



The DEFENDANT

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'I have found that humanity is not incidentally engaged, but eternally and systematically engaged, in throwing gold into the gutter and diamonds into the sea. . . .; therefore I have imagined that the main business of man, however humble, is defence. I have conceived that a defendant is chiefly required when worldlings despise the world – that a counsel for the defence would not have been out of place in the terrible day when the sun was darkened over Calvary and Man was rejected of men.'

G.K. Chesterton, 'Introduction', *The Defendant* (1901)

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The 'Broken Rainbow' of Education

by Karl Schmude

One of the most arresting chapters of Chesterton's book, *What's Wrong with the World* (1910), is 'The Broken Rainbow,' in which he deals with the subject of colour.

Chesterton was acknowledged as an artist before he became renowned as a writer. He studied at an art school in London in his early years, and produced sketches and cartoons and chalk drawings throughout his life.

He looked instinctively at colour as a sign and reflection of a deeper condition – in this case, what he saw as wrong with education.

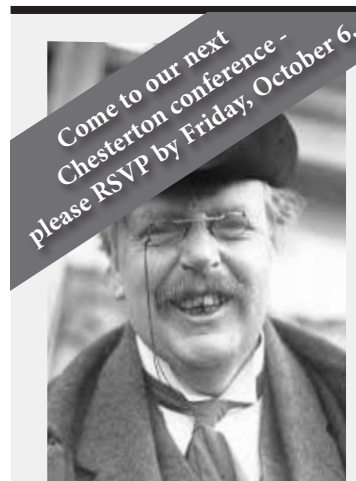
Regrettably, Chesterton's image of a 'broken rainbow' has now been eclipsed by the modern 'Rainbow' movement in favour of gender fluidity; but, as with other words that have been appropriated by political activists (for example, 'gay'), the 'broken rainbow' still presents a picture of present-day education.



Chesterton at London's Slade School of Art in 1892 at the age of 18

In *What's Wrong with the World*, Chesterton compared what he called the present 'chaos of colour' to a 'shattered rainbow,' and suggested that this disorder of colour derived from a lack of philosophy or right intellectual order.

By contrast, the miniature pictures painted by medieval artists communicated the objective importance and value of colour.



Laughter in Paradise: G.K. Chesterton and humour

The conference will take place on **Saturday, October 21**, at Campion College in Old Toongabbie, Sydney. Papers will focus on various aspects of Chesterton's humour, including Chesterton and the Marx Brothers; Christian humour in authors such as Dante, Chaucer, and Chesterton; Chesterton's favourite Shakespeare comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; and political cartoons in the age of Chesterton. There will also be a paper on Hilaire Belloc's humour.

For further information, please contact Karl Schmude – at kgschmude@gmail.com or on: 0407 721 458.

There is a Registration Form inserted in this *Defendant*.

The Meaning of Colour

If a hundred monks wore one brown habit it was because they felt that their toil and brotherhood were well expressed in being clad in the coarse, dark colour of the earth. I do not say that they said so, or even clearly thought so; but their artistic instinct went straight when they chose the mud-colour for laborious brethren or the flame-colour for the first princes of the Church. . . .

The modern trouble is not that the people do not see splendid colours or striking effects. The trouble is that they see too much of them and see them divorced from all reason. It is a misfortune of modern language that the word 'insignificant' is vaguely associated with the words 'small' or 'slight'. But a thing is insignificant when we do not know what it signifies. . . . Modern life, with its vastness, its energy, its elaboration, its wealth, is, in the exact sense, insignificant. Nobody knows what we mean; we do not know ourselves. . . .

- G.K. Chesterton, "Pageants and Dress," *The Uses of Diversity* (1920)

The Language of Colour

There are a great many other languages besides the verbal. . . . There is a scheme of aesthetic signs or emblems, simple indeed and consisting only of a few elemental colours, which is actually employed to convey great lessons in human safety and great necessities of the Commonwealth. It need hardly be said that I allude to the railway signals. They are as much a language . . . as the colour-sequence of ecclesiastical vestments, which sets us red for martyrdom, and white for resurrection.

For the green and red of the night-signals depict the two most fundamental things of all, which lie at the back of all language. Yes and no, good and bad, safe and unsafe, life and death.

