

Humility and Sanity: Glimpses of Chesterton and Waugh

--Epigraphs--

“Now, speaking quite externally and empirically, we may say that **the strongest and most unmistakable *mark of madness* is **this combination between a logical completeness and a spiritual contraction**....They all have [even “the mad doctors”] exactly that combination we have noted: **that combination of an expansive and exhaustive reason with a contracted common sense**. They are universal only in the sense that they take **one thin explanation** and carry it very far.” (G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (London: John Lane –The Bodley Head LTD., 1908), pp. 31-32, 36—from Chapter II (“The Maniac”)--italics in the original; bold emphasis added).**

“For **madness may be defined as using mental activity so as to reach mental helplessness**.” (G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (1908), p. 75—from Chapter III (“The Suicide of Thought”)--my emphasis added).

“If any frightened curate [as of 1908] still says that it will be awful if the darkness of free thought should spread, we can only answer him **in the high and powerful words of Mr. Belloc** [from Hilaire Belloc's 1906 *Open Letter on the Decay of Faith*], ‘**Do not, I beseech you, be troubled by the increase of forces already in dissolution. You have mistaken the hour of the night: it is already morning.**’...We have looked for questions in the darkest corners and on the wildest peaks....It is time we gave up looking for [mere] questions and began looking for answers.” (G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (1908), p. 64 (“The Suicide of Thought”)--my emphasis added).

“The phrases of the street are **not only forcible but subtle**: for a figure of speech can often get **into a crack too small for a definition**....And there is no more subtle truth than that of the everyday phrase about a man ‘**having his heart in the right place.**’ It involves **the idea of normal proportion**; not only does **a certain function** exist, but it is **rightly related to other functions**. Indeed **the negation** of this phrase [about “having a heart in the right place”] would describe with peculiar accuracy the somewhat **morbid mercy and perverse tenderness** of the most representative moderns [*i.e.*, those thinkers and writers **having a form of mercy and humility, but having them dislocated, not in the right location**].” (G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (1908), p. 50 (“The Suicide of Thought”)--my emphasis added).

In his 1908 book, entitled *Orthodoxy* — published fourteen years before he was received into the Catholic Church in the summer of 1922 — G.K. Chesterton speaks politely and acutely about the all-too-pervasive lunacy (and the somewhat diminished sanity) of the modern world he knew so well even then. By his first considering madness and some of the contrasting attractions of sanity, he also leads us to higher and deeper things, such as the enlivening and resilient, fuller order of virtue. That is, to the order of interrelated natural and infused virtues, as distinct from those precariously isolated and uprooted forms of virtue that are lonely and wandering and out of balance.

Near the beginning of his book's third chapter, entitled “The Suicide of Thought,” G.K. Chesterton graciously, but paradoxically, goes on to say:

In some ways the modern [admittedly often lunatic] world is far too good. It is full of wild and wasted virtues. When a religious scheme [sic] is shattered (as Christianity was shattered at the Reformation), it is not merely vices that are let loose. **The vices are, indeed, let loose, and they wander and do damage. But the virtues are let loose also; and the virtues do more terrible damage. The modern world is full of the old Christian virtues gone mad. The virtues have gone mad because they have been isolated from each other and wandering alone.** Thus some scientists [or “doctors”] care for truth; and their truth is pitiless. Thus some humanitarians [such as some sentimental religious pastors] only care for pity; and their pity [or mercy] (I am sorry to say) is often untruthful.¹

He then presents a characteristically cheerful example involving one of his earlier friendly disputants, Robert Blatchford (1851-1943), the professed rationalist-atheist editor of a socialist London newspaper, the *Clarion*. Their spirited and polite disputation was especially prominent during the years 1903-1904; and it was published in London, in 1904, as *The Blatchford Controversies*. Now, in *Orthodoxy*, some four years later, Chesterton charmingly says:

For example, Mr. Blatchford attacks Christianity because he is **mad** on one Christian virtue: the **merely** mystical and **almost irrational** virtue of charity. **He has a strange idea that he will make it easier to forgive sins by saying that there are no sins to forgive.** Mr. Blatchford is not only an early Christian, **he is the only early Christian who ought really to have been eaten by lions.** For in his case the pagan accusation

¹ G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy* (London: John Lane—The Bodley Head, 1908), pp. 50-51—my emphasis added. All further page references to this 297-page book will be placed above in the main body of this essay, in parentheses. Emphasis will often be added, for the sake of clarity, as well as accent. Hilaire Belloc's earlier-cited *Open Letter on the Decay of Faith* was published in London by Burns & Oates in 1906; but it is a difficult text to acquire, even in large research universities. At the time of its publication, Belloc was 36 years of age. Belloc and Chesterton had met for the first time in 1900, six years earlier, when Belloc was only thirty years of age, and GKC, who was born in 1873, was three years younger. It was in London, in a pub in Soho, that they first met and first conducted their vivid and wholehearted discourses together. They shared then their opposition to the Boer War and to Britain's big imperial ambitions. Belloc and Chesterton preferred the more humane and well-proportioned scale of “Little England.”

