final episode is complete allegory. Sunday's ambassador, who escorts the bedraggled six policemen to cabs manned by stately attendants armed with swords — symbols of angels — is dressed in the colors of the universe. His coat is the colour of the purple shadows, and his face is the color of the red and brown and golden sky.57 On arriving at Sunday's home, meant to be a symbol of heaven, each man is aware of a sudden happiness and is reminded in some way of his boyhood. Each man is given new clothes, a costume fitting to the day of the week he represents. Monday's costume of black and white symbolizes the first day of creation. Tuesday's of grey and silver represents water and dry land. The spring green of Wednesday represents the third day when life was created. On Thursday's drapery of

56 Ibid., p. 237.
57 Ibid., p. 307.
peacock blue is emblazoned the planets. Friday has a gown of dim purple on which are birds and fish. Dr. Bull, the last day of creation, wears a coat covered with heraldic animals in red and gold. On his head he has a man obviously in exuberant spirits. The doctor is the one whose headdress is mentioned. Could it be that Chesterton designedly put man above the animals on his costume as a symbol of man's dignity as a protest against the theories of Darwinian scientists? In giving each of the days a symbolic costume they are now changed into the seven days of creation and the seven orders of created things.

At the final conference the sitting of the six policemen in a crescent shape on a slight slope and the cheering of the crowd as each sits down seems to resolve the symbol into a new interpretation, the seven choirs of angels. We are made aware of this symbol when Syme notices a "frightful and beautiful alteration" on the faces of the men as Sunday comes into their midst.

The final scene of the last chapter is very significant. Cecil Chesterton points out that before the publication of Orthodoxy this chapter was the only exposition of Chesterton's doctrine. After Sunday commends the council men for their valor and declares himself to be the peace of God, the various men begin to complain. One cannot forgive Sunday for permitting him to stray so near to hell; another cannot see why he was fighting himself; a third wonders why he was hurt so much. Suddenly the session is

58 Ibid., p. 319.

59 Cecil Chesterton, op. cit., p. 152.
interrupted by the appearance of Gregory, who rages at them because, according to him, none of the complainers have ever suffered. Then it is that Syme, the poet, sees the "why" of pain and struggle. He reasons that man suffers and must fight for his ideals of right so that law and order and the ordinary things of life may be as romantic as revolt. "So that each man fighting for order may be as brave and good a man as the dynamiter. So that the real lie of Satan may be flung back in the face of this blasphemer, so that by tears and torture we may earn the right to say to this man, 'You lie.'" Shortly after this happening, Sunday disappears and a distant voice echoes, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of?" Undoubtedly, Chesterton is bringing out that if suffering is endured manfully in this world, it is purposeful; it will be rewarded in the end by the Peace of God.

The Ball and the Cross

Many critics have referred to The Ball and the Cross as a theological novel. This term is appropriate, for in it Chesterton gives his views on the nature of the Church and the nature of heresy. It is almost completely allegorical, and is, for this reason, perhaps the most obscure of the novels.

60 Gilbert Chesterton, The Man Who Was Thursday, p. 327.

61 Ibid., p. 329.

Although Chesterton in a teasing mood inscribed the following lines in Father O'Connor's copy of The Ball and the Cross,

You need not take it from the shelf
(I tried to read it once myself:
The speeches jerk, the chapters sprawl,
The story makes no sense at all)
Hide it your Yorkshire moors among
Where no man speaks the English tongue.

there is good reason to believe that his purpose in writing it was serious. Scott, in his critical work, makes it clear how adverse Chesterton was to a spirit of indifference when the eternal verities were at stake. He quotes Chesterton as having said, "Doctrine is absolutely necessary for soul health. We must define the goal before we shall ever reach any goal worth the effort." In his Autobiography, Chesterton remarks that "the modern world is organized in relation to the most obvious and urgent of all questions, not so much to answer it wrongly, as to prevent it being answered at all, ...

This attitude then is seen in the plot, which is based on the prevention of a worshipper and a blasphemer from fighting a duel over a difference about religion. In writing the book Chesterton's whole aim was to combat the secular disregard of the cross and to show that it is the one reality in the world worth crossing swords over.

The plot, concerned with the central conflict as it is given in the

63 O'Connor, op. cit., p. 110.

64 William Scott, Chesterton and Other Essays (Cincinnati, Jennings & Graham, 1912), p. 53.

two symbols of the title, depicts the strife between rationalism and religious mysticism. The sphere, as De Tonquedec explains it, "is the image of science — a perfect harmony accomplished in the lines — but closed, incapable of dilation or of progress. The cross, on the contrary, although it brings conflicts and contradictions to the heart, can extend or open its arms without altering its form." The globe is one in itself and is the symbol of the finished; the cross is divided against itself but is capable of extending into infinity without losing its shape and is an emblem of Faith and eternity.

Plunging immediately into the fantastic, the story opens with Professor Lucifer in his airship arguing with his sole passenger, Father Michael, about rationalism. After disagreeing with Lucifer that the round, satisfied ball should top the cross, Michael finds himself thrown out of the ship and clinging to a beam of the cross of St. Paul's Cathedral to save himself. After he is rescued by a policeman, Father Michael witnesses a quarrel between two young men and is shortly thereafter sent to an insane asylum. The story now proceeds more realistically with the adventures of Evan MacIan and Turnbull, who wish to duel over their religious views. However, Lucifer is busy attempting to crush out all religion, and they are prevented from carrying out their plan, since such a duel might reawaken an interest in religion. Chasing about the countryside in an effort to find a suitable place to duel, these two adversaries meet several alle-

66 De Tonquedec, op. cit., p. 43.
gorical types. At last the two are caught and put in an asylum along with anyone who has witnessed their adventures. For the moment Professor Lucifer seems to have triumphed, but just when all are about to be annihilated, Father Michael is the means of liberation.

The symbolic nature of the characters involved in these episodes is evident. Professor Lucifer is Satan, representing evolutionary progressiveness. The description of his face as cloven, his hatred of the cross, and his extraordinary powers are proof of this. In addition, this fact is alluded to in the opening chapter when Lucifer fiercely retorts to Michael's remark that he once knew a man like him with the revealing words, "There is no man like me." Again his nature is emphasized in the concluding chapter when the dead bodies of the two doctors fall into the fire and MacIan, referring to Professor Lucifer, says to Beatrice, who is bemoaning their loss, "No, they are not lost. They are saved! He has taken no souls with him after all."67

A direct contrast to the Professor is Father Michael — simple, kind, and lovable. In the first chapter his whole argument in defense of the cross in his opening tilt with Lucifer establishes him as a symbol for the Church and the religious viewpoint. Although the saintly priest is imprisoned throughout almost the entire narrative, at the conclusion MacIan, in the midst of a fiery wall, knows that he is not rescuing Father Michael,

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68 Ibid., p. 403.
but that the latter has the power within him to save all the inmates of the asylum. With his outstanding faith, Father Michael turns back the flames of materialism, and Turnbull, now a believer, falls to his knees in repentance for his erroneous atheistic views.

Evan MacIan, a young man who understands the supernatural is directly termed a mystic by Chesterton. He represents a zealous Catholic; and Turnbull, an ardent atheist. Both of these men are regarded as madmen in the novel because they are willing to die fighting for their religious convictions. Viewed from this angle, both men are symbols of sincerity as opposed to compromise.