- G.K. Chesterton, *G.F. Watts* (1904)

The old artist, Chesterton noted, 'contrived to convey an impression that colours really were significant and precious things, like jewels and talismanic stones. The colour was often arbitrary; but it was always authoritative.' As a result, it was treated with a respect that was not accorded by the contemporary artist.

What educators now needed to do is 'teach people to relish colours like liqueurs. They have the heavy business of turning drunkards into wine tasters. If ever the twentieth century succeeds in doing this, it will almost catch up with the twelfth.' (Chesterton loved to turn the accepted notion of 'progress' on its head and, with good humour, throw it into the face of his contemporaries!)

His conclusion was that the sheer abundance of colours in our time, combined with the loss of a colour scheme, is 'a pretty perfect parable of all that is wrong with our modern ideals and especially with our modern education. It is the same with ethical education, economic education, every sort of education.'

We are, said Chesterton, 'like children who have mixed all the colours in the paint-box together and lost the paper of instructions.'

Or, as he put it in another chapter of *What's Wrong with the World*, the problem for modern man is not that he's lost his way. Man has always lost his way. The problem for modern man is that now he has lost his address.

In his testimony at the US Senate hearings in March this year on his nomination to the Supreme Court, following which he was confirmed, Judge Neil Gorsuch, said:

'I wonder if we're like David Foster Wallace's fish: surrounded by water, yet somehow unable to appreciate its existence. Or like Chesterton's man on the street who is asked out of the blue why he prefers civilization to barbarism and has a hard time stammering out a reply because the "very multiplicity of proof which [should] make reply overwhelming makes [it] impossible.' ('Tremendous Trifles,' by Sean P. Bailey, *Gilbert*, March-April 2017) ■

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Dr Garrick Small

Australia: The Distributist Experiment

by Garrick Small

A Book Review

Race Mathews, *Of Labour and Liberty: Distributism in Victoria 1891–1966*. (Clayton, Victoria, Monash University Publishing, 2017). \$34.95

Available via this link: <http://www.publishing.monash.edu/books/oll-9781925495331.html>

Garrick Small is an Associate Professor of Property Economics at Central Queensland University and a frequent writer and speaker on Catholic social philosophy. He spoke at the Australian Chesterton Conference in 2011 at Campion College in Sydney, which addressed the theme of 'Faith in the Marketplace: The Social Catholicism of G.K. Chesterton Revisited'.

The Catholic Church came late into dealing with that corruption of liberty that is democratic capitalism.

It had always condemned the evils that were at its heart. As the capitalistic spirit came to dominate Christendom, riding in the wake of the Protestant revolt, the Church had first attempted to be content to set before men the timeless advice of their obligations to their fellows in the marketplace. It had hoped that men might learn to be both capitalists and virtuous.

By 1800, however, after the experience of too many centuries, that hope had proven vain, and the Church undertook more direct instruction. Race Mathews' recent book recounts the history of how that instruction emerged and how it took root in Australia.

The first half of the book puts that instruction into context and provides historical portraits of its ecclesiastical proponents. For anyone today interested in Catholic Social Thought, being acquainted with those conditions and leaders is vital to understanding the development of the problem and fortunes of the attempts to deal with it.

Mathews introduces the English Cardinal Manning and the two Irish churchmen who came to Australia, Cardinal Moran and Archbishop Mannix, all devoted to the 'social question' and to some extent, all remembered the less for it. They could see that justice could not be present when a wealthy nation has within itself widespread and increasing poverty at a time when the Church was more aligned with those in temporal power.

The Church's formula for effecting its social teaching relied on the laity. The remainder of Mathews' book concerns the attempts by Australian Catholic laymen to achieve this goal.

Mathews, who is not a Catholic, but a long time member of the Australian Labor Party, brings a fresh impartiality to this history. He outlines how well organised Catholic social action was in the early part of the twentieth century. This history is important for anyone today who has a mind to social action in the Catholic tradition.

In the first half of the century, a diversity of Catholic lay organisations were set up and flourished. Among these were the Campion Society and the Australian National Secretariat for Catholic Action in 1931 and 1938 respectively. These arrived at a time when the Catholic community was already cohesive and active in fostering its own youth and intellectual development.