is really true: **his [lax form of] mercy would mean mere anarchy**. He really is an enemy of the human race—because he is so human. (51—my emphasis added)

In order to show us how we today still suffer at times, not only from having “**a heart in the wrong place**,” but also from having “**humility in the wrong place**” (53—my emphasis added), Chesterton then takes two somewhat less charming (and more hyperbolic) historical examples: one of them being the Spanish Dominican Prelate, Tomás Torquemada (1420-1498), who was largely in charge of the 15th-Century Spanish Inquisition; and the other one being the bleakly naturalistic 19th-Century French novelist, Émile Zola (d. 1902). Thus he says:

As the other extreme [of the harsher forms of an isolated virtue], we may take **the acrid realist, who has deliberately killed in himself all human pleasure in happy tales or the healing of the heart**. Torquemada **tortured** people physically **for the sake of moral truth**. Zola **tortured people morally** for the sake of physical truth. But in Torquemada's time there was at least a system [in Christendom] that could to some extent make **righteousness and peace kiss** each other [as in Psalm 85:10]. Now they do not even bow. But **a much stronger case** than these two [is the other case of the kissing] **of truth and pity [or mercy]**—[as is also in Psalm 85:10], can be found in the remarkable case of **the dislocation of humility**. (51-52—my emphasis added)

Chesterton will now refreshingly illustrate some of the likely unanticipated consequences for a man who has his “**humility in the wrong place**” (53), but only after Chesterton first tries to explain the meaning of this phenomenon. Concerning this “dislocation of humility,” he assures us that:

It is only with one aspect of humility that we are here concerned. **Humility was largely meant as a restraint upon the arrogance and infinity [boundlessness] of the appetites of man. He was always outstripping his mercies** with his own newly invented needs. His very power of enjoyment [indulgence] destroyed half his joys. By asking for pleasure, he lost the chief pleasure; for the chief pleasure is surprise [in wonder and in adventure]. Hence it became evident that **if a man would make his world large, he must always be making himself small....It is impossible without humility to enjoy anything—even pride**. (52-53—my emphasis added)

Concentrating on his own society in 1908, Chesterton explicitly says:

But what we suffer from to-day [sic] is **humility in the wrong place**. **Modesty has moved from the organ of ambition. Modesty has settled upon the organ of conviction**; where it was never intended to be. **A man was meant to be doubtful about himself, but undoubting about the truth**; this has [now] been exactly reversed. Nowadays the part of a man that a man does **assert** is exactly the part he ought not assert—himself. The part he doubts is exactly the part he ought not to doubt—Divine Reason. [Thomas] Huxley [d. 1895] preached a humility content [in his polite agnosticism] to learn from Nature. The new sceptic is so humble that he doubts

if can even learn. Thus we should be wrong **if we said hastily** that there is no humility [or mercy] typical of our time. **The truth is that there is a real humility typical of our time**; but it so happens that it is **practically a more poisonous humility** than the wildest prostrations of the ascetic. **The old humility was a spur that prevented a man from stopping; not a nail in his boot that prevented him from going on.** For the old humility made a man doubtful about his efforts, which **might** make him work harder. But the new humility makes a man **doubtful about his aims, which makes him stop working altogether....**We are on the road to producing a race of men **too mentally modest to believe in the multiplication table....**Scoffers of old time were too proud to be convinced; but these [new scoffers] are **too humble to be convinced....**It is **exactly this intellectual helplessness which is our second problem** [after insanity and the signs of a maniac]....**That peril is that the human intellect is free to destroy itself.** (53-54, 56—my emphasis added)

In his book's second chapter, entitled “The Maniac” (pp. 20-49), Chesterton suddenly contributes in passing an insight that is likely to remain with us always, and even to inform our remaining life more abundantly: **“How much larger your life would be if your self could become smaller in it.”** (33) (Saint John the Baptist came to understand and then to bear faithful witness to that insight, I believe.)

Were the reader first to read and savor Chesterton's entire second chapter in *Orthodoxy* — on the maniac and his suffocating crampedness (and being therefore insufficiently “cracked”) — he would better appreciate Evelyn Waugh's own poignant and sometimes comic and ironic depictions of picaresque cunning and of actual insanity.