Besides these two main characters, there are a series of minor symbols encountered in their adventures. Mr. Cumberland Vane, the police magistrate, is a symbol for the compromising modern who looks with compassion on men like MacIan because they believe in a spiritual world. To this modern, religion was too personal a matter to be mentioned in a court. Mr. Gordon, from whom the swords for the duel are purchased, is a symbol of humanitarianism as a form of religion. The peacemaker who attempts to reconcile MacIan and Turnbull is a follower of Tolstoy and a symbol of a false philosopher who follows logic to the extreme; he is the type of Englishman who believes manners are a substitute for morals. Of him MacIan cries out in scorn, "Give up vows and dogmas and fixed things, and you may grow like That. You may learn, also, that fog of philosophy. You may grow fond of that mire of crawling, cowardly morals, and you may come to
think murder wrong, because it is violent, and not because it is unjust...

69 Then there is Wimpey, who had a Fellowship at Magdalen. He is a follower of Nietzcherchean philosophy, a worshipper of brute strength who preaches force but refuses to face it when MacIan challenges him to fight as a proof that he is sincerely fond of his beliefs. Beatrice, the wealthy young girl with whom MacIan falls in love, is a symbol of the practical modern who is convinced that a policy of broadmindedness is the only answer to a search for truth. Chesterton describes her as old and broken in thought but young in her emotions. From her passionate speech to MacIan after their wild drive to her father's lodge, it can be inferred that she is the tragic symbol of the hopelessness with which a Godless philosophy leaves the human soul. This conclusion is borne out by the following remarks taken from that speech:

...all the time you have inside only the horrid irony of your own empty head and empty heart. I am to give to the unfortunate, when my whole misfortune is that I have nothing to give. I am to teach, when I believe nothing of all that I was taught. I am to save children from death, and I am not certain that I should not be better dead. 70

Pierre Durand, the French wine merchant living on the Isle of St. Loup, is a symbol of civilization. In the chapter, "A Scandal in the Village," Chesterton terms him "merely a man." 71 This is a supreme com-

69 Ibid., p. 101.
70 Ibid., p. 186.
71 Ibid., p. 214.
pliment, for Chesterton had the greatest confidence in the common man. It is his daughter, Madeleine, a symbol of faith, that wins the atheistic Turnbull. With her spiritual outlook, she is a perfect antithesis of Turnbull. In speaking of the characters of father and daughter, Chesterton says: "Both of them had strength below the surface; they were like quiet peasants owning enormous and unquarried mines." As though in explanation of this statement he then adds, "The father believed in civilization, in the storied tower we have erected to affront nature; that is, the father believed in Man. The daughter believed in God; and was even stronger. They neither of them, believed in themselves for that is a decadent weakness." Madeleine is, in all probability, offered as a symbol of faith in contrast to the wealthy young Beatrice. One has found faith and contentment; the other has lost faith and found restless dissatisfaction.

Various people met on the grounds of the insane asylum are symbols for modern thinkers. Men drunk with their own importance are of the class that think themselves gods; the doctors Quayle and Hutton, with their mad methodical procedure, are the specialists who have made science an end, not a means to an end, and have thereby ruined men's lives with their pushing of science to its mad conclusion as the answer to every problem.

There are three outstanding incidents which are significant because of their symbolic character. These happenings serve to clarify the meaning of the novel. The first is MaClan's dream in which Satan, disguised

72 Ibid., p. 216.
73 Ibid., p. 216.
as a good angel, shows him St. Paul's with the cross erect and the ball invisible. Then he is given a view of the city controlled by perfect discipline. This order is to signify the superior race theory which believes in discipline, but not justice. With this revelation MacIan knows that the dream is from hell and relates in his conclusion as he retells it to Turnbull, "Turnbull, 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."74

The second incident involves a dream also. This time Satan drops from the sky and invites Turnbull to witness the Revolution he has yearned to see. Upon consenting to the plan, Turnbull is taken in the flying machine and is shown the universe after the cross has been struck awry and the ball is left secure. This situation is meant to signify the condition of the world in the hands of the intellectuals who wish a Utopia that would exclude the poor and underprivileged. In Satan's regime, human life and liberty are no longer sacred. Religion has been banished by the atheists, and now gunpowder, the incense of revolutionary religion,75 as Chesterton terms it, is creating havoc.

The third incident, involving the concluding chapter which is entitled "Dies Irae," provides the explication of the symbolism of events that follow. The insane asylum is now filled to capacity with all who have in any way been witness to the religious feud of MacIan and Turnbull. These

74 Ibid., p. 382.
75 Ibid., p. 318.
people represent the sane and wholesome element of the universe. The Master of the institution is materialistic science which has enslaved society in an effort to quell the idea that there were two people in the world interested enough in religion to fight over it. Durand, a representative of the natural rights of man who has made Dr. Hutton admit that if people are treated worse than barbarians then the social contract is annulled, starts the revolt by setting the asylum on fire. At this catastrophe all the inmates are perfectly calm because, as Turnbull says, they hate dying but they hate the scientific regime more. Just as all seems doomed for destruction, the Church, in the person of Father Michael, intervenes and saves all. Doctors Quayle and Hutton fall from the flying ship and perish in the flames.

Chesterton's use of symbolism in his descriptive detail is particularly germane to his theme. MacIan, similar to the author, thinks very frequently in terms of the symbol. Of him Chesterton says that his mind was always haunted with seraphic or titanic parallels. Previous to this remark he pointed out that he walked in a world of omens and hieroglyphics. Since MacIan is a mystic and a very fervent Catholic, he is also constantly reminded of the spiritual by his ordinary surroundings. For instance, the loveliness of Beatrice strikes him, and, as he notes her

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76 Ibid., p. 395.
77 Ibid., p. 259.
78 Ibid., p. 245.
beauty, he compares it to the sacraments.\textsuperscript{79} To him a sunrise speaks of Heaven. The following description reveals in part his thoughts as he watches the early sun:

All the colours were transparent. It seemed like a triumphant prophecy of some perfect world where everything being innocent will be intelligible; a world where even our bodies, so to speak, may be as of burning glass. Such a world is faintly though fiercely figured in the coloured windows of Christian architecture.\textsuperscript{80}

Looking at the same sun once it has risen, he sees how it burnishes everything gold "and every bird that rose with that sunrise caught a light like a star upon it like the dove of the Holy Spirit."\textsuperscript{81} The sea coming in and blocking off the fighters is seen as the finger of God.\textsuperscript{82} In brief, his whole outlook on the world of nature is with the eyes of the spirit. Early in his story, Chesterton makes the following observation about MacIan:

All through his life he thought of the daylight world as a sort of divine debris; the broken remainder of his first vision. The skies and the mountains were the splendid offscourings of another place. The stars were lost jewels of the Queen. Our Lady had gone and left the stars by accident.\textsuperscript{83}

Constantly, crossed swords, trees, a man waving both arms, and fence posts

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p. 171.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Ibid., p. 191.
\item \textsuperscript{81} Ibid., p. 195.
\item \textsuperscript{82} Ibid., p. 196.
\item \textsuperscript{83} Ibid., p. 33.
\end{itemize}
speak as symbols of the cross he loves. In fact, the last sentence of the book brings out this point:

He looked vaguely about at the fire that was already fading, and there among the ashes lay two shining things that had survived the fire, his sword and Turnbull's, fallen haphazard in the pattern of a cross.84

Even in himself MacIan sees a symbol. In one adventure both he and Turnbull sit astraddle a large grey wall and shift along its length in an effort to evade their pursuers. Almost immediately the thought occurs to him that the wall is a steed and that he and Turnbull are the two knights on one steed as it is pictured on the old shield of the Templars.