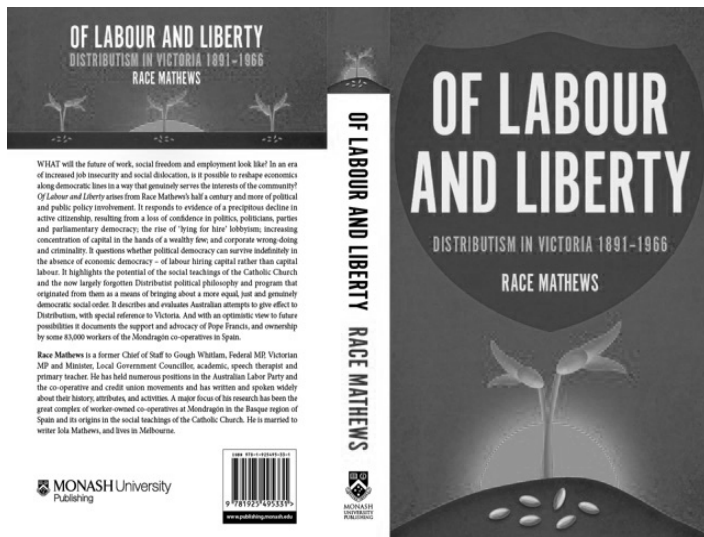
Dr Race Mathews

The Newman Society and Catholic Truth Society, both formed early in the twentieth century, were representative of the lay Catholic social infrastructure that understood the importance of connecting and educating the Catholic community. Other societies aimed at Catholics, youth, workers, and those on the land were added as the project of effecting the Church's social teaching in Australia matured.

Mathews introduces his readers to many of these societies, and more especially to their leaders. Despite their various minor differences, three commonalities stand out.

One is the uniformity of their underlying grasp of their faith and morals, and how the Church recommended that they be lived out. The second was belief in widely distributed private property, which was also a theme in the Church and its lay writers.

The third commonality was their aloofness from the Left/Right political polarity that had come to dominate democratic politics in Australia. In 1948 John C. Cullen described the apparent opposition between the Left and Right as a 'shadow war' in terms that are reminiscent of Chesterton's Hodge and Gudge, or Pope Pius XI's condemnation of both communism and capitalism as twin shipwrecks of faith and complementary forms of social, moral and juridical modernism.



Amongst this legion of dedicated Catholic lay activists Bartholomew Augustine (B. A.) Santamaria stands out as the central figure in the drama of Catholic social action in twentieth century Australia. By being its most outstanding leader, he was also most closely associated with its failures.

Santamaria was effective at growing and organising Catholic political action within the labour movement and at one point came close to ensuring the Australian Labor Party became a vehicle for realising Catholic social teaching at a time when the party was being seriously subverted by communism. A collection of forces thwarted Santamaria's goals and the result was a split in the party and the expulsion of much of the Catholic influence.

Mathew's treatment of Santamaria is understandable, though not unduly charitable. It is useful for those who think highly of Santamaria to be sobered by the facts of Mathews' criticisms. It is also important to avoid being taken in by the perspective of an author who has an obvious fascination with Catholic social thought, but not the benefit of the underlying Catholic faith that inspires and supports it. Santamaria was a Christian first, serving God in the Catholic tradition. His politics was secondary and instrumental to his exercise of his faith, which operated at a deeper and more comprehensive level.

The failure of the Australian venture in Catholic social thought was due to many causes, well beyond Santamaria.

Catholic action was not adequately coordinated and the Church's support not always sufficient. Moreover, the task of realising Catholic social principles within a political system that the Church forbade explicit connection with was insufficiently thought out to be effective.

It is understandable that Mathews laments the political failure of the venture since he recognises the benefits it could have brought Australia, but to isolate Santamaria as its cause is severe.

Australia represented perhaps the most general application of Catholic social principles, and while it has not been as successful as the Basque Mondragon cooperatives, it leaves us with many lessons.

Like Mondragon, the Australians understood the central importance of the 'one big idea', that of widely distributed private property.

Unlike Mondragon, Australian Catholics under Santamaria tried to apply it to the entire country, and not merely to a private cooperative or movement of cooperatives. Australian Catholics were very successful at fostering the cooperative movement, but that too failed as its Catholic compass was diluted by ecumenical sentiment.

