

## ABSTRACT

*Ex Umbris et Imaginibus in Veritatem: Wilfrid Ward and the Art of Newman*

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This dissertation investigates John Henry Newman's understanding of the imagination and its role in religious and aesthetic experience. Newman's fictional and poetic works fell into the background in scholarly discussions of his life and works shortly after his death. This, I suggest, was in part because the relationship between art and orthodox religion became strained during the crisis precipitated by Catholic Modernism. The Church's response to Modernism was an affirmation of the authority of the ecclesiastical hierarchy and a crackdown on intellectual activity outside of its supervision and control.

Wilfrid Ward's 1912 *Life of Cardinal Newman*, written under close scrutiny by the Catholic hierarchy during the Modernist controversy, established a precedent for the relative neglect of Newman's fictional and poetic works. However, an examination of Newman's treatment of the imagination and his exercise of it in his own poetry and fiction reveals the vital importance of this term to his mature understanding of religious experience. Though he begins with an attitude of suspicion toward the power of the imagination and advocates—even in his poetry—an attitude of *contemptus mundi* to counter the

world's siren song, he eventually comes to describe the imagination as the primary means by which the human mind encounters reality. Whereas in his early works he attempts to make great works of the imagination "safe" by requiring that they also express a standard of moral excellence, he gradually abandons this criterion to argue instead that the imagination is that which recognizes and submits to what exceeds it, whether that be divine and morally perfect or human and wildly unsafe. In either case, the act of submission has value in itself, by drawing the imaginer into relationship with something greater than him or herself and prompting a response of devotion and love. Therefore, Newman's mature understanding of the imagination, emphasizing openness and the willingness to engage with what exceeds one's control, goes directly to the heart of the deep anxieties of the late nineteenth-century Catholic Church.

*Ex Umbris et Imaginibus in Veritatem: Wilfrid Ward and the Art of Newman*

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A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of English

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Apo.</i>	<i>Apologia pro vita sua and Six Sermons</i> , ed. Frank M. Turner
<i>Call.</i>	<i>Callista</i>
<i>DA</i>	<i>Discussions and Arguments on Various Subjects</i>
<i>Dev.</i>	<i>An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine</i>
<i>Diff.</i>	<i>Certain Difficulties felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching</i>
<i>Ess.</i>	<i>Essays Critical and Historical</i> , 2 vols.
<i>GA</i>	<i>An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent</i>
<i>HS</i>	<i>Historical Sketches</i> , 3 vols.
<i>Idea</i>	<i>The Idea of a University</i>
<i>LA</i>	<i>Lyra Apostolica</i>
<i>LD</i>	<i>Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman</i> , ed. Charles Stephen Dessain
<i>LG</i>	<i>Loss and Gain: The Story of a Convert</i>
<i>Moz.</i>	<i>Letters and Correspondence of John Henry Newman during his Life in the English Church</i> , ed. Anne Mozley, 2 vols.
<i>OS</i>	<i>Sermons preached on Various Occasions</i>
<i>PS</i>	<i>Parochial and Plain Sermons</i>
<i>Pre. Pos.</i>	<i>Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England</i>
<i>TP</i>	<i>The Theological Papers of John Henry Newman on Faith and Certainty</i> , ed. Hugo M. de Achaval and J. Derek Holmes
<i>US</i>	<i>Fifteen Sermons preached before the University of Oxford</i>
<i>VV</i>	<i>Verses on Various Occasions</i>

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*This work is dedicated to my husband, Martin, in deepest gratitude  
for his faithful love and unfailing support*

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Both before and after Kingsley's famous accusation that "[t]ruth, for its own sake, has never been a virtue with the Roman clergy," John Henry Newman struggled against accusations of equivocation and dissimulation (Newman, "Mr. Kingsley and Dr. Newman" 358). His choice to publish fiction and verse shows his confidence in the potential that fictions, fables, and images have to communicate a truth beyond the literal. Yet he, like his protagonist in *Loss and Gain* (1848), displays a lifelong preoccupation with the distinction between reality and unreality and a constant frustration with the unreal.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes words themselves are unreal to him; passages in his works suggest a skeptical attitude toward language itself.<sup>2</sup> Those who would emphasize his sanctity may be tempted to downplay his engagement with images, symbols, and the phenomena of concrete experience: "he detected, even as he admired [the world] most, the danger it involved for him, the danger, in a word, that he would rest content with it, making an abiding-place of that which he himself had called . . . but a curtain and a veil" (Bouyer 137). Newman himself claimed that "'Saints are not literary men, they do not love the classics, they do not write Tales'" (Ward,

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<sup>1</sup> In the eighth of his Oxford University sermons, Newman warns that "[t]he influence of the world, viewed as the enemy of our souls, consists in its hold upon our imagination" (*US* 149). Newman's suspicion of the imagination as the world's primary tool and his consequently cautious approach to literature will be explored in Chapter Three.

<sup>2</sup> In the fifth Oxford University sermon, for example, he states that "[T]ruth] and human language are incommensurable. For, after all, what *is* language but an artificial system adapted for particular purposes, which have been determined by our own wants?" (*US* 84–5).

*Life of Newman* 1:229-30); with characteristic humility, he preferred to rank himself among the literary men. At his request, the phrase *Ex Umbris et Imaginibus in Veritatem* was inscribed on his tomb, a provocative epitaph that seems to incorporate his transition to the afterlife into a Platonic paradigm. However, he leaves no final guide to interpreting this message. Does it imply that the soul needs shadows and images in order to reach the truth, or do they rather prevent the soul's full access to truth until it moves beyond the present world?

It is with Newman's role as an artist—a maker and manipulator of “shadows and images”—and his theories about art that this dissertation is concerned. His understanding of the imagination both as a faculty of mind engaged in perceiving and realizing phenomena and as a source of literary art that creates and manipulates images is an aspect of his thought that both establishes him firmly in his time and yet sets him apart from it. For there is a strangeness in the fact that Cardinal Newman wrote novels and poetry, and, as shall be seen, almost a sense of embarrassment in the way many of his biographers have narrated this fact. Collected in *Verses on Various Occasions*, Newman's poems outnumber those in the *Poetical Works* of Matthew Arnold, and yet Newman's legacy is certainly not that of a poet. His literary works seem out of place coming from a mind so firmly fixed on the next life, oriented toward death and the final judgment to the point that he doubted the reality of material phenomena in his youth (*Apo.* 134). They seem almost to require an apology like the one John Bunyan affixed to his *Pilgrim's Progress* to defend the use of allegory in his “scribble” (26).

The question of whether or not flights of the imagination have a place among the works of a serious philosopher and theologian is an ancient one, dating at least from the exclusion of poets from Plato's philosophical republic (X:595). As Stephen Prickett points out, the problem "haunts the first and second Commandments, and persists like the interruptions of an annoying and troublesome child throughout the Hebrew Bible," while the relationship of art and religion was a critical point of contention in the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation ("What has Athens" 16-17). The Counter-Reformation saw not only a flowering of Catholic painting, sculpture, music, and other arts but also the formal promulgation of the Index Librorum Prohibitorum, or Index of Forbidden Books, a fact which highlights the tension within a church that wanted to celebrate the arts for their service to religion, distinguish themselves from Protestant iconoclasts, and at the same time exercise careful control over which works of art and literature were considered doctrinally "safe" (see 47-9 herein). On the other hand, the tendency of Newman's novels and verse to affirm religious orthodoxy has struck some readers as being out of place in the latter nineteenth century, a time during which clergymen and poets were having some disagreement about the proper relation between their disciplines; a time of rising doubt, agnosticism, and the slow ebb of the "sea of faith."<sup>3</sup>