For, before being attentive to Evelyn Waugh's surprising story “Mr. Loveday's Little Outing”² and the interwoven consequences of interrupted “Garden Parties,” I wish now first to consider one brief cunning and roguish scene from Evelyn Waugh's novel of the “Phoney War” period in England and also on the whole Western Front in World War II (from the British declaration of war on 3 September 1939 — until 10 May 1940, the German attack into France and the Low Countries). Waugh's 1942 novel is simply entitled *Put Out More Flags*³ and it shows, in part, how Basil Seal resourcefully discovers how an upper class hostess may implement “Garden Parties” as part of her hospitality and

2 Evelyn Waugh, *Charles Ryder's Schooldays and Other Stories* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982). The first story in this anthology is entitled “Mr. Loveday's Little Outing,” and will be found on pages 9-22. Further references to this story will be from this edition and will be placed in parentheses above, in this essay's main text. Only a small portion of this subtle story will be presented and discussed; but the reader is encouraged to read and re-read and savor the entire interwoven tale leading to a surprise in the ending.

3 Evelyn Waugh, *Put Out More Flags* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1942). The book was ironically and affectionately dedicated to his companion and friend, Randolph Churchill (1911-1968), Winston Churchill's only son. Although they were later estranged for over a decade (circa 1952-1964), they later forgave each other, as was humorously and poignantly reported in one of the last entries, “March 1964,” in Evelyn Waugh *Diaries*. Recalling R. Churchill, this current essay will primarily examine the scene on pages 108-109, where Basil Seal discovers “the little red-leather-covered address book” and the hostess' frequent notation therein of “**G.P.O.**”

social obligations.

Since Waugh's long-time friend Randolph Churchill also cherished gardening and was himself, not only an aristocrat, but also (like Basil Seal) a picaresque rascal, wit and prankster, we should now quote more or less in full the essence of Evelyn Waugh's "March 1964" diary entry, from his own later-published *Diaries*.⁴ This drollery (and final poignancy) to be found in the diary-entry was inserted only two years before Waugh's own death (on 10 April 1966) and only four years before Randolph Churchill's own death (on 6 June 1968):

March 1964 Randolph Churchill went into hospital (Sister Agnes's, thus keeping me away....) **to have a lung removed.** It was announced that **the trouble was not "malignant."** Seeing Ed Stanley at White's [their exclusive Gentlemen's Club in St. James, London], on my way to Rome, I remarked that **it was a typical triumph of modern science to find the only part of Randolph that was not malignant and remove it.** Ed repeated this to Randolph whom I met on my way home from Rome, again in White's. He looked so pale and feeble and was so breathless that **we there and then made up our estrangement of some twelve years.** (788—my emphasis added)

Such is Waugh's special sense of humor and characteristic sense of tragic helplessness and loss. And only nine years before—in his brief *Diary* entry for "Thursday 17 November 1955"—Waugh had also felicitously and sincerely written: "Resolved: to regard humankind with benevolence and detachment, **like an elderly host** whose young and indulged wife has asked a lot of people to the house [as well as to the garden party] **whose names he does not know.**" (747—my emphasis added)

Now let us consider Basil Seal and his married sister, Barbara Sothill, and how they could decide to make an expedient (if not an always profitable) use of some of his sister's own upper class neighbors in the surrounding countryside. For, under the danger of the enemy's aerial "blitz" (as seen in 1940), they had to find suitable billeting for urban children evacuated for their own safety into the countryside. These notably uncouth children—especially the three Birmingham "Connollies" ("Doris, Miky, and Marlane")—wreaked havoc at close quarters on these elegant country homes and lawns and, especially, on some recently retired couples, such as the Harknesses at their "Old Mill House." The District Billeting Officer learned how to gather large "donations"—or grateful "payoffs"—from the local gentry, provided that the slyly manipulative Basil Seal would not lodge the unruly and disordered Connollies at their estates, but place them mercifully elsewhere!

⁴ Evelyn Waugh, *The Diaries of Evelyn Waugh*—Edited by Michael Davie (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1976), p. 788—my bold emphasis added.

This background will provide enough elucidating context for one of Waugh's exquisite passages:

Basil set about the problem of finding a home for the Connollies **with zeal and method**. He settled himself at a table with an ordnance map [from the military], the local newspaper **and the little-red-leather-covered address book** which had been one of the old Mrs. Sohill's **legacies** to Barbara [her daughter-in-law, and Basil's sister]; in this book were **registered all her more well-to-do neighbors** for a radius of twenty miles, **the majority of whom were marked with the initials G.P.O.—which stood for Garden Party Only**. Barbara had done her best to keep **this invaluable work of reference** up to date and had from time to time crossed out those who had died or left the district, and added the names of newcomers [like the unsuspecting Harknesses!].

Presently Basil said, “What about the Harknesses of Old Mill House, North Grappling?”