Mathews gives space to the cooperatives and their successes, and compares them to Mondragon.

Of Labour and Liberty is an important work, and perhaps a salutary one. His fondness for what the Catholic Church has proposed as the solution to the economic problem is as evident as it is fair.

Overall, he presents it as a necessary solution, but the Australian experience can only be read as less than optimistic that the necessary solution could ever find root again in the present organisation of the Church and the political system that currently dominates the West. ■

Was Chesterton a secret Australian?

In his 1919 novel, *Round the World in Any Number of Days*, the English author, Maurice Baring (1874-1945), who was one of Chesterton's closest friends, depicted him as an Australian.

He produced a pastiche of Chesterton in which an Australian complained that the works of Chesterton were 'bosh'. 'Thank God,' he added, 'he's not an Australian.' But, Baring retorted:

'... fancy if [he] had been an Australian! One wonders what would have been the effect of his figure, his style, and his philosophy. . . . I think he would have written gigantic epics on the Blue Mountains, the Bush and gum-trees; wild romances about bush-rangers and beachcombers, and swinging songs about Botany Bay.

'I can imagine Mr Chesterton looking lean and spare riding a horse bareback. One of his qualities would have certainly developed in the same way, had he been born and bred over the sea, and that is his geniality, his large, hospitable nature, his belief in goodness; for hospitality and friendliness grow if anything quicker on Australian and colonial soil than they do in England.'

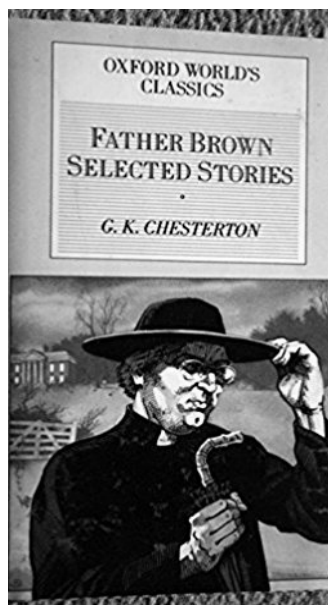
Father Brown – the Perspective of Ronald Knox

by John Young

John Young is an Australian philosopher who has contributed frequently to *The Defendant* as well as to various journals and newspapers in Australia and overseas. He is the author of various books, including *Reasoning Things Out* (1982) and *The Natural Economy* (1997), and has taught at the Centre for Thomistic Studies and other institutions.



Monsignor Ronald Knox



A volume titled *Father Brown Selected Stories* was published in Oxford World's Classics in 1955. The selection was made by Monsignor Ronald Knox, who contributed an interesting Introduction.

He begins with the observation that just as Chesterton by his physical bigness overflowed his surroundings, in his literary output he never really found his medium because every medium was too small for him. His philosophy of life was too large to fit any medium.

For example: 'His *History of England* is a brilliant resume, but it is a history of Chesterton rather than of England.' 'Even his *Ballad of the White Horse*, one of his certainly immortal works, cannot be graded among English epics because it is so much more than an epic.'

Knox writes: 'When we founded the Detection Club, he was appointed, without a dissension voice, as its first president; who else could have presided over Bentley and Dorothy Sayers and Agatha Christie and those others?'

The mystery stories, too, Knox observes, are mystery stories with a difference. 'As usual, the box has been so tightly packed that the clasps will not fasten; there is too much meat in the sandwich.'

Knox suggests that a fictional detective has a special attraction if he is able to appeal to us through weakness, the general reaction to him being that he would never be able to solve the problem. 'It is because he drops his parcels and cannot roll his umbrella, because he blinks at us and has fits

of absentmindedness, that Father Brown is such a good publisher's detective.'

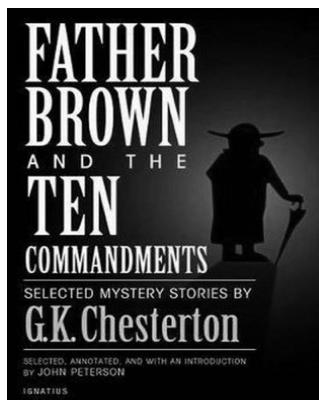
Father Brown is not a scientific expert: he doesn't know about obscure poisons and is not the author of any treatises about the different kinds of cigarette ash. But he understands humanity. More precisely, Father Brown understands himself and has the humility to see what he himself would be capable of under certain conditions.