Arguments about the extent to which Newman's poetry and fiction bear mention beside his universally-acclaimed works like *The Idea of a University*, the *Apologia pro vita sua*, and the *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* have persisted since their author's lifetime and will be examined in due course. Newman's own

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<sup>3</sup> For an important contribution to the recent study of Victorian poetry of faith—rather than the more widely-studied poetry of religious doubt—see Kirstie Blair's *Form and Faith in Victorian Poetry and Religion*.

opinion of his works is difficult to pinpoint—for example, in one place he writes of his poems with self-deprecating modesty and at the same time refers to critics who give them the highest praise—but it is also not of primary consideration in an assessment of their place among his works and their contribution to his thought (VV v-vi). He revised and republished both poetry and fiction through edition after edition during his lifetime, and this fact alone suggests that he considered them to hold a legitimate place beside his other works (Hill, “Originality and Realism” 42). Moreover, they gain a special significance because of their place in the chronology of his life and works: both times that he found himself projected into the national spotlight, first after his conversion to Roman Catholicism in 1845 and then after his final triumph over Kingsley in 1864, he turned immediately to a work of imaginative rather than controversial or didactic literature. The first work he published after his conversion to Roman Catholicism was the novel *Loss and Gain* (1848), and the first major work he composed after the *Apologia pro vita sua* was “The Dream of Gerontius” (1865). Was it a reflex of humility or even of exhaustion that moved him to turn from momentous works to lighter matter, or was he rather taking advantage of having the public’s full attention to offer it something different from his works of nonfiction prose?<sup>4</sup>

In his recent account of Newman’s life, John Cornwell justly writes that “his most compelling, and perhaps most neglected, reputation is as Newman the writer” (8). Although Newman has received serious attention from scholars in

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<sup>4</sup> The composition history of “The Dream of Gerontius,” which Newman wrote on scraps of paper and only published at the prompting of a friend, does not suggest that he meant to take advantage of his celebrity status after the *Apologia*’s publication with this poem (Sharrock 55). Still, it remains one of the first fruits of the renewed energy and influence with which he wrote after his triumph over Kingsley.

many fields, especially among historians and theologians, it is true that his work as a literary artist has tended to be overshadowed by his many significant contributions to theology, history, philosophy, educational theory, and religious devotion. Cornwell does not attempt to identify a cause behind this relative neglect of Newman's literary reputation, but to do so and to inquire into the possible reasons behind it may prove fruitful in restoring this aspect of Newman's work to its rightful prominence in the study of his writings and thought.

In the next chapter, I propose that Wilfrid Ward's *Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman* (1912) represents a turning point in the treatment of Newman's poetry and fiction, especially of their place among his other major works. Unlike Newman's earlier biographers, Ward has very little to say about any of Newman's works of imaginative literature. His silence about these works in what is otherwise an almost exhaustive literary biography is a significant omission. When he broke this silence seven years later in his *Last Lectures*, he did so apparently in order to defend Newman the artist against any suspicion of being a "dilettante" or a maker of art for its own sake rather than in service to his central endeavor: the spread of authentic religion. Both Ward's silence in the biography and anxiety in the Lectures about these works reflect, I argue, the atmosphere of suspicion surrounding the controversy over Catholic Modernism that dominated Catholic intellectual discussion while Ward was writing the biography. He wrote under intense pressure to defend Newman from any taint of Modernism or Modernist sympathy.

In Chapter Three, I discuss Roman Catholic attitudes toward poetry and fiction in the late Victorian period that translated into the pressures under which

Wilfrid Ward composed his *Life of Newman*. Isolated from the dominant currents of English intellectual life, subject to a long tradition of anti-Catholic prejudice in fiction as well as the popular press, dominated by an arch-conservative party, and intensely focused on the questions of authority that preoccupied the First Vatican Council, the late Victorian Catholic Church tended to approach works of the literary imagination dismissively, suspiciously, or even fearfully. This was true, as shall be seen, not only for secular but also for religious literature, which for its emotional power and its tendency to escape strict theological control was believed by some—Wilfrid Ward’s father included—to be as dangerous as any other work of the imagination. Near the turn of the twentieth century, the Modernists promoted a view of religion that grounded religious experience in emotion and, in some cases, treated the divine as entirely immanent in nature. Imaginative literature that described religious conversion in terms of emotion or emphasized the incarnational relationship between nature—human or otherwise—and the divine became suspect in a new way.

In Chapter Four, I describe how Newman’s theory of the imagination undergoes a gradual transition from an attitude of suspicion similar to that of the Catholic conservatives to one they would likely have found problematic. His early view of poetry, expressed in the 1829 essay “Poetry, with Reference to Aristotle’s *Poetics*,” displays an anxiety to make moral excellence a prerequisite for literary excellence, so that the only great poets are also “safe” poets as guides to moral truth. Meanwhile, in his *Parochial and Plain Sermons* he describes a view of the imagination as a powerful but dangerous faculty particularly susceptible to deceit by “the world” and its false promises. Closely akin to the unreal, the products of the imagination serve primarily to confuse and distract the soul from

its duty. One must fight the world by mortification and detachment, separating oneself from those who would lead the soul astray. From this early position, I argue, Newman comes to articulate a theory of the imagination that not only acknowledges but celebrates its escape from strict control. The imagination becomes that which recognizes and submits to what exceeds it, whether that be divine and morally “safe” or human and fundamentally unsafe. This act of submission is the same whether the imagination is engaged in aesthetic or religious experience. In abdicating control, in allowing oneself to be comprehended by something greater than oneself, the imagination leads to love—to unity with that by which the self is embraced. Rather than detaching, it connects the imaginer ever more fully with the world, the human race, the supernatural realm, and ultimately the divine. Far from being concerned with what is unreal, the imagination becomes for Newman the primary faculty by which one has contact and enters into a relationship with reality. My argument about the transformation that Newman’s theory of the imagination underwent, particularly during the 1840’s and 1850’s, sets this study apart from works such as G. B. Tennyson’s and Geoffrey Wamsley’s, which examine Newman’s fiction and poetry in light of Tractarian poetics.

In Chapter Five I trace the changes in Newman’s theory of the imagination as they appear in his poetry and fiction. While the poems in the *Lyra Apostolica* are by and large expressive of his early mistrust of the imagination and “the world,” his novels and “The Dream of Gerontius” reflect the shift in his attitude toward the imagination and the value of aesthetic experience. He eventually comes to represent the transition *Ex Umbris et Imaginibus in Veritatem* not as a rejection of the shadows and images that comprise both earthly life and

art but as a union of earth with heaven, a process of organic growth from the nutritive soil of earth to the soul's flowering in the afterlife. Religious and aesthetic experiences merge, the truth itself becomes a shadow, while Christian and non-Christian peoples alike become absorbed into one great movement from earth to heaven that does not leave earth behind.

Finally, in Chapter Six I conclude that the gradual turn in Newman's theory of the imagination and its manifestation in his fiction and poetry make his later works more susceptible to suspicions of affinity between Newman's thought and that of the Catholic Modernists as well as others of the late nineteenth century who argued for too strong a relationship between emotion, aesthetic experience, and religion for the comfort of the Catholic authorities.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Wilfrid Ward and the Art of Newman

Wilfrid Ward's two-volume *Life of John Henry Cardinal Newman* (1912), which has stood for a century as a foundational read for any scholarly exploration of Newman's works, closely examines Newman's copious body of writings – with some notable exceptions.<sup>1</sup> The most striking of these is Newman's second novel, *Callista* (1855): the book receives only three passing mentions in the whole biography. At the point in his chronology when Ward would naturally have entered into a description and analysis of the book, he leaves his readers with the simple comment, "*Callista*, begun in 1849, and laid aside, was finished in 1856. His letters tell us no more than the bare fact; and the book is so well known that I shall say no more of it here" (*Life of Newman* 1:352). And he says hardly more of it elsewhere: in only one other place does he describe its contents at all, and there he merely characterizes it as "a tale presenting an outline of history as to the action of Christianity on the educated world in the early centuries" (1:244). This sparse outline hardly does justice to the drama of martyrdom and conversion that is the novel's main focus. Ward's stated reason for passing so quickly over the novel seems unpersuasive; in no other case does Ward allow a work's fame alone to discourage him from offering his own commentary. For example, he prefaces his section on the *Essay on the*

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<sup>1</sup> In the Preface to his own biography of Newman, Ian Ker states, "Ward's work has achieved an almost classic status" (*John Henry Newman* vii). He faults it on three points: Ward's brevity with regard to Newman's Anglican years; his account of Newman's personality, which Ker finds to be "unbalanced and one-sided"; and Ward's not having had access to letters that have come to light in the intervening years (vii).

*Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) with a similar claim: “This great work is too well known to need full analysis here” (1:88); yet he goes on to provide four pages of summary and detailed analysis.<sup>2</sup>

Newman’s first novel, *Loss and Gain* (1848), becomes in Ward’s account a thinly-veiled autobiography and nothing more; as with *Callista*, Ward nowhere offers a substantial description or explication of the novel’s contents, much less an analysis of the novel as a work of art. In his first reference to this work, which is not only Newman’s first novel but also his first published work following his reception into the Roman Catholic Church, Ward explicitly identifies Newman’s description of Reding’s sorrowful departure from Oxford with Newman’s own feelings on leaving the city (*Life of Newman* 1:117). Later, Ward remarks that, when Newman published the novel, “[t]he actors in the drama hailed the book as a perfect representation of the Oxford society of those days” (1:191). In a third place, Ward notes that “[r]eaders of ‘Loss and Gain’ will remember how sights and sounds are laden for [Newman] with memories,” again identifying the novel’s narrator and protagonist with Newman (2:336). All other mentions of this novel appear in quotations taken from Newman’s letters, and none can be described as more than a passing reference that relates some topic from the book to one of Newman’s prevailing ideas.

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<sup>2</sup> William Barry hints at one possible reason behind Ward’s reticence with regard to Newman’s specifically literary contributions:

English critics, unlike French, are scarcely permitted in books to handle as they ought questions which affect style and language. There is thought to be a pedantry in such minute investigations, whereas, until they are attempted, no proper estimate can be formed of a writer’s place in literature. A volume might well be given to the sources from which this great scholar [e.g. Newman] drew, the laws of composition to which he submitted, the variations in his manner according to the subject dealt with, his affinities, repulsions, triumphs, failures, and limits, strictly as an author, irrespective of his theme. (*Newman* 222)

Barry felt himself unequal to this task, as the book he proposed has yet to be written in the fullness he describes.

Newman's poetry, although it receives more of Ward's attention than either of the novels, nevertheless receives fairly little in comparison with the sermons, lectures, and other works of nonfiction prose. Ward makes no mention of the role of Newman's poetic imagination in shaping the contents of these works. For example, his comments about "The Dream of Gerontius" (1865) amount to the observation that it emerged from Newman's imaginative preoccupation with death, that it along with the *Apologia pro vita sua* (1864) moved him once again into the national spotlight, and that it reflects how real to him was the supernatural realm—nothing, for example, regarding its experimental form, its striking images and metaphors, or its relation either to Newman's earlier poetry or to that of his contemporaries (*Life of Newman* 2:78, 203, 342). Nor does Ward ever mention Eldward Elgar's 1900 setting of the poem to music, either, although this composition has since been partially responsible for the poem's enduring fame (Ker, *John Henry Newman* 575). Moreover, he does not quote a single line or phrase of this poem, which many readers consider to have been Newman's greatest. Of Newman's contributions to *Lyra Apostolica* and his *Verses on Various Occasions*, Ward only quotes the praise of others, offering none of his own, and at the same time qualifies this praise with an interestingly Wordsworthian echo, as if the similarity between Newman's poetry and Wordsworth's famous definition of poetry detracts from the merits of the poetry: "These poems . . . , though written hastily as outpourings of the heart, have been ranked very high by some of our best critics" (1:51). In all, he quotes from only six of Newman's nearly two hundred poems, and of these he quotes in full only three, "Lead, Kindly Light," "The Two

Worlds," and one brief and humorous letter in poetic form (1:56, 1:592, 2:318).<sup>3</sup>

He does take the trouble to quote Newman's very self-deprecating assessment of his own skill as a poet in a letter to Richard Holt Hutton (2:204).

In the "Preface" to his biography, in which Ward lays out his purpose and method, he summarizes Newman's character thus:

His own nature enhanced the effect of untoward circumstance. The delicate perceptions which charmed so many were a part of the artist's temperament, sensitive to praise and blame, craving for sympathy. This is a temperament not helpful in the struggle with the world which practical enterprises entail. [. . .] Conscience bade him reject without hesitation that indulgence of mood and impulse which makes life intolerable to the artistic temperament. (*Life of Newman* 1:15)

Clearly, when Ward uses the term "artist" he has a particular sort of artist in mind. Here, to be artistic is to be susceptible to a certain temperament, rather like a psychological condition, rather than to have a gift or calling. Here is no "man speaking to men" endowed with "a greater knowledge of human nature, and more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind" (Wordsworth, "Preface" 453). Here is no "unacknowledged legislator of the world" (Shelley, "Defence" 36). Nor is this artist a practitioner of the "criticism of life" that will help "the spirit of our race" find "its consolation and stay" (Arnold, "The Study of Poetry" 64). Nor yet is this the artist who can "see near things as comprehensively / As if afar they took their point of sight, / And distant things, as intimately deep / As if they touched them" (Browning 5:183-7). Far less is he one who engages in "a single-minded attempt to render the highest

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<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Ward quotes in full a passionate verse diatribe against the Church of Rome published in the *Christian Times* during the anti-papal riots of 1851, and he also quotes extensively from a hymn to Dr. Achilli prepared for his reception at Exeter Hall in 1850 (1:255, 277). He was clearly not averse to including poetic quotations to supplement or illustrate his historical narrative.

justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect" (Conrad xlvi). These lofty accounts of the artist's vocation, which broadly reflect the dignity ascribed to literary artists by the artists themselves during and just after Newman's lifetime, bear little resemblance to Ward's sensitive and delicate seeker after sympathy and indulgence of "mood and impulse." Ward's definition of the artist comes from somewhere else, and one suspects the influence of Pater, Wilde, and *fin de siècle* decadence on his view.<sup>4</sup> In another passage Ward wishes to qualify his presentation of Newman's sensitivity and so brings forward another aspect of Newman's character "distinct," in his opinion, "from the temperament of the artist"; namely, Newman's "overmastering love of holiness," his "absolute devotion to duty," and his "deep love and reverence" (*Life of Newman* 1:21). Thus he places Newman's reverence and obedience in opposition to his artistry. When he concludes his introduction with a special affirmation of Newman's "enthusiastic loyalty to the Holy See, and his profound satisfaction with the Catholic religion," he makes his own purpose of affirming Newman's orthodoxy clear and at the same time hints that these impulses ultimately overcame the enervating influence of Newman's artistic temperament (1:25).