“Middle-aged couple. He retired from some sort of a job abroad. I think she's musical. Why?”

“They're advertising for boarders.” He pushed the paper across to her, where she [Barbara] read, in the *Accommodation* column:—

Paying Guests accepted in lovely modernized **fifteenth century mill. Ideal surroundings for elderly or artistic people wishing to avoid the war worries**. All home produce. **Secluded old world gardens**. 6 gns [guineas] weekly. **Highest references given and expected**. Harkness, Old Mill House, North Grappling.

“How about that [accommodation] for the Connollies?”

“Basil, you can't.”

“Can't I just. **I'll get to work on them at once**. Do they allow extra petrol for your billeting work?”

“Yes, but....”

“That's grand. I'll take the Connollies [all three of the uncouth and disorderly urban urchins!] over there this morning. **D'you know, this is the first piece of serious war work I've done so far?**” (108-109—my bold emphasis added; italics in the original)

With this additional preparation we may now more discerningly examine Evelyn Waugh's compact short story, especially if we concurrently retain a larger “criterion” and our sense of “**what is not there.**” That is to say, what G.K. Chesterton deftly used to call our sense of “**the presence of absence**”: as in “the presence of the absence of hope (or love)”. Chesterton, in his 1925 book, *The Everlasting Man*, wanted to distinguish two important psychological realities, as it were: “the absence

of the presence of God” and, something even more subtle, “**the presence of the absence of God.**”⁵

As we now consider “Mr. Loveday's Little Outing” more closely, we may also find ourselves recurrently wondering about the sadness, and the extent to which one hauntingly and increasingly feels “**the presence of the absence of love.**” When I first read many years ago the first three pages of Waugh's short story — after having already read many fictional and non-fictional texts of Chesterton — I found myself saying “**the love of a wife is a touching thing.**”

Let us now see if that tonal and moral impression also strikes a current reader as he meets Lady Moping and her daughter Angela driving for a visit to the “Country Home For Mental Defectives.” (11)

Lady Moping says:

“You will not find your father greatly changed [after 10 years!],” remarked Lady Moping, as the car turned into the gates of the County Asylum.

“Will he be wearing a uniform?” asked Angela.

“No, dear, of course not. **He is receiving the best attention.**”

It was Angela's **first visit** [after only 10 years!] and it was **being made at her own suggestion.**

Ten years had passed since the **showery** day in late summer **when Lord Moping had been taken away**; a day of confused but bitter memories for her [Angela]; **the day of Lady Moping's annual garden party**, always bitter, confused that day by the caprice of the weather which, remaining clear and brilliant with promise **until the arrival of the first guests**, had suddenly **blackened into squall**. There had been a **scuttle** for cover; the marquee had **capsized**; a **frantic** carrying of cushions and chairs; a table-cloth **lofted to** the boughs of the monkey-puzzler [a tall deciduous tree], **fluttering in the rain**; a bright period and **the cautious emergence onto the soggy lawns; another squall**; another twenty minutes of sunshine. It had been an abominable afternoon, **culminating at about six o'clock in her father's attempted suicide.**

Lord Moping habitually threatened suicide on the [annual] occasion of the garden party; that year [only 10 years ago] he had been **found black in the face, hanging by his braces** [his suspenders for his trousers] in the [elegant] **orangery**; **some neighbours**, who were sheltering there from the rain, **set him on his feet again**, and [swiftly] **before dinner** [soon after six o'clock!] **a van** [from the Asylum] **had**

5 G.K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1925), p. 97—in Part I, Chapter IV —“God in Comparative Religion”—my bold emphasis added. We shall later return to this matter and to “the unfathomable sadness” (97) of some pagan and modern literature, as in Evelyn Waugh himself, sometimes even purposively.

called for him. Since then [only ten years ago] **Lady Moping had paid seasonal calls at the asylum and returned [home] in time for tea, rather reticent of her experience.** (9-10—my emphasis added)

The love of a wife is a touching thing! And the active compassion of a daughter, too!

However, “many of [Lady Moping's] neighbours were **inclined** to be critical of Lord Moping's **accommodation** [away from his home and his family: *i.e.*, his wife with their two children, an unnamed young son as well as his daughter, Angela].” (10—my emphasis added) For, after all:

He [Lord Moping] was not, **of course**, and ordinary **inmate**. He lived in a separate wing of the asylum, **specially devoted to the segregation** [hence the additional isolation] **of the wealthier lunatics**. These were given every consideration which their **foibles** permitted [such as a proneness to suicide?]. They might **choose** their own clothes (many indulged in the liveliest **fancies**), **smoke** the most expensive brands of cigars, **and on the anniversaries of their certification** [of madness!] **entertain** any other **inmates** [hence Mr. Loveday, Lord Moping's “Secretary,” included!] for whom they had an attachment, to private dinner parties [not just garden parties!].