Knox: 'The real secret of Father Brown is that there is nothing of the mystic about him'. Other characters in the stories expect a Roman Catholic priest to appeal to the supernatural in solving mysteries; instead he appeals to reason. '...Father Brown is doing just what Poirot does; he is using his little grey cells. He is noticing something which the reader hasn't noticed, and will kick himself later for not having noticed.'

Knox says there is only one female villain in the whole series. '... It is part of Chesterton's obstinate chivalry that he hardly ever introduces you to a woman you are meant to dislike.' Also, 'people with Irish names (how unlike Sherlock Holmes!) are fairly certain to be innocent.'

(I had never noticed Irish-named criminals in the Sherlock Holmes stories, but of course the two most dangerous criminals in London – Professor Moriarty and Colonel Sebastian Moran – have Irish names. An Irish priest urged Conan Doyle to return to the Catholic Faith, an appeal Conan Doyle may have resented, because when he created his arch-villain he evidently remembered it. The priest's name was Father Moriarty!)

Knox observes: '... If we are to judge the Father Brown cycle by the canons of its own art, we shall not be disposed to complain that these are something less than detective stories; rather, that they are something more. Like everything else Chesterton wrote, they are a Chesterton manifesto.' ■



Father Brown – Distinguishing the Sin from the Crime

by Charlie Hegarty

Charlie Hegarty, a frequent book reviewer to the *London Catholic Herald*, has kindly allowed *The Defendant* to reprint this review of Chesterton's *Father Brown and the Ten Commandments*. *Selected Mystery Stories* (Edited by John Peterson. Ignatius Press, 2017)

Never having read any of Chesterton's Father Brown stories (there are 51 of them in all), this book has been a treat.

Usually my holiday reading list includes a Georges Simenon novel; this year it has been spent in the company of a small, tubby figure in black, with a 'moonlike face' and carrying a heavy umbrella.

These stories of how the Commandments might be broken are ingenious, deliberately far-fetched, packed with humorous sideswipes at contemporary fashions and with glimpses of Chestertonian wisdom.

They have whetted my appetite to read the remaining 41 titles.

As John Peterson points out in his introduction, what interested Chesterton was the state of his characters' souls; their sins more than their crimes.

As Father Brown reflects, 'You must remember, in a murder case, the guiltiest person is not always the murderer.'

The stories should be read slowly; otherwise you might miss a thought-provoking aside – such as the priest's

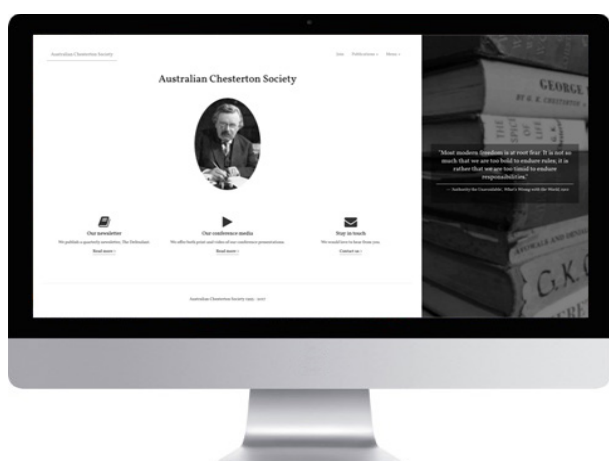
comment on being taken to visit a millionaire in 'The Arrow of Heaven': 'It is my duty to visit prisoners and all miserable men in captivity.'

In 'The Worst Crime in the World', Chesterton's fictitious alter-ego startles the reader by reminding him that 'There are two types of men who can laugh when they are alone. . . either very good or very bad. . . either confiding the joke to God or confiding it to the Devil. . . It does not mind if nobody sees the joke. The joke is enough in itself, if it is sufficiently sinister and malignant.'