In this and in other biographies, Ward emphasizes his subject's letters, diaries, and other records of his life rather than his published writings, imaginative or otherwise. His 1904 biography of the Irish poet and critic Aubrey Thomas de Vere, for example, reveals his limited interest in poetic analysis; quotations from de Vere's poetry form a distinct minority of the volume, which

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<sup>4</sup> The influences on Ward's definition of the artistic temperament will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

is largely devoted to extensive quotation from his letters and diaries. At the same time, this volume, not a third of the length of his biography of Newman, includes quotation in full of at least fifteen de Vere's poems, as well as several partial quotations and lengthy quoted passages of de Vere's analyses of his own and others' poetical works.<sup>5</sup> Ward's comments on the operation of de Vere's poetic imagination in medieval religious imagery, imagery drawn from nature, and the interaction between Christianity and science are more extensive than any comment he offers on any of Newman's poetic works (e.g. *Aubrey de Vere* 234, 250, 368). This earlier biography contains a more lengthy comment on Newman's *Callista*—on the title page of which Newman included one of de Vere's poems—than may be found anywhere in Ward's later biography of Newman (305).

Moreover, in the *Life of Newman* it is not only the explicitly literary works in Newman's canon that suffer from Ward's neglect, but the place of imagination itself in his thought. Ward makes no mention of Newman's early work of literary criticism, the essay "Poetry, with Reference to Aristotle's *Poetics*," nor does he make any reference to Newman's review of Keble's *Lyra Innocentium* in which he argues for the well-known assertion that "the [Catholic] Church herself is the most sacred and august of poets" (*Ess.* 2:442). The section of Ward's biography in which references to the imagination occur most frequently is the first chapter, where they appear in reference to Newman's childhood, youth, and Anglican period—all of which Newman moved beyond in mature adulthood. This fact alone might be taken as coincidental except that, of the subsequent

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted poems appear on pages 45, 61, 117, 144, 190, 233, 241, 246, 247-8, 250, 252, 272, 304, and 409. Quotations from de Vere's comments about poetry appear throughout.

occurrences of the term “imagination,” a significant majority appears in quoted material rather than in Ward’s own voice to such an extent that he seems almost to avoid the word. Several instances employ the term in its pejorative sense, making it the opposite of true perception.<sup>6</sup> In effect, then, Ward downplays Newman’s imaginative works to an extent disproportionate with his treatment of other works and inconsistent with his effort to produce a balanced account of Newman’s life and writings.

Ward also exercises careful reticence in making connections between Newman and his literary contemporaries, the Romantics and the Victorian novelists. According to Ward, Newman’s literary influences are primarily John Keble and Hurrell Froude (*Life of Newman* i.57). Both references to Coleridge in the biography describe a contrast between Coleridge’s thought and Newman’s (1:49, 57)—the first of these contrasts relates to Coleridge’s understanding of Church doctrines as symbols rather than truths, an issue at the heart of the Modernist controversy to be discussed hereafter. When Ward discusses Romanticism, his emphasis is all on the French and German side, and the names he combines with Newman’s make it clear that he considers Newman’s connection to Romanticism strictly within the fields of theology, philosophy, and

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<sup>6</sup> For example, Ward quotes a passage from the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* in which Newman instructs, “[S]educe not yourself with the imagination that [faith] comes of disappointment or disgust, or restlessness, or wounded feeling, or undue sensibility, or other weakness” (*Life of Newman* 1:95). In another quoted letter, the reader finds Newman complaining, “I feel that no one here can sympathize with me duly—for even those who think highly of me have the vaguest, most shadowy, fantastic notions attached to their idea of me, and feel a respect, not for me, but for some imagination of their own which bears my name” (1:150). In at least seven places, Ward quotes Newman drawing an explicit contrast between imagination and reason (1:152, 407, 424, 2:96, 252, 310, 477-8), and he also quotes a letter in which Newman remarks to John Henry Wilberforce that Christ’s clearest teachings are also those most startling to the imagination (1:626). Finally, Ward characterizes Cardinal Wiseman as having a vivid imagination, a trait that becomes a subtle form of criticism, implying that it kept Wiseman out of touch with the real challenges of his time (1:253-4).

history—not at all in terms of poetry or fiction (1:309-15). By contrast, William Barry, Ward’s predecessor as a Newman biographer, traced literary influences on at least the *Apologia* through the whole movement of continental Romanticism.<sup>7</sup> More recently, Alan Hill, whose attentive analysis of Newman’s novels will be discussed in Chapter 5, detects the influences of Scott, Wordsworth, Byron, Terence, Shakespeare, and Jane Austen on the prose style of Newman’s novels (“Originality and Realism” 22). Nor can Ward be excused from omitting these other influences by ignorance or lack of qualification to write on specifically literary subjects: his 1904 biography of Aubrey de Vere shows his familiarity with Dante, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley, among others. His treatments of de Vere’s literary criticism give no impression of hesitation on Ward’s part to move as easily among poetic and literary ideas as he elsewhere does among theological and philosophical concepts.

Biographers of Newman who preceded Ward placed noticeably greater emphasis on Newman’s literary and imaginative work. R. H. Hutton’s 1891 biographical essay reflects its author’s firm conviction of Newman’s merits as a literary artist.<sup>8</sup> To Hutton, the *Lyra Apostolica* poems are essential parts of

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<sup>7</sup> “Compeers Newman had, beyond a doubt;” writes Barry. “[N]ot, however, ‘the Roman moralists’ whom he never had looked into, but Chateaubriand, de Maistre, Stolberg, Tieck, Arnum, Bretano, Friedrich Schlegel, and Novalis—to mention only these—whose works throw a broad light on the *Apologia*. Nay, we must go further back. Goethe’s early years mark the time, and Strasburg Cathedral is the high place, from which that Romantic movement set out. We may connect Goethe with Walter Scott; Johnson and Burke with Coleridge, who again is a disciple of Schelling; and Schelling, in the days on Newman’s greatest power at Oxford, was himself the oracle at Munich. Nor can we overlook the learned and devout Southey, writer of epics, or Wordsworth, most spiritual-minded among English poets, both of whom contributed to the great restoration, and were heralds of it” (*Newman* 149).

<sup>8</sup> Hutton makes Newman’s “consecration” of his literary gifts to the service of the Church a test of his moral greatness (9). “His literary power has been so great,” he writes, and has shown itself in a style of such singular grace and charm, as well as in irony of such delicacy and vivacity, that the highest literary eminence was easily within his reach, had he cared to win it, long before his name was actually

Newman's canon because they offer "almost the only early evidence of his rare and vivid imagination," which was fully realized in "The Dream of Gerontius" (11). "Some of them," he writes, are "poems of the purest beauty, some of them mere doctrinal or didactic or theologico-political anathemas" (37). He praises "The Elements," a poem from which he quotes extensively but which has since vanished from critical view, as exhibiting "exquisite and almost Aeschylean genius" and "a rich vein of literary power" (11). Though Hutton's essay is only a fraction of the length of Ward's biography, he quotes extensively from and comments on an equal number of Newman's poems, so that the proportion of his work occupied in analysis of Newman's literary and imaginative works is far greater.<sup>9</sup> Hutton praises Newman's narrative art in *Loss and Gain* as art, remarking on the novel's "admirable fidelity" to "young men's thoughts and difficulties," its "happy irony," and its "perfect representation of the academical life and tone at Oxford" (194).<sup>10</sup> Again, he devotes several paragraphs of analysis and quotation to *Callista*, which in Hutton's opinion is "the most perfect and

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known to the world at large; and he would have been a great power in literature had he cared to devote himself to literature in the wider sense, before the Oxford movement had begun to cause anxiety to the Established Church. (9-10)

Although "he seems to have shown no sort of consciousness of literary power, and to have hardly aimed, in his more serious work, at anything like literary form," still "in a few short poems, and a few of the later University sermons, . . . he betrayed his strange mastery of literary effect," while "[i]t was not indeed till after he became a Roman Catholic that Dr. Newman's literary genius showed itself adequately in his prose writings, and not till twenty years after he became a Roman Catholic that his unique poem was written" (10-11). "I think," Hutton concludes in his introductory chapter, "there is hardly any other instance in our literature of so definite and remarkable a literary genius being entirely devoted, and devoted with the full ardour of a brooding imagination, to the service of revealed religion" (15).