Typical of Chesterton's other heroes, MacIan fancies that he is a fierce conspirator, and with a sword-stick he bravely walks the streets of London. It is with this stick he first attacks Turnbull. Like Syme of The Man Who Was Thursday, he views the cross on St. Paul's with admiration and love; it is to him a symbol of the best in England's heritage. Casting about in his mind for a corresponding monument of the Brunswicks and the Protestant Constitution, he selects a sky sign advertising pills.85

The Flying Inn

This last novel to be considered lacks the unity of attack seen in the three previous works. In its pages there is less symbolism and more satire aimed at sham philanthropists, vegetarians, teetotallers, and deca-

84 Ibid., p. 403.
85 Ibid., p. 34.
dent artists. "It is," says Ronald Knox, "as if Chesterton has been trying to rewrite Heretics in the form of a novel."\(^{86}\) Kelly, on the other hand, sees in its defense of common things — the poor, beer, donkeys, song, and simple fun — a similarity to Chesterton's The Defendant.\(^{87}\) Undoubtedly these two observations are correct, but, in spite of the widely diversified topics brought in for comment, there is one dominant theme.

In The Flying Inn the basic conflict that predominates over the other minor struggles is symbolized by the crescent and the cross. The two opposing philosophies behind these symbols are allegorical to the crusades, a period in history dear to the heart of Chesterton. The crescent represents the Mohammedan customs and thought; while the cross, as in the previous novels, stands for the Christian viewpoint. In his work, Evans sees The Flying Inn as Chesterton's warning against pantheism and oriental philosophy, an interest in which was being revived at one time.\(^{88}\) However the fight for supremacy between the crescent and the cross serves more as a background for the more tangible struggle between prohibition and the rights of man.

The title of the novel stands for a white standard, emblazoned with a blue ship and a red cross of St. George. This emblem for an inn called "The Ship" literally flew from one place to another. It is meant to be a symbol of revolt against suppression of man by modern social legislation.

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\(^{86}\) Knox, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 362.

\(^{87}\) Kelly, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 87.

\(^{88}\) Evans, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 74.
"In all the mad adventures of The Flying Inn," says Pfleger, "healthy human nature is fighting in its inmost essence, ideal and divine, against the unnatural existence of the modern man without boundaries, home, or religion,...

Lord Ivywood, influenced by a certain Turk, Misyra Ammon by name, banishes all inns. Humphrey Pump, owner of "The Ship," in league with Captain Patrick Dalroy, sets out with his sign and keg of rum to sell wherever they wish to put up the sign. Fighting, drinking, and singing, the two men elude their enemies and create havoc with their fantastic notions. The conflict between Ivywood and Dalroy is brought to a climax when Dalroy reveals that Crooke, a wealthy chemist, has been selling spirits to a select clientele. Humanity joins the ranks of Dalroy and, marching on Ivywood's estate, they defeat the forces of Moslem. Lord Ivywood, who has betrayed his country, witnesses the hand-to-hand combat between his commander, Oman Pasha, and Dalroy. After the latter's defeat, Lord Ivywood goes insane.

Lord Philip Ivywood, the powerful statesman, stands out in his beliefs as a symbol for the Nietzschean superman. Forgetting that he himself is but man, he becomes inhuman, and, in his desire for perfection, he grows fanatical and expects too much from himself and other men. Chesterton asserts that his greatest fault was a pride in the faultlessness of his mental and moral strength. Confessing that he can see no meaning in humility,


Ivywood desires to be the greatest man in the world and confidently thinks he possesses the power to become such a man. In this he is a symbol of an evil pride, a pride which, Chesterton points out, makes men wait patiently for others to rise to their spiritual plane. He, together with his philosophy of a superior man, is tantamount to Professor Lucifer in The Ball and the Cross. When Crooke, a chemist who has deceived him, asks him if he thinks he made the world that it would be remade so easily, Ivywood retorts fiercely, "The world was made badly, and I will make it over again."

Early in the novel, Ivywood likewise confesses to be a follower of the religion of the East, Mohammedanism. He acknowledges it by proclaiming:

Not in vain, I think is the symbol of that faith the Crescent, the growing thing. While other creeds carry emblems implying more or less of finality, for this great creed of hope its very imperfection is its pride, and men shall walk fearlessly in new and wonderful paths, following the increasing curve which contains and holds up before them the eternal promises of the orb.

Here it is plain that it is pride that leads Ivywood to embrace a religion that holds the promise of making men like gods. His failure to understand human limitations leads him completely awry in his concept of man's nature. This erroneous concept, turning back on him, destroys him, and at the end he is portrayed as a madman. Now, oblivious of all about him as he plays

93 Ibid., p. 78.
with scraps of flowers, he is a living symbol of the result of the philosophy which declared, "I have gone where God has never dared to go. I am above the silly supermen as they are above mere men."94

Misyra Ammon, Ivywood's henchman in an effort to amalgamate the British and Turkish empires, is a symbol of rationalistic madness as it is described in Orthodoxy.95 He has the one insane idea that English civilization is derived from Turkish sources and makes every incident fit his theory. He had at his finger tips many fragmentary facts, but he did not have any integrated picture of the truth and tradition behind these facts. Chesterton explains his strange power over intellectual men like Ivywood by pointing out his two outstanding traits -- ability to produce a theory on any subject and the ability to think consistently and logically on his illogical theories.96

At variance with these two figures are two other characters who are counter symbols for them. The first of these, Patrick Dalroy, is typical of the usual Chestertonian hero. However, unlike the other heroes, he does not carry a sword-stick or wear a cape. Patrick is outfitted in a green and white uniform of the Navy of Ithaca and carries a sword. Wine, song, and boisterous humour are his fortes. Dalroy is a symbol for Catholic tradition, for patriotism, and for adventure.

94 Ibid., p. 320.
95 Gilbert Chesterton, op. cit., p. 38.
96 Gilbert Chesterton, The Flying Inn, p. 283.
Representing Christianity, he is a contrast to Ivywood in his concept of man. In his talk with Humphrey Pump he sums up his philosophy of life in the following words:

"Do you know, Hump," he said, "I think modern people have somehow got their minds all wrong about human life. They seem to expect what Nature has never promised; and then try to ruin all that Nature has really given. At all those atheist chapels of Ivywood's they're always talking of Peace, Perfect Peace, and Utter Peace, and Universal Joy and souls that beat as one. But they don't look any more cheerful than anyone else; and the next thing they do is to start smashing a thousand good jokes and good stories and good songs and good friendships by pulling down the 'Old Ship.'

...I don't know whether God means a man to have happiness in that All in All and Utterly Utter sense of happiness. But God does mean a man to have a little Fun; and I mean to go on having it. If I mustn't satisfy my heart, I can gratify my humour." 97

Again, as a group of common men march against Ivywood, Dalroy sings a song. The four lines which conclude each stanza furnish concrete examples of symbolism and are pertinent to Dalroy's idea of man. In the following verses, the value of human nature is symbolized by the "tree," and the destructive philosophy of Ivywood is symbolized by the "ivy" which would destroy the tree and expose it to a "sea" of evils:

But Ivywood, Lord Ivywood
He breaks the tree as ivy would

97 Ibid., p. 65.
And eats the wood as ivy wood
Between us and the sea. 98

Notably, Dalroy stands out as the champion of the cross in the pitched battle between Mohammedanism and Christianity. It is his sword that causes Oman Pasha's death, and the subsequent downfall of the Crescent.