The fact remained, however, that it was **far from being the most expensive institution**; the **uncompromising** address, “COUNTY HOME FOR MENTAL DEFECTIVES” **stamped** across the note-paper, **worked on** the uniforms of their **attendants** [such as Mr. Loveday], **painted**, even, upon a prominent hoarding at the main entrance, **suggested the lowest associations**. From time to time, with less or more tact, her [Lady Moping's] friends attempted to bring to Lady Moping's [henceforth untroubled] notice particulars **of seaside nursing homes**, “**of qualified practitioners with large private grounds suitable for the charge of nervous or difficult cases**,” but she accepted them lightly [with loveless indifference, too]; when her son came of age he **might** make any changes **he** thought fit; **meanwhile** she **felt no inclination** to relax her **economical régime**; **her husband had betrayed her basely** on the **one** day of the year **when she looked for loyal support**, and **[he] was [now] far better off than he deserved**. (10-11—my emphasis added)

The love of a wife is a touching thing, but preferably when she is not also disposed to practice vengeance with insouciance or chill indifference.

As the car with Lady Moping and her daughter Angela approached the asylum for their visit, “a few lonely figures in great-coats were shuffling and loping about the park,” (11) and Lady Moping then nonchalantly observed:

“Those are **the lower class lunatics**.... There is [by contrast] a very nice little **flower garden** for people like you father. I sent them some cuttings last year.”

They drove past the **blank**, yellow brick façade to the [male] doctor's **private**

entrance and were received by him in the “visitors room,” set aside **for interviews of this kind**. The window was **protected** on the inside **by bars and wire netting**; there was **no fireplace**; when Angela **nervously tried** to move her chair further from the radiator, she found that it was **screwed** to the floor. (11-12—my emphasis added)

The lacking love of a wife for her own vulnerable and expendable husband — now a humored inmate in a disordered environment — is a shuddering and chilling thing. What a example to her daughter!

Before our finally meeting Lord Moping in person, we are, by way of preparation, given some perfunctory and pathetic glimpses of Lord Moping's own (unnamed) attendant psychological doctor, whose words are unmistakably superficial and vague, and listlessly ignorant:

“Lord Moping is **quite ready** to see you.”

“How is he?” [asks Angela]

“Oh, **very well, very well indeed**, I'm glad to say. He had a rather nasty cold some time ago [a year or two ago?], but apart from that **his condition** [with or without madness?] **is excellent**. He spends a lot of time writing.”

They heard a shuffling, skipping sound approaching along the flagged passage. Outside the door **a high peevish voice**, which Angela [after 10 years!] **recognized as her father's, said** “I haven't the time, I tell you. Let them come back later [perhaps in a year or so?].”

A gentler tone [Mr. Loveday is now speaking], with a slight rural burr, replied, “Now come along now. It is a purely **formal** audience. You need stay no longer than you like.”

Then the door was pushed open (it had no lock or fastening) and Lord Moping came into the room. He was **attended by an elderly little man** [Mr. Loveday] with full white hair and **an expression of great kindness**. (12—my emphasis added)

As Lord Moping walked in, he “moved with a jogging gait **and shook hands with his wife,**” who immediately and ungraciously said: “This is Angela. You remember Angela, don't you [after only 10 years]?” (13):

“No, I can't say that I do. What does she want?”

“We just came to see you.”

“Well, you have come at an exceedingly inconvenient time. I am very busy. **Have you typed out that letter to the Pope yet, Loveday?**”.... “So I did. Well, it is fortunate [that you didn't], as I think the whole letter will have to be redrafted. A great

deal of new information has come to light since luncheon. A great deal....You see, my dear, I am fully occupied.” He turned his restless, quizzical eyes upon Angela....

“Very well, Papa.”....

“Anyway,” said Lord Moping petulantly,Well, can't stop, nice of you to come [after 10 years]. I would do more for you if I could, but **you see how I'm fixed**. Write to me about it. That's it. *Put it in black and white.*”

And with that he [Lord Moping] left the room. (13-14—my bold emphasis added; italics in the original)

“Soon the door opened and Loveday returned” (14) to apologize for, and explain a little, the slight abruptness of Lord Moping's conduct:

“Forgive my coming back, sir, but I was afraid that the young lady [Angela] might be upset at his Lordship's not knowing her [after 10 years]. You mustn't mind him, miss. Next time he'll be very pleased to see you. It's **only to-day** he's put out [like the one day of the year when his wife had had her provocative annual Garden Party?] on account of being behindhand with his work....And **he's got muddled** with his card index. That's all it is. He doesn't mean any harm [not even latently, we hear from his Lordship's “secretary”].”