<sup>9</sup> Hutton quotes in full and comments on the poems "Separation of Friends," "The Isles of the Sirens," "The Death of Moses," "The Good Samaritan," and "Corcyria," as well as part of "St. Philip in His School" and lengthy passages of "The Dream of Gerontius" (36, 246-9).

<sup>10</sup> Moreover, he not only quotes much more extensively from *Loss and Gain* than Ward does, but he also recognizes its importance as the first work Newman published after his conversion and insists on treating it as a novel rather than as a fictionalized autobiography (191, 194).

singular in spiritual beauty, excepting perhaps the *Dream of Gerontius*," of all of Newman's works – not merely of his imaginative works, but including his sermons, histories, devotions, and lectures as well (220).<sup>11</sup> Hutton's praise is extraordinary: "I know of nothing in fiction," he proclaims, "more delicate, more spiritual, more fascinating than the story of Callista's conversion and death" (221). The entire last chapter is devoted to "The Dream of Gerontius" and makes a case for its unique contribution to an understanding of Newman's works as a whole. To Hutton, this poem is the crown and summation of Newman's whole body of writings. "Surely in all literature," he writes, "there has been no more effective effort to realize the separation of soul and body" (247). Hutton argues that "none of [Newman's] writings engrave more vividly on his readers the significance of the intensely practical convictions which have shaped his career."

It is

the poem of a man to whom the vision of the Christian revelation has at all times been more real, more potent to influence action, and more powerful to preoccupy the imagination, than all worldly interests put together. . . . *The Dream of Gerontius*, though an imaginative account of a Catholic's death, touches all the beliefs and hopes which had been the mainstay of Newman's life, and the chief subjects of his waking thoughts and most vivid impressions. (245)

In light of twentieth-century comments on Newman's poetry and fiction, Hutton's effusive praise seems idiosyncratic; however, he was not alone among

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<sup>11</sup> Hutton reiterates this assertion a few pages later:

To me *Callista* has always seemed the most completely characteristic of Newman's books. Many of them express with greater power his intellectual delicacy of insight, and his moral intensity, but none, unless it be *The Dream of Gerontius*, expresses as this does the depth of his spiritual passion, the singular wholeness, unity, and steady concentration of purpose connecting all his thoughts, words, and deeds. (225)

He urges that it deserves more popularity than it had attained owing to its "antiquarian disquisition" and the fact that "the sentiment of the book is of too exalted a kind to make its way to the heart of a hasty reader in search of exciting incident" (221).

his contemporaries. At Newman's death, a tribute in *Publisher's Circular* asserted that "in all he did he was the poet working unconsciously through the imagination," while the *Speaker* speculated that "even as a poet posterity may rank him higher than Keble" because, "if he does not keep uniformly on Keble's level, he has certainly soared to loftier heights" (Glancey 206, 222). James Anthony Froude's reminiscences about the Oxford Movement include the following reflection on Newman's verses in the *Lyra Apostolica*:

They were unlike any other religious poetry which was then extant. It was hard to say why they were so fascinating. They had none of the musical grace of the 'Christian Year.' They were not harmonious; the metre halted, the rhymes were irregular, yet there was something in them which seized the attention, and would not let it go. Keble's verses flowed in soft cadence over the mind, delightful, as sweet sounds are delightful, but are forgotten as the vibrations die away. Newman's had pierced into the heart and mind, and there remained. The literary critics of the day were puzzled. (275)

In his biography of 1894, William Barry compares Newman on several counts to John Wesley but then notes:

. . . [I]n one thing Newman far surpassed Wesley; he was a man of letters equal to the greatest writers of prose that his native country had brought forth. The Catholic Reaction of the nineteenth century, more fortunate than the Evangelical of a hundred years before, claims its place in literature, thanks to this incomparable talent, side by side with the German mysticism of Carlyle, the devout liberalism of Tennyson, the lyric Utopias of Shelley, and the robust optimism of Browning. Newman is an English classic. (*Newman* 7)

For Barry, then, Newman rivals the great poets as well as the great prose writers of his time.<sup>12</sup> Barry quotes frequently from both novels throughout his work,

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<sup>12</sup> Barry later claims that Newman's "ruling passion was literature" (15); he compares him in temperament and upbringing to De Quincey (17-18); and he further argues in support of the essential place imagination holds in Newman's thought: "Imagination, with Newman, *was* reason, as with Carlyle, Wordsworth, Goethe, and Shakespeare—not the bare mechanical process that grinds out conclusions from letters of the alphabet, in what is at best a luminous void, but the swift sudden grasp of an explorer, making his way from crag to crag, under him the raging sea, above him sure ground and deliverance" (20-21). Barry shows himself capable of expressing

allowing them to comment on Newman's life and other major works rather than treating them as an insignificant recreation. Like Hutton, he devotes an entire chapter of his biography to "The Dream of Gerontius," which he compares to Calderon's *Autos Sacramentales* as "at once an allegory and an act of faith" and contrasts with Dante's and Milton's visions of the supernatural world (211).<sup>13</sup> To Barry, Newman's philosophy is a form of and inseparable from his poetry:

He had a philosophy of his own, vast and overshadowed with eternal mysteries, akin rather to the poet's deep creative reason than to the diagrams of a school-teacher. How strongly imaginations like these tend to the rhythmic form will not need proving. [. . .] Nor could a genius nourished on Sophocles fail to echo the sounding lines of ancient chorus or strophe, not seeking renown, but as a medium for thoughts which were haunting him day and night. (45)

And his praise of Newman's poems is unequivocal, asserting that some would "endure while English is spoken" (46); it is "rugged sincere verse" (48); he devotes seven pages to Newman's contributions to the *Lyra Apostolica* and concludes by a flattering comparison of "Lead, Kindly Light" to Goethe's "Mason-song" (52). He includes *Callista* in the catalogue of Newman's works which "may claim to undistinguished place in that Temple of Fame" of great world literature (89-90). Newman's sermon "The Second Spring" (1852), for Barry, "marks in literature a moment of the Romantic triumph, not less

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qualified praise, as he does when he reflects on Keble's *Christian Year* that "it lacks the Dantean flame in which all things are transmuted to colours of a supernatural world; neither has it the passion or the pity of Christina Rossetti's intense white light" (30).

<sup>13</sup> Like Hutton, Barry is unequivocal in his praise of Newman's poetic art. "It is the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas moulded into lines of Shakespearean weight and precision," he writes (212). The song of the demons "breaks out in stanzas, uncouth, turbulent, but preter-human, as grim as in medieval mysteries, and as awe-inspiring" (213). He compares Newman's stern supernaturalism with that of Aeschylus as well as of the Catholic liturgy for the dead (214). Newman's imagination, "letting go the outward, has taken man's soul for his stage; the persons of the drama live within it, throb to its vibrations, and surge up into light from its unfathomable deeps, in such degree made concrete as in itself is creative, whether of good or evil" (216).

memorable than Chateaubriand's appearance with the *Génie du Christianisme* in his hand" (99). Clearly, in the wake of the nineteenth-century biographies of Newman, the very minor part played by Newman's novels and poetry in Ward's biography was something of a break with tradition.