As a symbol of the true patriot, Dalroy is loyal to Britain in upholding it against the invading ideas of Moslem. His patriotism, however, is correct when it rebels against the laws passed which destroy the liberty of men. He believes that even if a man were to choose evil, he should be left free to make that choice. On the other hand, in the regime of Ivywood an economic world patterned, not after the nature of man, but the madness of one group of intellectuals was threatening the liberty of men in an effort to make heaven on earth. Justly Dalroy rebels against Ivywood's sociological reforms and champions man's free will.

Patrick Dalroy, a symbol of the adventurer, is such in the same sense as Chesterton in respect to his romanticism and zest for life. Speaking of this aspect of Dalroy's character, Chesterton says that although he was fond of jokes and rhymes, nothing he could write or sing ever satisfied him like something he could do. 99 Patrick's laughter rings as he proposes "doing things" to Humphrey Pump, and his high spirits find satisfaction in rollicking songs. His ditty, heard by Lady Joan when she had escaped from the meeting of the Simple Souls, shows his romantic

98 Ibid., p. 298.
99 Ibid., p. 268.
mood and his attitude toward life and love. This first stanza, though not so satirical as the remaining two, gives the keynote to his character as an adventurer:

I come from Castlepatick and my heart is on my sleeve,
And any sword or pistol boy can hit ut with me leave,
It shines there for an epaulette, as golden as a flame,
As naked as me ancestors, noble as me name.
For I come from Castlepatick and my heart is on my sleeve,
But a lady stole it from me on St.
Gallowglass's Eve. 100

Humphrey Pump, complement to Patrick Dalroy's poetic nature, is a symbol for the English commoner. Deeply versed in English traditions, he possesses a generous supply of common sense and ingenuity. His kindly eyes, gentle manner, and cool exterior reveal him as a mild-mannered Englishman. As Misyra Ammon is the soul of madness, so Pump is meant to be the soul of sanity. Braybrooke points out that because of his common sense he did not fall into the pessimism which thinks a possible poison is of necessity a poison. 101 Chesterton delineates his character well when he says, "He was, indeed, without any pretense of book-learning, a certain kind of scientific man that science was unfortunate in losing. He was the old-fashioned English naturalist like Gilbert White or even Isaac Walton, who learned things not academically like an American Professor, but actually

100 Ibid., p. 83.

like an Indian."102

As a tribute to Pump's true value to the empire, Chesterton records that his song written against grocers shows the only antagonistic emotion that screwed "his infinite English tolerance to the pitch of a song."103 Like the other songs of the novel, it is light-hearted and witty. The metaphorical figures of the last stanza show Pump's harmless way of poking fun at his adversary:

The hell-instructed Grocer
Has a temple made of tin,
And the ruin of good inn-keepers
Is loudly urged therein;
But now the sands are running out
From sugar of a sort,
The Grocer trembles; for his time
Just like his weight is short.104

The Flying Inn is singular in that it uses its heroine for more than a motif of inspiration. Lady Joan Brett is a symbol for the bored aristocrat.105 However, she is in search of truth and is a real thinker. By her own logical reasoning, she questions Lord Ivywood's philosophy and his economic and religious plans; others are content to worship and follow him blindly. Although she is always mixed up in her psychology, the rantings of Misysra Ammon challenge her common sense and she rebels at his ideas, too. It is not surprising that Lady Joan is at the core of all Dalroy's dreams, for at heart she is also an adventurer, admiring action

103 Ibid., p. 72.
104 Ibid., p. 73.
105 Ibid., p. 250.
and longing to be freed from the deadening effects of wealth and the warped thinking of her close friends. Through Dalroy she eventually finds love, happiness, and a purpose in life.

Dorian Wimpole is a representative member of the aristocracy also. He is a poet and, like Lady Joan, is striving for happiness. However, in his effort to find it, he becomes an eccentric. From the description of his personality and character, Dorian is a symbol for an aesthete, a man that receives impressions of beauty with eagerness but never bothers to make them himself. Chesterton very succinctly says of him:

He was a man neither foolish, nor evil, any more than Shelley; only a man made sterile by living in a world of indirectness and insincerity, with words rather than with things. He had not had the smallest intention of starving his chaufeur, he did not realize there was worse spiritual murder in merely forgetting him.106

Nevertheless, Patrick Dalroy makes Dorian aware of the importance of man and, before the end of the novel, he has joined him in his crusade to overcome the crescent and to defend the rights of the individual. With his awareness of the importance of the human personality, his eccentricities vanish.

Besides these characters, other idiotic individuals are introduced who represent various philosophies or evils obnoxious to Chesterton. A symbol of a hair-splitting journalist is advanced in the rantings of Mr.

106 Ibid., p. 191.
Hibbs However. He is characterized to perfection with the single comment that the reader could get from his article a faint glimpse of Mr. Hibbs However's opinion on almost every other subject except the subject of the article. Mr. Leveson, a smooth politician, represents the modern spirit of accepting a leader's views without question and then reflecting that leader's ideas as his own. To symbolize Mammon Mr. Hugby is introduced. In his seeking of materialistic gain he has "made the inns stink with poison, till even good men asked for no inns at all." 107 Dr. Meadows is symbolical of several evils. Economically, he is scorned as a materialist, capitalist, and self-interested philanthropist. On the scientific side he is held up as a radical pseudo-scientist and a food faddist. In religion he is a sceptic. On his character Chesterton expends the most energy, and with biting sarcasm Dalroy says to him, "Why should you be the god of this valley, whose god is your belly, merely because you do not even love your god, but only fear him? Go home to your prayers, old man; for all men die." 108 As a symbol of the English mind in regard to revolt Dorian Wimpole's abused chauffeur is introduced. Incensed at his employer's neglect, he speeds away to Wales to rid himself of his temper, not to rid himself of his tyrant. Lastly, the inn itself is for Chesterton a symbol of freedom in a world increasingly enslaved. 109

107 Ibid., p. 245.
108 Ibid., p. 245.
There is a decided contrast in the use of the symbol for the descriptive detail in *The Flying Inn* as compared to that employed in the preceding novels. No one of the characters thinks habitually in symbols. Perhaps Chesterton had too many "peeves" at which to aim, or perhaps he reserved his talents for the songs sung by his leading character. The two men around whom some slight symbolism centers are the two poets -- Dalroy and Dorian Wimple. Dalroy in his anger against Ivywood and his clique calls their meeting place a tin temple and terms it "Babylon." Whenever he enters the home of Ivywood, which has been redecorated in imitation of the art of the East, he senses evil and he feels that the place is the horrid, twisted abode of Satan. The Moorish decorations are a source of irritation to him and he believes them pointless. It is characteristic of Dalroy to draw his sword in anticipation of action, and this customary action is a symbol of his love for liberty and right.

When Dorian passes through the seven stages that make him see how erroneous his cousin Philip is in his views and how hypocritical he himself has been, each mood brings him in sympathy with created things. As he passes through each successive stage, several symbols are disclosed. His feeling of hatred is meant to signify his awareness of other people in the world besides himself. The rattle snake which he crushes with his heel represents positive evil. With his overcoming this evil, there comes to him a sense of adventure which finally leads him to having a purpose in

life. Dorian's final mood shows him eating oysters and, since he had at one time pleaded with touching pathos that an oyster never be eaten, this action is a symbol of his return to sanity in that he sees man in his proper relationship to the rest of creation.

Throughout the lectures given by the loquacious Misyra Ammon, symbols are mentioned, but his talk is so obviously that of a mad man that references to his use of the symbol does not seem relevant to this study.