As always with Chesterton, his instinctive irreverence towards the gods of the age is a delight, such as when, in 'The Actor and the Alibi', Father Brown inveighs against 'those highbrows' who talk about 'the Will to Power': 'Damned nonsense and more than damned nonsense – nonsense that can damn.'

How would Chesterton fare today in a BBC discussion group [or, for an ABC Q&A audience! *Ed.*]?

Very badly. After all, 'You needn't have any intellect to be an intellectual', as Father Brown remarks. His political incorrectness would become notorious. Here is just one example: 'The population was red and brown with pink spots...' ■



Australian Chesterton Website

The Australian Chesterton Society website (www.chestertonaustralia.com) provides information about the Society and its activities, including its regular conferences now held at Campion College in Sydney. It also provides access to past issues of *The Defendant* newsletter.

The website was designed by Marty Schmude.

Chesterton on Charles Dickens and the Condescension of the Elites

Dickens stands first as a defiant monument of what happens when a great literary genius has a literary taste akin to that of the community. For this kinship was deep and spiritual. Dickens was not like our ordinary demagogues and journalists. Dickens did not write what the people wanted. Dickens wanted what the people wanted.

. . . Dickens and his school had a hilarious faith in democracy and thought of the service of it as a sacred priesthood. Hence there was this vital point in his popularism, that there was no condescension in it. The belief that the rabble will only read rubbish can be read between the lines of all our contemporary writers, even of those writers whose rubbish the rabble reads. . . . The only difference lies between those writers who will consent to talk down to the people, and those writers who will not consent to talk down to the people.

But Dickens never talked down to the people. He talked up to the people. He approached the people like a deity and poured out his riches and his blood. This is what makes the immortal bond between him and the masses of men. He had not merely produced something they could understand, but he took it seriously, and toiled and agonized to produce it.

They were not only enjoying one of the best writers, they were enjoying the best he could do. His raging and sleepless nights, his wild walks in the darkness, his note-books crowded, his nerves in rags, all this extraordinary output was but a fit sacrifice to the ordinary man. He climbed towards the lower classes. He panted upwards on weary wings to reach the heaven of the poor.

- G.K. Chesterton, "The Great Popularity," Chap.5, *Charles Dickens* (1906)



Charles Dickens



Chesterton at Brighton in 1935, a year before he died

Rising Above the People by Understanding Them

Poets draw out the shy refinement of the rabble. . . . [They] carry the popular sentiments to a keener and more splendid pitch; but let it always be remembered that it is the popular sentiments that they are carrying. . . .

The Poets are those who rise above the people by understanding them. Of course, most of the Poets wrote in prose – Rabelais, for instance, and Dickens. The Prigs rise above the people by refusing to understand them: by saying that all their dim, strange preferences are prejudices and superstitions. The Prigs make the people feel stupid; the Poets make the people feel wiser than they could have imagined that they were. . . .

The Poets who embrace and admire the people are often pelted with stones and crucified. The Prigs who despise the people are often loaded with lands and crowned.

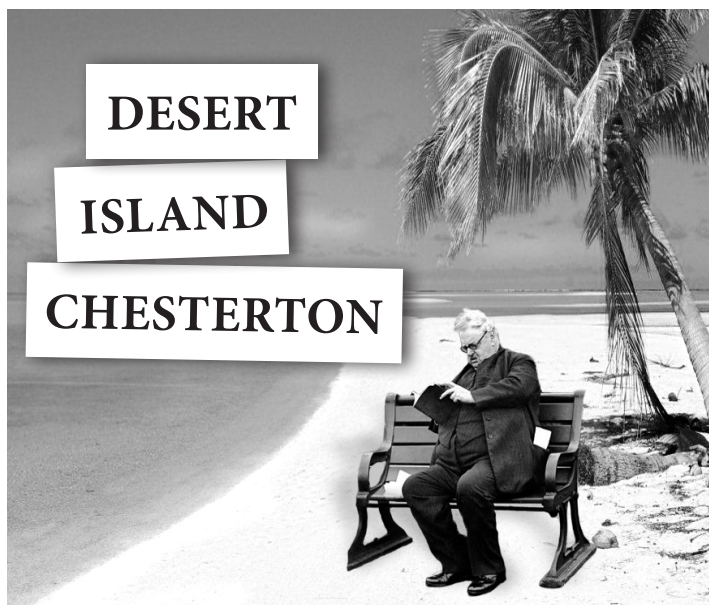
- G.K. Chesterton, "The Three Kinds of Men," *Alarms and Discursions* (1910)

The Democracy of the Dead

Tradition may be defined as an extension of the franchise. Tradition means giving votes to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead.

Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death.

- G.K. Chesterton, "The Ethics of Elfland," *Orthodoxy* (1908)



The Man Who Was Thursday

by Philippa Martyr



When asked what book he would choose if stranded on a desert island, Chesterton famously answered: Thomas' Guide to Practical Shipbuilding. In this new Defendant series, Desert Island Chesterton, writers will focus on a single Chesterton title in the event of their being marooned.

Launching the series is **Dr Philippa Martyr** (pictured), a Perth-based historian, university lecturer, academic researcher, and student, who explains why she has picked *The Man Who Was Thursday*.

G.K. Chesterton and I have a funny old relationship, rather like the one I have with Monty Python.

I know his reputation, and I have met many of his devotees who can quote large tracts of his writing, and who generally swear by him. But it's been a struggle for me to engage with him.

This may seem scandalous, but there it is, and it's probably yet another sign of a poor upbringing, or perhaps that I lack the Chesterton gene and have to learn to digest him over time, like lactose.

The comparison should end there, because Chesterton was a far more serious contributor to the good than Monty Python (or possibly lactose) ever will be.

But there was a moment when I engaged gloriously with Monty Python: the surreal sequence at the beginning of *The Meaning of Life* about a firm of pirate accountants, their city buildings in full sail on the high seas, engaging in terrifying takeover bids. This sequence – the work of one of my favourite directors, Terry Gilliam – captivated me on the spot.

And it is the same with Chesterton's fiction: there is one novel with which I bonded instantly, and for much the same reasons: its surreal vision, hypnagogic imagery, and crazy story.

If I were stranded on a desert island, that's the Chesterton book I would choose to have.

The Man Who Was Thursday (1908) has one of the best book titles in English literature, and it doesn't let you down. It charts the dreamlike journey of Gabriel Syme, a madman turned policeman turned anarchist, into a heart of darkness that turns out to be a re-enactment of the seven days of Creation and the fall of the angels, but which leads to his conversion.

Or does it? Is it really just a story about *fin de siècle* fears of bomb-throwing anarchists who were then stalking Europe?

Thursday's beauty and quality stand out when you compare it to similar fantastical Early Modernist works about human

encounters with supernatural forces, sometimes in the form of ancient gods and goddesses.

Some were religious parables, such as Ford Madox Ford's *Mr Apollo* (1908) with its wonderfully incongruous opening scene of Apollo landing gracefully on a London street in immaculate evening dress.

E M Forster ('The Story of a Panic', 1902), E F Benson ('The Man Who Went Too Far', 1912), Aldous Huxley ('Cynthia', 1920), and D.H. Lawrence ('The Last Laugh', c1927) all produced short stories about human encounters with Pan, mostly malicious and tragic.

Lawrence's story may actually be deliberately or unconsciously evocative of *Thursday* – it features a red-haired man, a woman, a walk in the dark after an artistic get-together in Hampstead, and a fresh-faced policeman who may or may not be friend or foe. Needless to say, it doesn't end well.

By contrast, *Thursday* is positively tonic, and yet every bit as terrifying as it pits its frail and flawed human characters against a series of bizarre adversaries, especially the giant and unpredictable Sunday. The story peels off in layers, but like an onion in reverse – or like C S Lewis' 'real world' at the end of *The Last Battle* – it gets larger and larger.

The imagery is hypnotic, apocalyptic, and deeply symbolic; every tree and every landscape are invested with heraldic significance. Nothing is what it seems, and that turns out to be the whole point.

Did Chesterton live with symptoms of temporal lobe epilepsy?

Thursday's dreamlike imagery and rich interpretation of ordinary events, and Chesterton's hypergraphia and absent-mindedness, might all point to it, but retrospective diagnosis is something best engaged in for fun rather than for profit.

The Man Who Was Thursday is for me proof that even someone who lacks the Chesterton gene can enjoy his fiction in small quantities, savouring its richness rather than drowning in it. ■