A few clues may be found that indicate possible reasons behind Ward's neglect of Newman's imaginative works in the *Life of Cardinal Newman*. Ward's education began in what Sheridan Gilley calls "an uncompromisingly Catholic atmosphere" under the influence of his father, William George Ward, who had been a prominent voice among the arch-conservative neo-ultramontane Catholics of his own generation. Throughout his adult life Wilfrid Ward's own writings exhibit a continuous effort to balance the neo-ultramontane legacy of his father and Cardinal Henry Manning with the more critical and broad-minded religious philosophy of Newman (Gilley, "Ward, Wilfrid Philip" 1-2). His university studies and subsequent career as a biographer, essayist, and advisor on church and theology to the duke of Norfolk left him steeped in the philosophical and theological controversies of his time (Gilley, "An Intellectual Discipleship" 319). On the other hand, his friendships with Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Aubrey de Vere brought him into close and familiar contact with the poetic and literary preoccupations of the late nineteenth century. Moreover, as founder of the Synthetic Society, a group comprised of nonconformists, Anglicans, and Catholics, Ward clearly engaged in conversations that moved beyond the scope of his ultramontane upbringing (Gilley, "Ward, Wilfrid Philip").<sup>14</sup> He was not

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<sup>14</sup> Members in the Synthetic Society included, for example, James Martineau, Richard Holt Hutton, G. K. Chesterton, George Tyrrell, and Friederick von Hügel (Gilley, "Ward, Wilfrid Philip" 2-3).

without a sense of fancy—Josephine Ward narrates with some exasperation that he “would, in spite of all my protests, make the children believe in the existence of fairies!”—or an artistic education. He studied music, serving as choirmaster at Ushaw College and maintaining a lifelong love for Italian opera, and he seriously entertained the idea of an acting career (Ward, *Last Lectures* xii, xli; Gilley, “Ward, Wilfrid Philip” 1-2). Nor was Ward likely to have held any kind of prejudice against the religious novel as such: his wife, who became his posthumous editor, published eight religious-themed novels between 1899 and her death in 1932. Several of these went through multiple editions in her lifetime, and four were translated into other European languages.<sup>15</sup> Clearly, one must look elsewhere for possible reasons behind Ward’s neglect of Newman’s poetry and novels.

One might argue that Ward’s assessment of the merits of Newman’s poetry and fiction may have influenced his choice to move them to the margins, so to speak, of his life. In his *Last Lectures*, he states briefly, “The unity of [his] purpose made him occasionally enter fields in which he does not stand in the first rank. He was not a great writer of fiction. He was not a great poet, though he wrote true poetry” (145). However, taken as a whole, these same lectures put forth an argument in favor of the central and significant place that Newman’s role as artist holds and the impossibility of separating this role from Newman’s thought. Here, unlike in the *Life of Cardinal Newman*, Ward openly catalogues

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<sup>15</sup> One of them at least shows some influence of Newman’s fiction: in *Horace Blake*, a confrontation takes place in which an atheist woman confronts a Catholic man and accuses him for not explaining to her what his faith should have made clear to him (418-9). This surprising reproach of a non-Christian to a Christian for not doing his missionary duty is strongly reminiscent of Callista’s reproaches to Agellius for not attempting to make his “Master” known to her (*Call.* 128-134).

Newman's work as poet and novelist among his other accomplishments, noting that he produced works of high literary and imaginative value. Indeed, he reiterates that Newman was a poet and artist so often in these lectures that one begins to feel that he is protesting too much (6, 110). At the same time, he immediately sets out to defend Newman against any suspicion of superficiality. His thesis in the first lecture is that Newman was not in fact a "dilettante" (the word seems so surprising) because, despite his dabbling in many genres, he always worked genuinely and creatively toward a single purpose (6-7).

As the lectures progress it becomes clear that Ward is keen to defend Newman *because* of his belief in Newman's skill as a consummate literary artist.<sup>16</sup> Ward clearly appreciates Newman's art: in his fifth lecture he praises and quotes from the sketches of Jucundus in *Callista* and of Bateman in *Loss and Gain* and describes so perceptively how these works of poetry and fiction are all gathered into the larger project of his life that one sees why Charles Stephen Dessain called these lectures, rather than the biography, Ward's "best work on Newman" (110-111; *LD* 11:xix). Yet even amid this praise, Ward reveals a cautious, even suspicious attitude toward the artist *per se* that underlies his struggle to preserve his hero from such an epithet. Newman's best philosophic work "needed in addition those [skills] of the poet and literary artist" to give it persuasive power, but Ward makes it clear that Newman did not write beautifully "for art's sake"

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<sup>16</sup> Ward even faults Newman's critics for appreciating his poetry on a purely artistic level: The really profound thoughts in such writings are simply passed over and the discussions are politely set aside. The pleasanter task is undertaken of paying tributes to what is not controversial—the English style, the poetic beauty of the 'Dream of Gerontius,' the engaging frankness of the 'Apologia' as an autobiography, the picturesque account of the history of the Turks, and subtle and humorous delineation of the typical gentleman in the 'Idea of a University.' Thus an imaginary Newman is formed out of his more superficial gifts. (*Last Lectures* 22)

(*Last Lectures* 14, see also 26, 50, 62, 69-71, 72).<sup>17</sup> Literature has a dangerous potential:

Great master though he was of literary form, he never forgot the danger lest literature, instead of ministering to action, inspiring it or expressing it so as to communicate the inspiration to others, should be content with merely an artistic aim; should be simply pursued as an art without ministering to the deeds which make up all that really matters in human life. (130)

Ward is, of course, quite right, but by positioning himself rhetorically against those who would emphasize the aesthetic merits of Newman's poetry and fiction he nonetheless sets a precedent in Newman studies for opposition between Newman the thinker and Newman the artist. Ward's protest against those who "have endeavoured to treat Newman's literary gifts as something apart from his deepest work" is just, as far as it goes, but in revealing his frustration with critics who would over-emphasize Newman's literary talents it suggests that Ward might have under-emphasized them (49). "His style is no mere ornament to be admired by literary connoisseurs," he protests indignantly (71). Indeed, drawing on important passages in Newman's prose to this effect (which will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4), Ward argues that "mere artistry," art for art's sake, produces unreality:

As with all mystics, the emergence from the Slough of Despond, from the struggle of indecision, gave an intensity of reality to [Newman's] subsequent happiness; and this left an unmistakable impress on the style which no mere artistry could have effected. He was indeed contemptuous of the mere literary man who studied artistic effects instead of speaking out what was in his heart. A

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<sup>17</sup> "The brooding imagination so often apparent," Ward writes, "tells of deep and hard-won conviction as distinguished from mere ingenuity expended in defending this or that position. The style has qualities which a mere literary man does not possess—for whom artistic effort is the beginning and end of his aim" (50). In harmony with Newman's own sentiments, which Ward quotes from *The Idea of a University*, he argues that Newman's editing process "was due to no mere love of literary form for its own sake" (53).

literary man, he once said, can say strong things because no one believes he means them.<sup>18</sup> (70-1)

Contrasted with the biography, these lectures bring two important things to light: Ward's appreciation for Newman's poetry and fiction makes his relative silence about these works in the biography even more noteworthy, and at the same time Ward's attitude toward art, artists, and specifically Newman's works as an artist may do much to explain why he assigns them a subordinate place among Newman's works. Still, his thorough understanding of Newman's attitude toward literature begs the question, why do the sentiments expressed in these lectures appear nowhere in the *Life of Cardinal Newman*?