From the four novels selected for special study, it is evident that Chesterton used the symbol in his plot, characters, and descriptive detail. These symbols at times follow almost the same pattern in each successive story. True, they are not identical, but in general the philosophical idea behind each is quite similar. Usually these symbols deal with some form of good or evil and typify the forces in the twentieth century against which Chesterton waged constant war. It is obvious, too, that there is a considerable dropping off in the use of the symbol in the novel written in 1914 -- The Flying Inn -- as compared to its use in the first novel, The Napoleon of Notting Hill, written in 1904.
CHAPTER IV

CHESTERTON'S USE OF THE SYMBOL AS SEEN IN THE

BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

The Ballad of the White Horse is Chesterton's longest and most ambitious poem. Although he admittedly has a weakness for riotous colors, clanging reverberations, and marked martial rhythms in his verse, nevertheless this poem, epic in nature, represents him at his best. Its theme of the struggle between Christianity and paganism called forth all the verve and fire of Chesterton's character and prompted him to pen touching and beautiful lines, grim and bloody lines, prophetical and thundering lines. In accomplishing these various moods, the poet used the symbol to portray his deep feeling and to picture the struggle as it appeared to him.

What fascinated Chesterton was action and, as Reilly says, "Chesterton was immensely interested in having the world run always decently and sometimes gloriously. It was because of his interest in the first that he wrote prose; it was because of his interest in the second stirred his imagination and his emotions that he wrote poetry." It is significant that in the historic clash between Alfred and the Danes the reason for the conflict goes deeper than the antagonism of philosophy

against philosophy. The poem shows Chesterton's awareness of the existence of evil, and Williams makes this observation in speaking of *Lepanto*, *Saint Barbara*, and *The Ballad of the White Horse* by remarking:

They are no mere historic poems nor merely expressions of the Catholic and democratic tradition against Mohammedans, the Prussians, or the Danes, they penetrate more and more deeply into that state of being which is common to humanity when every man feels that he is indeed fighting forlornly, in a cause which he hardly knows and in which he does not believe, [this certainly cannot be applied to Chesterton who was ever aware of the intrinsic value of his cause] against spiritual enemies and interior treacheries who are triumphant and all but omnipotent.²

That Chesterton deliberately employed the symbol is evidenced by his preface to the poem in which he states that Alfred was important because he fought for the Christian civilization against the heathen and that he has "summarized this first crusade in a triple symbol, and given to a fictitious Roman, Celt, and Saxon a part in the glory of Ethandune."³

In order to obtain a more lucid view of Chesterton's symbols in *The Ballad of the White Horse*, his use of them will be discussed in three main divisions, namely, 1) those dealing with **society**, 2) those dealing with **nature**, and 3) those dealing with **religion**. In addition to these three topics, brief mention will be made of the use of certain domestic articles as symbols. This material will follow the section on symbols dealing with


nature. Under the three general headings just referred to, it is possible to get a fairly accurate picture of how the hidden meanings and spiritual ideas of Chesterton's world were brought to him by his social, natural, and religious environment. With the discussion of these various symbols, an attempt will be made to interpret each and to point out how each is a part of Chesterton's outlook.

Society

Chesterton's passionate concern for the Catholic Faith divides the characters of this poem into two distinct classes—Christian and pagan. With Alfred's visit to the Danes, he introduces the various prototypes of paganism. Harold, the young, wild, and sensual pagan, sings of material things—wine, money, food, women. His whole outlook is summed up in the opening words of his song:

For Rome was given to rule the world
And gat of it little joy—
But we, but we shall enjoy the world,
The whole huge world a toy.4

Next comes Elf, who with his feminine looks and light touch on the harp, is a symbol of the poetic pagan. His singing recalls the land the Danes have left with its folk songs, hearths, and pagan customs. Sadly he reminds his listeners that amidst all rejoicing

There is always a forgotten thing
And love is not secure.5

4 Ibid., p. 35.
5 Ibid., p. 38.
After this poignant piece, the savage pagan, Ogier, symbol of hatred, takes the harp. With stern face and hard eyes, he sings his song of wrath, weary gods, and disillusionment. Swiftly and sharply he concludes it with the pessimistic taunt,

And you that sit by the fire are young
And true loves wait for you;
But the King and I grow old, grow old,
And hate alone is true.⁶

Then King Guthrum smilingly takes up the harp. His song reveals him as a symbol of the cultured pagan. Of all the chieftans, his plight seems most sad, for old and experienced he realizes the hopelessness of having nothing to hold dear, of not knowing, and of not understanding the meaning of life. To him, action is a means of forgetting all that he cannot understand. At the last charge when all common men—foulers, seamen, and hedge-workers—attack, Guthrum's symbolical character is further emphasized by Chesterton's chant:

King Guthrum was a great lord,
And higher than his gods—
He put the popes to laughter,
He chid the saints with rods.

He took this hollow world of ours
For a cup to hold his wine;
In the parting of the woodways
There comes to him a sign.⁷

Of all the pagans, Guthrum alone is found worthy. He alone is given the chance to be signed with the saving sign of the cross in Baptism.

Looking at these men, one can see the adversaries against whom

⁶ Ibid., p. 40.
⁷ Ibid., p. 113.
Chesterton was constantly pitting his talents in his novels—the materialist, the aesthete, the scientist, and the intellectual. He looked upon these types as being tireless in their efforts to wreak destruction wherever they go—

Whose flames anear him or aloof
    Took hold of towers or walls of proof,
Fire over Glastonbury roof
    And out on Ely, fire.8

In the twentieth century, Chesterton looked upon their modern counterparts as equally destructive. Therefore in opposition to these wreckers of civilization Chesterton sets up the usual Christian types as they are found in his novels.

Alfred, the warrior and valiant fighter, is of the same temper as MacIan in The Ball and the Cross. After listening to the pagans' songs, he takes the harp and with a firm touch proclaims his credo. Undoubtedly, he is a symbol of the militant Christian. His faith is strong as he declares God Good, and the forces of destruction evil. In the incident of the woman with the cakes he shows his love and pity with the words,

And well may God with the serving-folk
    Cast in His dreadful lot;
Is not He too a servant?9
    And is not He forgot?

However, his laughter when he recovers from the blow with a hot cake given him by the old woman shows Christian humility. After that stinging rebuke, the king exaltingly proclaims,

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8 Ibid., p. 33.
9 Ibid., p. 54.
Pride flings palaces at the sky,
   As a man flings up sand,
But the firm feet of humility
   Take hold of heavy land.\textsuperscript{10}

That Alfred's humility is sincere is evidenced by his public confession of
a secret sin before he enters battle. It is also this virtue which enables
him to reorganize his men and lead them on to victory without the assistance
of his great leaders. There is special significance in the fact that in his
last battle Alfred, the Christian par excellence, wielding his weapon with
certainty, kills Ogier, symbol of pride and hate. With his fall the tide
turns in favor of God's army.