“**What a nice man,**” said Angela, when Loveday had gone back to his charge.

“Yes” [said the doctor]. I don't know what we should do without old Loveday. Everybody loves him, staff and patients [inmates] alike.”

“I **remember him** well. It's a great comfort [to my negligence?] to know that you are able to get **such good warders,**” said Lady Moping; “people who don't know, say such foolish things about asylums.”

“Oh, but **Loveday isn't a warder,**” said the doctor.

“**You don't mean he's cuckoo, too ?**” said Angela. [That is to say, that Mr. Loveday is like my own father?]

The doctor corrected her.

“He is an *inmate*. It is **a rather interesting case**. He has been **here for thirty-five years.**”

“But [having met him only once for a few minutes!] I've **never** seen anyone saner,” said [the callow and selectively sentimental] Angela.

“**He certainly has that air,**” said the doctor, and **in the last twenty years** we have treated him **as such** [as a sane man, but, of course, only after our 15-year test and trial and observation of him!]. **He is the life and soul of the place....An invaluable man about the place.**” (14-16—my bold emphasis added; italics in the original)

Look out! And be not rash or presumptuous. For, here are already some “tip offs,” some menacing hints!

Angela is so moved by Mr. Loveday that she wisely makes some further inquiries about him and his mysterious tenure there of only 35 years:

“Yes, but why is he here?”

“Well, it is **rather sad**. When he was a very young man he killed somebody—a young woman **quite unknown to him**, whom he knocked off her bicycle and then throttled [lethally, unto death]. He gave himself up **immediately** afterwards and has been here ever since [having been diagnosed **as a homicidal maniac?** Or what?].”

“But **surely** he is **perfectly safe now** [after 35 years]. Why is he not let out?”

“Well, I suppose **if it was to anyone's interest**, he would be [“let out”]....He's **perfectly happy** here **and I can assure you** *we* aren't going to take the **first** steps in **turning him out** [in liberating him truly?]. **He's far too useful to us.**”

“But it doesn't seem fair,” said Angela. [What is unfair about your own father's “fixed” situation, and the seeming inattentiveness and indifference of his whole upper class family?]

“Look at your father,” said the doctor. “He'd be quite lost without Loveday to act as his secretary.”

“It doesn't seem fair.” [Angela repeated, without mentioning the additional needs of her own father.] (16—my emphasis added)

Angela's immediately following sequence of thought and conversation with her mother, Lady Moping, is especially noteworthy for grasping what Waugh subtly reveals, namely their common indifference concerning Lord Moping himself, except for Lady Moping's lingering and whining resentment concerning her own social embarrassment at her annual Garden Party some ten years ago:

Angela left the asylum, oppressed by a sense of injustice. Her mother was unsympathetic.

“Think of being locked up **in the looney bin** all one's life.”

“He attempted to hang himself in the orangery,” replied Lady Moping, “*in front of the Chester-Martins.*”

“**I don't mean Papa. I mean Mr. Loveday.**”

“I don't think I know him [*i.e.*, that same Mr. Loveday about whom she had just said “I remember him well,” although she had admittedly thought he was only a good

warder, not an **inmate** himself, until she was corrected by the professional doctor].

“Yes, **the looney** they have put to look after papa.”

“Your father's **secretary**. A **very decent** sort of man, I thought, **and eminently suited to his work**.” (16-17—my bold emphasis added; italics in original)

“At luncheon on the following day,” Angela asked her mother:

“Mums, what does one have to do **to get people out of the bin?**”

“**The bin? Good gracious, child, I hope you not anticipate your father's return here.**”

“No, no. Mr. Loveday.”

“Angela, you seem to me to be **totally bemused** [confused, bewildered]. I see it was a mistake to take you with me on **our little visit** yesterday.” (17—my bold emphasis added; italics in original)

We are now thus to discover that this ardent and partially provoked young woman has found a new Progressive Cause to champion. For, “after luncheon Angela disappeared to the [estate] library and was **soon immersed in the lunacy laws** as represented in the encyclopædia.” (17—emphasis added)

Two weeks later, Angela resourcefully used the occasion (or pretext) of her father's own “**eleventh Certification Party**” (18) — a commemoration to mark his 11th year in residence at the “looney bin” — to take to him as a gift of some “pheasants”; and “she showed an unusual willingness to run over [by car? or perhaps by bicycle?] with them.” (18—my emphasis added) For, we are also told by the narrator that “Her mother was **occupied with other interests** [hardly thinking of the effectively abandoned Lord Moping] **and [she] noticed nothing suspicious.**” (18—my emphasis added)

Having found an occasion upon arrival to speak candidly to Mr. Loveday, after having merely asked perfunctorily about “her father's health and spirits” (18), Angela boldly remarked: “Don't you ever want to get away?” “Don't you ever think of being free again [after his 35 years in the “looney bin”]?” and thus he replies, as follows, (**also suggesting his long-standing yearning, or obsession**):

“Oh yes, miss, I think of it [of “being free again”]—**almost all the time I think of it.**”

“What would you **do** if you got out? There must be *something* you would sooner do than stay here.”