If Ward's work as biographer was governed by his commitment to a faithful representation of his subject, as many have testified is the case, it was likewise profoundly shaped by his delicate rhetorical situation (Weaver 27). His progress on the biography depended heavily on the cooperation of the Birmingham Oratorians, who proved cautious guardians of Newman's posthumous reputation and from whom Ward obtained permission to access Newman's papers only with difficulty and after long delay (Lahutsky 52-7). Then, when Ward was already far advanced in the biography's composition, Pope Pius X released the encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis* (1907). "Nothing," writes one scholar, ". . . so colored the shape and content of the biography and determined the nature of the difficulties Ward would face in its writing as did

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<sup>18</sup> "[T]ypical man of letters though [Newman] himself was," Ward elsewhere notes, "he was keenly alive to the weakness to which the literary temperament is liable. He depicts it in no doubt in many places at its best and in its strength; but he also depicts it at its worst and in its weakness. Literature that has no due regard to the realities of life degenerates into the use of what he calls 'unreal words'" (*Last Lectures* 130).

the developments of 1907" (Lahutsky 51).<sup>19</sup> "It was not to him," writes Josephine Ward, "a sectarian controversy, but the vast question of the religious future of the human race" (Ward, *Last Lectures* xl). The encyclical was intended to condemn the teachings of the group of philosophers and theologians known as the Catholic Modernists. Some of these writers drew inspiration from Newman's ideas, and the works of others bore sufficient resemblance to Newman's that, for a time, his writings fell under suspicion (Misner 5).<sup>20</sup> To his dismay, Ward was initially convinced that Newman was condemned along with those Modernists such as George Tyrrell and Alfred Loisy who were the pope's specific focus.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> The Modernist crisis and Wilfrid Ward's response is described most fully in Maisie Ward's two-part biography of her parents, *The Wilfrid Wards and the Transition and Insurrection versus Resurrection*. Like most scholars and like Wilfrid Ward himself, Maisie focuses on the central theological controversies.

<sup>20</sup> The Encyclical was highly controversial. Ward wrote for the January, 1908 issue of the *Dublin Review* to "signify his acceptance of, and obedience to, this utterance of the Supreme Authority" and at the same time to explain *Pascendi* and to distinguish Newman's thought from the ideas condemned ("The Encyclical 'Pascendi'" 1). Already by that time, only months after the Encyclical's appearance, he notes that the suggestion of Newman's condemnation was "widely circulated" (6). Both George Tyrrell and W. J. Williams, for example, separately claimed in *The Times* that the Encyclical had condemned Newman (Ward, *Last Lectures* xxxviii; Schoenl 198). Josephine Ward quotes at length from an early response of Wilfrid Ward's to the idea that Newman held ideas in common with condemned Modernists (Ward, *Last Lectures* xxxiii-xxxvi). Ward notes that both the extreme right and the extreme left parties associate Newman's name with those of the heterodox theologians, the conservatives out of a persistent hostility to Newman's ideas and the Modernists out of a desire to sanction their own ideas with his revered name (xxxiii). Among Newman's works, those of greatest significance for Catholic Modernist thought were *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1878) and *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870) (Misner 12). Already during his lifetime, Newman had run into conflicts with the conservative, neo-ultramontane wing of the Catholic Church over their anxiety "that he held the proofs for the existence of God to be merely probable (in the sense of uncertain), and to rest on the priority of feeling over rational demonstration" (Coulson, *Religion and Imagination* 51). The Modernist tenets these ideas resemble will be discussed in the next chapter.

<sup>21</sup> Ward wrote to the Duke of Norfolk on October 10, 1907, "'I don't believe the Pope meant to condemn Newman. But he has done so beyond all doubts so far as the words of the Encyclical go—not only on development but so much else.'" Ward clarifies what will become for him a crucial distinction: he believes that the Encyclical condemns Newman by its unguarded language rather than by authoritative exposition of Newman's ideas or writings as heterodox. "Its theology," he writes, "is drawn up not by a keen mind alive to the religious controversies of the age [ . . . ] but by a scholastic theologian who may either be an anti-Newmanist, as they often are, or does not know Newman's work and condemned the modernists on certain points in terms which beyond question equally condemn Newman's theories. The situation is, I cannot but think most serious'" (Weaver 30). Reflecting back on this time, Ward describes his conviction that the

Others, too, felt Newman's reputation threatened, and Cardinal Edward Thomas O'Dwyer, Bishop of Limerick, leapt into immediate action with the essay "Cardinal Newman and the Encyclical *Pascendi dominici gregis*" (1908) in which he insists with strident rhetoric that Newman was "a Catholic to the tips of his fingers" based on "evidence of the absolute harmony of Newman's views with the teaching of the Pope" (5, 8).<sup>22</sup> One can see the delicacy of Ward's position and the subtlety he felt necessary to apply both to Newman's thought and to the Encyclical in order to interpret it rightly in the fact that he "offended O'Dwyer" by insisting on censoring this article before publishing it in the *Dublin Review* (of which he was editor at the time). "Ward thought O'Dwyer too kind to *Pascendi*," narrates Gilley, "and could not accept that it posed no fundamental problems" ("Wilfrid Ward and his 'Life of Newman'" 182).<sup>23</sup> Helped partly by Ward's own self-identification with Newman as well as his former friendships with both

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encyclical emerged out of a conflict between parties, both of whom lost sight of the subtlety required to deal with the Modernist challenge. "I dreaded," he writes, the identification of a growing need with the grumblings of discontented people—who would be discontented whatever was done. I feared that their want of discrimination between urgent necessities and Utopian schemes might lead to a corresponding indiscriminate on the part of the authorities—that the authorities might regard all the programme of the thinkers and experts as part of a wanton campaign by inveterate grumblers. And eventually it was just this fear which was realised seven years later when the Encyclical *Pascendi* was published. (Ward, *Last Lectures* xxxii)

<sup>22</sup> There is a hint of similar anxiety to defend the orthodoxy of Newman's poetry in particular in Maurice Francis Egan's introduction to the 1903 American edition of *The Dream of Gerontius*, in which he confidently proclaims, "There can be no question as to the correspondence of the teaching of Cardinal Newman with the theology of the Catholic Church" (7). Though the publication of this edition predates that of *Pascendi*, it coincides with the height of the Modernist controversy. For a other contemporary responses to the idea that Newman might have been implicitly condemned by *Pascendi*, see Schoenl 196.

<sup>23</sup> As Ward was already under suspicion in Rome, his refusal to publish O'Dwyer's article uncensored could have cost him his position as editor of the *Dublin Review* and therefore showed considerable courage (Schoenl 201). Reports had been circulating in England since 1906 of "heresy-hunters" who examined the works of liberals in search of reasons to denounce them to Rome (167). For a description of the specific threat against Ward, as well as supportive responses by his friends among both liberals and conservatives, see Schoenl 172-5.

Tyrrell and Loisy, Ward himself felt the touch of suspicion that also fell on his literary hero's works for a time, and he was not "welcomed by ecclesiastical officials as a champion of orthodoxy" (Weaver 27-8; Gilley, "An Intellectual Discipleship").<sup>24</sup>

Once John Norris, superior at the Birmingham Oratory, learned of Ward's doubts, he took it as grounds for renewed suspicion of Ward's competence as Newman's biographer.<sup>25</sup> He and a handful of other theologians became Ward's censors, insisting on reviewing all proofs before the biography's publication to safeguard Newman's reputation as an orthodox son of the Catholic Church.<sup>26</sup>

This pressure may help partially explain Ward's reticence about Newman's more

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<sup>24</sup> Ward's attitude toward the Catholic hierarchy was a spirit of obedience that was far from servile; his wife writes of him that he was "greatly preoccupied with the work of reconciling modern thought and religious faith, of acquiring greater liberty for thought within the Church by the sanction of authority and not by revolutionary methods" (*Last Lectures* xxx). He sought to enact change from within. A tribute written by one of Wilfrid Ward's friends places the degree of suspicion that touched Ward himself in perspective:

To those who knew him at all intimately the charge of 'liberalism' was too ludicrous to be taken seriously, though it caused himself much pain at the time. . . . Quite intelligibly the more revolutionary party disliked the attitude of the self-appointed advocate who doggedly refused to allow them to appropriate the consecrated word 'development' and suggested that their proper war-cry was 'anarchy.' And, almost as intelligibly, he was not altogether trusted by those who hold that any change in established things must be for the worst. But the Catholic body at large never distrusted him: the loyalty of his faith was as patent to them as his sincerity of mind was to all who knew him" (qtd. in Ward, *Last Lectures* xxxvii).