Like other heroes of Chesterton's creation, Alfred's faith endows
him with courage to fight against tremendous odds. Vigorously he scorns
slavery and valiantly calls to his men, "Charge all, and go to God."\textsuperscript{11}

Each of Alfred's chiefs is a representative of a separate race, and
in describing these warriors fitting symbols are used. Eldred, the Saxon,
is obviously a man of the land. Symbolically he is described--

\begin{quote}
And Eldred's great and foolish heart
Stood open, like his door.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

In the following lines his physical appearance is likened to nature:

\begin{quote}
His face a dreaming furnace
His body a walking hill.\textsuperscript{13}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., p. 62.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 106.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 18.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 19.
At the time of battle he is fittingly likened to the strong things of nature—

His face like a sanguine sunset
His shoulder a Wessex down,
His hand like a windy hammer-stroke; 14

When Eldred is felled by Elf's magic spear, the Christians cry out,

Fallen is the tower of Wessex
That stood beside the sea. 15

In depicting Mark, Chesterton makes him the true Roman, having strong features, orderly lands, and the Christian heritage. That he is a symbol for town life is evident in the great conflict of the chiefs, Christian and pagan. His faith, tested by surrounding doubt and falsehood, is strong, and Mark alone is able to withstand the attacks of the enemy. He is successful in slaying Elf, the poet with the magic spear. When Ogier, the symbol of hate, scornfully charges him, Mark overthrows him—

Then Mark set one foot on the shield
One on some sundered rock upheeled,
And towered above the tossing field,
A statue on a roof. 16

This picture of the Christian holding hatred in check is symbolic of that time in history when the Church was triumphant over her adversary the devil and made true progress in art, literature, and education.

By deceit, however, Hate triumphs over Mark, and Ogier, the victor, cries in killing the representative of Rome--

14 Ibid., p. 84.
15 Ibid., p. 87.
16 Ibid., p. 91.
No more shall the brown men of the south
Move like ants in lines,
To quiet men with olives
Or madden men with wines. 17

Here the olive stands for Christian peace; the wine for Christian fervor.

In Ogier's song of triumph, Mark is a symbol of Rome as is evident in the following lines:

No more shall the white towns of the south
Where Tiber and Nilus run
Sitting around a secret sea
Worship a secret sun.

The blind gods roar for Rome fallen,
And forum and garland gone,
For the ice of the north is broken,
And the sea of the north comes on.

The blind gods roar and rave and dream
Of all cities under the sea,
For the heart of the north is broken,
And the blood of the north is free. 18

The secret sun that is worshipped is Christ, and the secret sea is the See at Rome. The forum and the garland are the victories of the Christians in banishing pagan customs from the culture of the Romans. The rivers of the north that have broken free are the pagan philosophies that move with maddening force to overcome Christian nations and peoples.

Colam, the Gael, is gay when he holds the sword and sad when he holds the harp. As a symbol for the spiritual he is imaginative and seemingly unreasonable. When the sensualist Harold meets him, he questions, "What

17 Ibid., p. 93.
18 Ibid., p. 93.
broken bits of earth are here?" Lightly comes Colan's reply,

Oh, truly we be broken hearts,
For that cause, it is said,
We light our candles to that Lord,
That broke himself for bread.  

In these four lines we have the traditional religious symbols of candles representing faith and bread representing the Eucharistic Christ.

Staunchly Colan faces the sensualist and the materialist, so well prepared for battle. Hurling his one sword at Harold and killing him, he strikes the first blow at the pagan. This throwing of the sword is spoken of in the following symbolical terms by Alfred:

For this is the manner of Christian men,
Whether of steel or priestly pen,
That they cast their hearts out of their ken
To get their hearts' desire.

Thus the idea of Christian self-abnegation is brought out in figurative language.

These Christian leaders and their pagan opponents are representatives of the types through whom he expounds his philosophy in his novels. However, Chesterton's use of nature as a symbol is much more predominant in The Ballad of the White Horse than in any one of the novels studied for this thesis.

Nature

The keynote for Chesterton's use of nature is struck in the dedica-

19 Ibid., p. 75.
20 Ibid., p. 75.
21 Ibid., p. 78.
tion of the poem in which he refers to his wife as a wandering star. To him she stands as a symbol of faith who passes through a universe devoid of that virtue. This idea is brought out in the following lines:

Up through an empty house of stars,
   Being what heart you are,
Up the inhuman steeps of space
   As on a staircase go in grace,
Carrying the firelight on your face
   Beyond the loneliest star. 22

This use of an object of nature as a symbol is the beginning of its frequent recurrence throughout the entire poem. The star symbol is again employed in Alfred's defense of Christianity when he boasts that only the Christian knows how to cherish created things and that "by God's death the stars shall stand." 23 Once again Alfred refers to the star of faith when he urges his men against the pagans with the following words:

Follow the star that lives and leaps,
   Follow the sword that sings,
For we go gathering heathen men,
   A terrible harvest, ten by ten. 24

In the account of the miraculous vision of Mary, the Mother of God says to Alfred:

The men of the East may spell the stars,
   And times and triumphs mark,
But the men signed of the cross of Christ
   Go gaily in the dark. 25

22 Ibid., p. xvi.
23 Ibid., p. 47.
24 Ibid., p. 63.
Here the stars are meant to be symbols of world knowledge, and the dark is a symbol for the period when it seems as though the Christians are being overwhelmed by evil. Further on, when Alfred admits to Colon that he is a conquered king, the star is used in a new sense. In indignation Colon looks at his king with eyes that were "stars of scorn."26

As he describes Alfred in the forest, Chesterton in Apocalyptic strain speaks of the "evil stars" as a symbol of pride.27 Again when Colon meets the proud, sensual Harold, the poet relates that evil stars shine over Caerlon where Colon was born.28 Elf's spear, gift of the mermaids, is referred to as "The star of the evil spear."29

Chesterton's most lengthy and most beautiful passages on the star are written about it as a symbol of hope. Alfred pities the poor and the lonely, but he sees that in eternity these lowly shall be rewarded. He describes the star of hope in the following significant way:

A little light that leaps and flies
Like a star blown on the wind.

... A dancing sparkle, a doubtful star,
On the waste wind whirled and driven,
But it seems to sing of a wilder worth,
A time discrowned of doom and birth,
And the kingdom of the poor on earth
Come, as it is in heaven.30

26 Ibid., p. 27.
27 Ibid., p. 53.
28 Ibid., p. 77.
29 Ibid., p. 87.
30 Ibid., p. 57.
This star is again the emblem of hope that gives Alfred courage to charge the pagans once more. After he has pictured his men preparing to leave the field to the pagans, Chesterton very subtly draws the attention of the reader away from the warriors with his

Gray twilight and a yellow star
Hang over thorn and hill.31

Undoubtedly the grey twilight as it is used here is meant to be a symbol of the impending defeat of the pagan.

When Alfred is struck on the brow with a cake, he cries out that the imprint of the burn shall flame for the red star of humility. By not returning the blow, he declares that he shall have tenfold strength against his enemies. Here Chesterton shows the power of true Christian humility —

This blow that I return not
Ten times will I return
On kings and earls of all degree
And armies wide as empires be
Shall slide like landslips to the sea,
If the red star burn.32

If there is any symbolical significance in making his star of humility red, it might lie in the fact that of all the virtues it takes the most courage to practice; hence the color, red.

In the last charge against paganism, the star is used to symbolize the soul of the Christian. Alfred speaks the following symbolic passage:

31 Ibid., p. 103.
32 Ibid., p. 62.
No brothers, by your leave, I think
Death is a better ale to drink
And by all the stars of Christ that sink,
The Danes shall drink with me. 33

Just as the star served frequently for a symbol, so, too, does the sea. It is used in a figurative sense in approximately ten different instances. Usually, Chesterton has it signify some evil power, and then it is referred to as being sad, gray, drifting, and powerful. Mary's words to Alfred show the sea in this sense:

I tell you naught for your comfort,
Yea, naught for your desire,
Save that the sky grows darker yet
And the sea rises higher. 34

Here the sea is meant to be the surge of paganism that is threatening Christian culture today.