The old man **fidged** **uneasily**. “Well, miss, **it sounds ungrateful, but I can’t deny** I should welcome **a little outing, once**, before I get too old to enjoy it. I expect **we all have our secret ambitions**, and there *is* one thing **I often wish I could do. You mustn’t ask me what...**But I do feel that *if* I had done it, just for a day, [just for] an afternoon even, then I would die quiet. I could settle down again easier, **and devote myself** to the poor **crazed** people here with a better heart. Yes, I do feel that [as if I were **not** myself also a “**crazed inmate**”?”.]”

There were **tears in Angela's eyes** [but not for her **crazed** father, it appears] that afternoon [on her father's 11th Anniversary Party] as she drove away. “He [Mr. Loveday] *shall* have his little outing, bless him,” she [quite resolutely!] said. (18-19—my bold emphasis added; italics in original)

As we approach the not entirely surprising end of the story, we might be wondering here for a moment as to who really has the **sanity** and who has the **humility** and, thus, also the cardinal virtue of **prudentia** (a truly practical wisdom). Nonetheless, from that day of her tear-making interview with Mr. Loveday — but not at all held with her own father, much less showing merciful tears **for him** — Angela “onwards for many weeks...had a new purpose in life,” (19) some aspects of which “greatly disconcerted Lady Moping.” (19)—“I believe the child's in love. **I only pray** [sic] that it isn't that **uncouth** Egbertson boy.” (19—my emphasis added)

Angela's legal research — coming to understand the technical meanings of “‘alienist', 'barrister' or 'government official'” — “**now had for her the glamour that formerly [and uncouthly?] surrounded** film actors and **professional wrestlers. She was [now] a woman with a cause**, and before the end of the hunting season **she had triumphed. Mr. Loveday achieved his liberty** [sic].” (20—my emphasis added)

Moreover, we learn that, concerning this allowance of liberty, “**The doctor at the asylum showed reluctance but no real opposition**”; and “at last the day came [“marked by some ceremony”] when Mr. Loveday took leave of **the home** where he had spent such long and useful years [more than 35 now].” (20—my emphasis added) Lord Moping had been sent away from his family **home** only eleven years ago—when “a van called for him” (10)—though despatched as an **entirely expendable** husband and father, then immediately becoming **one of “the wealthier lunatics.”** (20—my emphasis added)

As it turned out — **soon after** “a dozen or so **variously afflicted lunatics** hopped and skipped after him down the drive until the iron grate opened and Mr. Loveday stepped into his freedom” (21), there came a surprise. For, indeed, “it was **to the surprise of all** [and perhaps even to many of the

readers?]) that he returned **within two hours** of his liberation.” (21—my emphasis added)

Immediately after Mr. Loveday's few calm words with the doctor-- such as “I think I shall be here [now] for good....I've enjoyed myself *very much*. I'd been promising myself one little treat, **all these years**. It was short, sir, but *most enjoyable*” — the story succinctly ends with one stunning paragraph:

Half a mile up the road from the asylum gate [along, or just off, the path that Mr. Loveday walked], they found an **abandoned** bicycle. It was a **lady's machine** of some antiquity [maybe of some 35 years ago?]. Quite near it in the ditch lay **the strangled body of a young woman, who, riding home to her tea**, had chanced to overtake Mr. Loveday, as he strode along, **musings on his opportunities** [when, perhaps, he would be seeing Angela Moping again?]. (22—my emphasis added)

We were not told whether or not it was the body of young Angela Moping that was found; and we are not told any more about the abandoned and more isolated Lord Moping himself, nor about his legal wife Lady Moping. But, Lord Moping certainly would now need his own ardent daughter's generous compassion and zealous assistance **even more so now**, and we may hope that she did not, in the ditch, come herself to face death (and then the other three of the Last Things) — although her imprudently (and delusively) Progressive Therapeutic Scheme, to help Mr. Loveday at least, had crumbled into ruin.

CODA

We return now to consider a little further G.K. Chesterton's earlier-mentioned, discerning concept of “**the Presence of Absence**.” For it is essentially a perception of **what is not there but should be**, such as the perception of the absence of loyal love and mercy in some of the members of the Moping family, as Evelyn Waugh has subtly presented them, especially Lady Moping and her daughter Angela.

We would better understand what Angela did not grasp or did not do with reference to her own father, if we were to contrast it with what Dr. Hendry's only daughter so attentively and sustainedly did to help her own learned, but eccentric, father whose eccentricity was considered to be an acute lunacy and thus grimly punishable under the new and unjust medical laws, enforced by the frigid therapist, “Dr. Gambrel.” That is to say, her beloved father was a vulnerable and psychologically persecuted (and legally prosecuted) man, who was then living alone with his generously self-sacrificial daughter whose own mother was then no longer living. This affectionate and moving depiction is to be found in G.K. Chesterton's memorable last novel, entitled *The Return of Don Quixote*.⁶ For those who are not

⁶ G.K. Chesterton, *The Return of Don Quixote* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1927—first published in 1926 in England). The novel's pagination is, as usual, to be found in the main text of this essay.

able to read the entire inspiring novel, first published in 1926, it would be of great worth to them to read and savor at least Chapters VIII, IX, and X, and then Chapter XIX, the last chapter of the novel, which is itself entitled “The Return of Don Quixote,” where a chivalrously returning knight (Douglas Murrel, nicknamed “Monkey”) also returns to marry “Dr. Hendry's daughter.” (301) The chivalric and courageously just-minded Douglas Murrel yearningly and gratefully accepted and received the marital sacrament: “*iit in matrimonium.*” (302) “**You are the knight who has returned**” (294), says the honorable and humble Michael Herne, who is Douglas Murrel's own “**Sancho Panza**” (293).

Throughout the novel, Murrel “had heart,” and “he had his heart in the right place” (in Chesterton's magnanimous and humble understanding).

Some scholars have also thought that, in addition to G.K. Chesterton, Saint Thomas Aquinas himself gave “heart” (Latin “*cor*”) a prominent place in his own theological anthropology (*i.e.*, his fuller doctrine of man) along with the other two unique faculties of “*intellectus*” and “*voluntas.*”

If we thought and expressed our thought idiomatically, we would probably not say that Evelyn Waugh's Lady Moping “had heart.” Nor had Angela had her own heart in the right place, after all.

Evelyn Waugh especially cherished the profound substance (though not always the style) of one of the books of G.K. Chesterton, *The Everlasting Man*, which was first published in 1925, when Chesterton was a Catholic. And it was just one year after *The Everlasting Man* that Chesterton first published *The Return of Don Quixote*.

It may also be fitting now, in conclusion, to quote a thoughtful passage from *The Everlasting Man*, concerning “The Presence of Absence,” that we may more fully apply it to what was “absent” (designedly) in Evelyn Waugh's subtle 1936 story “Mr. Loveday's Little Outing” (first published separately in some magazines in the early 1930s). In *The Everlasting Man* (1925) — Part I — Chapter 4 (“God and Comparative Religion”) — G.K. Chesterton, showing his humility and magnanimous sanity, dares to say meditatively, as follows:

I suspect **an immense implication** behind all polytheism and paganism. I suspect we have only a **hint** of it [the immense implication] here and there in these savage creeds or Greek origins. It is **not exactly** what we mean by **the presence of God**; in a sense it might **more truly** be called **the absence of God**. **But absence does not mean non-existence**; and **a man drinking the toast of absent friends** does **not** mean that from his life all friendship is absent. **It is a void but it is not a negation**; it is something as

positive as **an empty chair**....A thing of this kind **can only be an impression and a rather subtle impression**; but to me it is **a very strong impression made by pagan literature and religion**. I repeat that **in our special sacramental sense** there is, of course, **the absence of the presence of God**. **But there is in a very real sense the presence of the absence of God**. **We feel it in the unfathomable sadness of pagan poetry** [as in the noble Virgilian half-lines of sorrow and final futility, in the poet's recurrent "*nequiquam*" ("in vain")]....We can use no other word [than "God" (97) or the "Unknown God" (97)] **in that mighty line in which [the poet] Virgil spoke to all who suffer with the veritable cry of a Christian before Christ: "O you that have borne things more terrible, to this also God [sic] shall give an end."** (96-98 —my emphasis added)

Would not Evelyn Waugh himself even faithfully say: "*Forsan et haec olim meminisse iuvabit*" (Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book I, Line 203—"Perhaps even these things will one day be remembered with joy"; or "A joy it will be one day, perhaps, to remember even these things.")

Such is the persevering Hope that expects that the Tears of Sorrow will finally, with Faith and in Sanctifying Grace, be turned in the Tears of Joy. "*Sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.*" (Virgil, *Aeneid*, Book I, line 462)

"There are tears in (at) the heart of things, and the [**sane and humble**] mind is touched by all things that die or, someday, must die." May those tears be, finally, be tears of joy, the tears of Beatitude.

After facing the ineluctable Four Last Things.

--Finis--

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