Ogier praises the power of the sea, referring to it as a force of evil, when he says the following:

So rides my soul upon the sea
That drinks the howling ships;
Though in black jest it bows and nods
Under the moons with silver rods,
I know it is roaring at the gods,
Waiting the last eclipse. 35

Shortly after this he prophesies evil's victory over good by boasting

And in the last eclipse, the sea
Shall stand up like a tower,
Above all moons made dark and riven

33 Ibid., p. 104.
34 Ibid., p. 14.
Hold up its foaming head in heaven
   And laugh, knowing its hour.36

Perhaps the most significant passage on the sea occurs in the following lines when Ogier kills Mark and triumphing that Rome has fallen, he cries:

   Down from the dome of the world we come,
   Rivers on rivers down
   Under us swirl the sects and hoardes
   And the high dooms we drown.37

"The rivers on rivers" represent the deluge of paganism that will sweep the world, and its power is signified by the force of these waters to ruthlessly sweep everything to ruin and utterly drown whatever is in its path.

Other symbols for evil are the lichen, weeds, and moss. These are used to signify the wrongs which creep up unaware and choke out good. The following lines exemplify this use:

   The turf crawled and the fungus crept,
   And the little sorrel, while all men slept,
   Unwrought the work of man.38

Symbolically and with evident clarity Chesterton foretells the certainty with which evil imperceptibly invades the realm of good. Alfred expresses this idea in the following prophetical lines:

   So ceaseless and so secret,
   Thrive terror and theft set free;
   Treason and shame shall come to pass
   While one weed flowers in a morass;
   And like the stillness of stiff grass
   The stillness of tyranny

36 Ibid., p. 40.
37 Ibid., p. 93.
38 Ibid., p. 131.
Over our white souls also
Wild heresies and high
Wave prouder than the plumes of grass,
And sadder than their sigh.39

Chesterton also resorts to the animal kingdom for symbols. In one
instance the soul is likened to a lost bird. Of course, this is a symbol
for the soul which knows not truth -- the soul of a pagan. It is used
with this connotation in the following query put to Alfred by King Guthrum:

Do we not know, have not heard,
The soul is like a lost bird,
The body a broken shell?40

The Christian is referred to several times as "A hare on the mountain
height."41 In another place, Chesterton says in reference to the pursued
Christian,

The hare has still more heart to run
Than you have heart to ride.42

Once Ogier in scorn refers to the Christians as "humbled Wessex hounds."43
As Mark's blows fall on the enemy, they are likened to "birds about the
battle-field."44 In the same stanza, Ogier is described as writhing under
his shield "Like a tortoise in his dome."45

39 Ibid., p. 125.
40 Ibid., p. 42.
41 Ibid., p. 36.
42 Ibid., p. 45.
43 Ibid., p. 94.
44 Ibid., p. 91.
In addition to the things of out-of-doors, Chesterton makes occasional use of domestic articles to symbolize his ideas. Brief mention will be made of these. The "arch and pen"\textsuperscript{46} are used as symbols of culture. Lamps and fruits are used as symbols for the home and for the land, respectively. Chesterton uses these two articles very effectively in contrast. When things are going against the Christian, Alfred cries:

\begin{quote}
The lamps are dying in your homes,
The fruits upon your bough;\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

After Elf is killed, events favor the Christians and then he reminds his men,

\begin{quote}
The fruits leap up in all your farms,
The lamps in each abode;\textsuperscript{48}
\end{quote}

In another instance, Chesterton proclaims through Alfred when he is in prophetical mood --

\begin{quote}
Yea, this shall be the sign of them,
The sign of the dying fire,
And Man made like a half-wit,
That knows not of his sire.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

Here "dying fire" can be taken to represent either paganism's lack of ardor for virtue and right, or it may be interpreted as being a symbol for the breakdown of the home and family life. Just previous to this incident the sword, as a symbol of man's personal liberty, is mentioned in this way:

\begin{quote}
46 \textit{Ibid.}, p. 6.
47 \textit{Ibid.}, p. 88.
48 \textit{Ibid.}, p. 90.
49 \textit{Ibid.}, p. 128.
\end{quote}
By this sign you shall know them,
The breaking of the sword,
And Man no more a free knight,
That loves or hates his land. 50

In view of this statement, it seems that the latter interpretation of the
dying fire as the breakdown of the family is the more likely meaning.

Religion

In the realm of religion, Chesterton makes frequent use of figurative
description. He employs the symbol in dealing with religious topics simply
because he feels incapable of depicting the greatness of God. He explains
this feeling of inadequacy in the following lines:

For who shall guess the good riddle
Or speak of the Holiest,
Save in faint figures and failing words,
Who loves, yet laughs among the swords.
Labours and is at rest? 51

The best example of the use of the symbol in reference to the Nature
of God is seen when Alfred sits watching the old woman's cakes. Medita-
tively, he thinks of God in the following various guises:

1. A Gardener

For was not God my gardener
And silent like a slave;
That opened oaks on the uplands
Or thicket in graveyard gave? 52

50 Ibid., p. 128.
51 Ibid., p. 56.
52 Ibid., p. 55.
2. An Armourer

And was not God my armourer,
All patient and unpaid,
That sealed my skull as a helmet
And ribs for hauberk made?53

3. A Servant

For God is a great servant
And rose before the day,
From some primordial slumber torn;
But all things living later born
Sleep on, and rise after the morn,
And the Lord has gone away.54

4. A Giant

But some see God like Guthrum
Crowned, with a great beard curled,
But I see God like a good giant,
That, labouring, lifts the world.55

In other places in the poem God is also represented in the following
figurative ways:

1. A Craftsman

The God that heweth kings in oak,
Writeth songs on vellum,
God of gold and flaming glass,56

2. A Loving Knight

For Love our Lord, at the end of the world,
Sits a red horse like a throne
With a brazen helmet and an iron bow
But one arrow alone.

53 Ibid., p. 55.
54 Ibid., p. 55.
55 Ibid., p. 56.
56 Ibid., p. 90.
Love with the shield of the Broken Heart
   Ever his bow doth bend.
With a single shaft for a single prize
   And the ultimate bolt that parts and flies
   And a sound of souls that rend. 57

In his reference to Christ here, Chesterton most beautifully depicts Him as a lone Knight, the Knight of Love. His single arrow represents the graces he won for us on Calvary and His right to His redeemed creatures. The single prize is the immortal soul of man; the rending of the soul when it is pierced with the arrow of His Love is symbolic of the anguish that it costs it to be detached from all created things to be Christ's completely.

In speaking of the Blessed Virgin, whose vision inspired Alfred to resume his war against the pagan, Chesterton, in the manner of a knight, compares her mainly to the familiar things in life. When Alfred sees her for the first time standing in the tall grass, the poet pictures her as follows:

He looked; and there Our Lady was,
   She stood and stroked the tall live grass
   As a man strokes his steed.

Her face was like an open word
   When brave men speak and choose,
   The very colours of her coat
   Were better than good news. 58

On seeing Mary at the time just before the last battle, King Alfred compares her to a "great light like death," 59 and speaks of her as a Virgin of the

57 Ibid., p. 79.
58 Ibid., p. 10.
59 Ibid., p. 107.
Seven Sorrows standing with a sword in her hand. At this time Chesterton also likens Our Lady to nature —

Her dress was soft as western sky,
And she was a queen most womanly —
But she was a queen of men.

To describe her voice, the poet uses the following comparisons:

And a voice came human but high up,
Like a cottage climbed among
The clouds; or a serf of hut and croft
That sits by his hovel fire as oft,
But hears, on his old bare roof aloft,
A belfry burst in song.

In an effort to tell Mark of the Virgin's revelation, Alfred says,

But out of the mouth of the Mother of God
I have seen the truth like fire;

Aside from these larger uses of metaphorical description, Chesterton speaks of the virtue of faith as a light, humility as a firmly rooted tree, love as a flame, fortitude as a daring knight faithful to his oath, and chastity as a robe of snow.

In concluding this chapter, one might say that from the various references cited, Chesterton, like any other poet, carried his symbolism

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60 Ibid., p. 107.
61 Ibid., p. 107.
62 Ibid., p. 12.
63 Ibid., p. 23.
64 Ibid., p. 122.
65 Ibid., p. 62.
66 Ibid., p. 45.
67 Ibid., p. 78.
68 Ibid., p. 45.
into his poetic works. There is a similarity, too, in the objects symbolized in his poems to those in his novels. However, in his poetry he works with more grace and polish, even though at times he overwhelms the reader with his comparisons and colorful descriptions. When this effect occurs, his thought is neither clear nor coherent. However, despite these criticisms there is no doubting the sincerity of Chesterton's beliefs or the general success of his presentation of the same. For this reason, the writer is in agreement with Sister Marie Virginia, who says, in speaking of Chesterton's poetry, "The quality of Chesterton's art is really the effusion of love for Christ from which it proceeds. It was his interior joy, his interior Christian life which gave his poetry its value, enabling him to find in the external world a significance beyond the commonplace, .."69

CHAPTER V

CHESTERTON AS KNIGHT OF THE HOLY GHOST

From the works discussed Chesterton's versatile use of the symbol is apparent. It seems appropriate then to conclude a study of the symbolic aspect of his works with a picture of him in the symbolic garb of knight. No twentieth-century author was so aware of the struggle between the powers of Light and Darkness, and no present-day writer appears to be so frequently referred to as a "Knight." With his militant Catholicity and his love of the Middle Ages with all the ideas for which this period stood, the title "Knight" probably would have pleased Chesterton immensely, and we cannot help wishing that he could have had the pleasure of reading de la Mare's lines penned in his honor. The following lines are a part of that memorial poem:

Knight of the Holy Ghost, he goes his way,
Wisdom his motley, Truth his loving jest;
The mills of Satan keep his lance in play,
Pity and Innocence his heart at rest.1

This verse, written at the time of Chesterton's death, is the culminating tribute of a long series of similar acclamations. His brother Cecil said of him, "If his name were to be remembered among men at all, he would probably prefer the tribute that Heine demanded -- the sword of a

1 O'Connor, op. cit., p. 152.
brave soldier in the Liberation War of Humanity."\(^2\) In his work, Pfleger eulogizes Chesterton for his spiritual acumen and concludes his remarks by saying:

> When you read him, you receive the impression of watching a fencing match. There he stands up, a fencer seemingly omnipresent, turning in every direction a sword perpetually in motion which he wields with a tireless and confident skill. He is Christ's fencer and gladiator, and how expert he is!\(^3\)

Somewhat similar is Lowther's observation that Chesterton has put on the whole armour of God and that never doughtier knight rode to the lists than this gay, gallant soldier of God.\(^4\) Evans refers to Chesterton as "the last of the Crusaders,"\(^5\) and "he deserves," says Alexander, "to be called the first knight of Europe in the new dispensation. I should say he especially merits this title, for he is but one of a large number of artists and literary people who as a matter of fact are devoting their best energies to the defense of the most valuable things in Western culture."\(^6\)

This last quotation provides the interpretation of Chesterton's title of knight and of the combative type of writing he did. With the

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\(^2\) Cecil Chesterton, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

\(^3\) Pfleger, *op. cit.*, p. 176.


clearest vision, he foresaw the deadly dangers that threatened Western Civilization, and undauntedly he entered the lists against the pernicious enemies of the Christian way of life.

Like the knight of old, Chesterton was well-equipped for battle. He had for armour the great love of God; for a shield he had the Catholic faith, the faith for which he had fought unassisted. As for arms, he was well-equipped with his sword of common sense and his lance of laughter. To complete the picture we can envision him, as Bullett did, carrying the banner of Saint George, instead of that of any earthly king.7

With such accoutrement, Chesterton was indeed qualified to take his place as a knight to "renew the face of the earth." Nevertheless, he had other advantages that made him a formidable foe. He fought successfully because he knew what the struggle was about. As has already been pointed out, Chesterton came face to face with evil early in life, and he knew its terrific destructive force. He saw that the whole trend of thought behind divorce, eugenics, birth control, socialism, humanitarianism, atheism, and liberalism was directly opposed to Christian morality. Alarmed at even the slightest compromise in favor of any of these movements, he preached against them in prose and verse.

Secondly, Chesterton had the initiative and responsibility to contribute actively and creatively to the upholding of Christian ideals. At a tremendous cost to his physical health, he used up his vitality in writing

of all types -- novel, essay, poetry, drama, short story, literary criticism. The maintaining of his own newspaper -- G. K.'s Weekly -- was a severe drain, physically and financially. However, like a true Christian warrior, he had the strength and the fire of the Holy Spirit to bear manfully all such hardships. With perseverance to the end, he used his energies, like the knight of old, in defending women and the sanctity of the home, in protecting the weak and lowly, in serving God faithfully, in being loyal to his country, and in being a model of Christian virtue himself.

Lastly, Chesterton was strong enough to accept hardships and dangers in a lighthearted spirit. Unlike his gloomy contemporaries, the aesthetes, he never became dismayed when evil loomed large and men seemed weak. With zest he clung to his shield of Faith and launched a fresh attack. In this he is very similar to the defeated King Alfred, who with his scattered forces struck at the enemy once again. In the face of danger his humor enabled him to jest and in his jesting scatter his enemies. Bullett compares his use of laughter to a cleansing sword, swift and lethal as lightning, and he further remarks that "Chesterton's mirth is like a gale out of Heaven, a cleansing wind, a hurricane of humorous common sense."

Selfless zeal and his consuming love of God and men account for Chesterton's lack of careful workmanship, his disregard of true proportion and literary effect, and his repetition of the same ideas over and over

8 Ibid., p. 13.

9 Ibid., p. 21.
again. He was a Knight of the Holy Ghost first and an artist second. What mattered to him most was to defend the Truth, not to make of himself a litterateur. Making men aware of Christ and His Divine teachings he took to be his vocation and duty. Is it any wonder then that Eric Gill described him "as a holy man beyond all his contemporaries"? Mindful of this fact, too, the Republic of Ireland donated a bell for the Chesterton Memorial Church on which is inscribed the following:

Presented to the parish of Beaconsfield by friends and admirers of Gilbert Keith Chesterton, to ring the call to faith, which he so chivalrously answered in song, in word, and in example to the glory of God and of England.

With this tribute to Gilbert Keith Chesterton, the Knight of the Holy Ghost, to stand as a symbol of his living Faith, it seems appropriate to close the study of a man whose words will last as long as the chimes of the bell on Memorial Church because he followed, and in his works leads others to follow The Way, The Truth, and The Light.


11 Cyril Clemens, G. K. Chesterton as Seen by His Contemporaries (Webster Groves, International Mark Twain Society, 1939), p. 173.
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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Sister Mary Patricia Cullen, O.S.F., has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

September 10, 1949

Signature of Adviser