<sup>25</sup> "That you should take it for granted that the Cardinal was implicated by the Encyclical," Norris wrote to Ward, "[. . .] is to me a proof that you are looking at the Cardinal's teaching from a wrong point of view and with a preconceived opinion in your mind as to what his teaching was" (Lahutsky 53).

<sup>26</sup> Lahutsky narrates in detail some of Ward's censors' interference with his plan. For example, he disputed with John McIntyre, a theologian from Oscott to whom his proofs were submitted for reading and censorship, who objected to his use of Newman's own word "idea" in the phrase "the Christian idea." McIntyre feared it would be one basis for the Modernists' claiming Newman for one of their own. Though Ward prevailed in this dispute, it nonetheless reveals the minute examination to which his work was subjected and the kind of anxiety his censors felt over any association between Newman and the condemned Modernists (Lahutsky 55).

imaginative works.<sup>27</sup> The controversy did much to push Newman's theological works into the foreground. Moreover, *Pascendi* contains language suggestive of a negative view of the imagination and its creations that may have encouraged Ward to allow his literary works to fade into the background.<sup>28</sup> This language is consistent with the encyclical's aim to condemn a group of writers whose interpretations of Scripture and Catholic tradition had run wild, but at the same time it evinces a suspicion of the imagination that may have influenced Ward to downplay its significance in Newman's *corpus*. To be clear, the encyclical as a whole does not in any way condemn imaginative literature or even deal directly with the art of literary composition; however, it does attack a too free, too liberal

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<sup>27</sup> Any connection that may exist between Wilfrid Ward's neglect of imagination in Newman's thought and pressure under which he wrote following the *Pascendi* crisis appears to have passed largely without comment. Maisie Ward's two-part biography of her parents Wilfrid and Josephine, *The Wilfrid Wards and the Transition* (1934) and *Insurrection v. Resurrection* (1937), tells the story of Ward's struggle to meet the challenge posed by the Oratorians and by *Pascendi*. The most thorough studies of Ward's interpretation of Newman appear in the collection *Newman and the Modernists* (1985), edited by Mary Jo Weaver, which focuses almost exclusively on Newman as theologian. Sheridan Gilley also contributes to the attempt to distinguish Ward's Newman from the original in his articles "Wilfrid Ward and his 'Life of Newman'" (1978) and "An Intellectual Discipleship: Newman and the Making of Wilfrid Ward" (1990), the former of which focuses on Newman as theologian and the latter on Newman as philosopher.

<sup>28</sup> For example, every time but one that Pius X mentions art, he uses the term in reference to the "noxious arts" by which the Modernists lead others into error (Pius X 1, 3, 43). The exception appears when he reminds his readers that "every science and art should serve [theology] and be to it as handmaidens" (46). Moreover, he likens the Modernist philosopher's intellect to a painter engaged in restoring an old picture, reiterating the analogy between heterodox thinker and artist (11). One of the key doctrines of the Modernists he condemns is that of "symbolism," or the belief that the formulae of dogma and even the Sacraments "are *symbols*, they are the images of truth," "merely imaginative" rather than containing truth in themselves (13). Thus the ideas of symbol and image acquire an exclusively negative connotation within the encyclical, and although this is only the case specifically with regard to the Modernist application of symbol to dogmatic formulae, the negative weight given symbols and images resounds heavily. Finally, he cautions his bishops to be on guard against any among the clergy "who show a love of novelty in history, archaeology, biblical exegesis, and finally towards those who neglect the sacred sciences or appear to prefer to them the profane" (48). It does not require a great leap to find Newman in this description; it particularly calls to mind an often-quoted passage from the reminiscences of James Anthony Froude, one of Newman's contemporaries at Oxford. "Newman's mind," Froude writes, "was world-wide. He was interested in everything which was going on in science, in politics, in literature. Nothing was too large for him, nothing too trivial if it threw light upon the central question, what man really was and what was his destiny" (278).

exercise of the imagination on basic tenets of the Catholic faith, such as the divinity of Christ. It reflects a suspicion of the unbridled exercise of the imagination to which many Catholic thinkers, especially among the ecclesiastical hierarchy, subscribed. This wider trend within Catholic thought deserves a more thorough investigation into its origins and extent and will be examined in the next chapter.

Ward was not the first to begin to downplay Newman's poetry and fiction during the height of the Modernist controversy, suggesting that the heated theological questions of the day were at least partially responsible for the subsequent neglect of Newman's literary works. Wilfrid Meynell's 1907 biography includes quotation from the poems "A Thanksgiving" and "To F. W. N." and extensively from "Consolations in Bereavement" in its opening pages. He mentions by title several other poems in the clear expectation that his reader will recognize these titles.<sup>29</sup> However, he has little to say about *Loss and Gain*, neglecting to mention its composition or publication, and he does not mention *Callista* at all. Henri Bremond, a Modernist sympathizer himself, presented an account of Newman in the same year that interprets Newman's fascination with his own autobiography as "autocentrism" and is therefore pleased to interpret all of Newman's works as participating in this autobiographical obsession (*The Mystery of Newman*; see also Gilley, "Wilfrid Ward and his Life of Newman" 177-8). Therefore Ward certainly cannot be blamed for singlehandedly moving Newman's literary works into the margins of his career. However, Ward's

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<sup>29</sup> The poems are "Nature and Art," "Snapdragon," "The Trance of Time," "Paraphrase of Isaiah, Chapter LXIV" and "Lead, Kindly Light" (Meynell 11-12). In subsequent chapters he quotes from "Separation of Friends" (44)

biography was certainly the most influential to emerge from this time, serving as a model and a starting point for scholars who followed.

The hypothesis that Wilfrid Ward may have deliberately suppressed aspects of Newman's writings and career in writing his biography in the wake of *Pascendi* is not unprecedented. Nadia Lahutsky examines three other examples of his acting in a similar way in order to pacify his censors: the "1846 plans for a theology school, the *Rambler* incident, and Newman's relations with J. J. Ignaz von Döllinger," which "represent areas where Ward may have been especially tempted to bend the narrative to coincide with his own understanding of what should be known of Newman, an understanding which was in conflict with both those of the Oratory and of other—more daring—interpreters of Newman" (47).<sup>30</sup> Especially with regard to Newman's relations with Döllinger, Lahutsky finds that Ward used strategic omissions to avoid controversy (62).

Historical records indicate that, through careful thought, a spirit of obedience, and consultation with theological authorities, Wilfrid Ward quickly resolved his anxiety regarding the question of whether Newman was condemned by *Pascendi*. However, there is a very interesting fictional product of the same years that leaves room for doubt. In 1913, the year after her husband finally published his Newman biography, Mrs. Wilfrid Ward published a novel entitled *Horace Blake* that centers on the struggles of a young author to write the definitive biography of a great and controversial man. Although it is a work of fiction, it nevertheless contains many similarities to Wilfrid Ward's own

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<sup>30</sup> Döllinger was a liberal Catholic and biblical scholar of Newman's generation whose attempts to promote free inquiry among Catholic intellectuals and new methods of historical criticism caused his works to fall under official suspicion (Schoenl 4).

difficulties and therefore provides a fascinating commentary on the *Life of Newman*. The biographer's subject is Horace Blake, a modernist playwright who begins life as a sheltered Roman Catholic raised in a loving family, rejects religion in his young adulthood, and goes on to write plays that attack social and religious shams while leading a scandalously immoral life. So far, except for his fame he can hardly be compared with Newman as a biographer's subject, but the similarity begins to appear at the end of the man's life, which is when the novel's narrative begins. In Part I, Blake learns that he is dying of cancer and retreats to the Breton coast to conquer the disease or be conquered by it. Confronted by the simple piety of the locals there, he experiences a deathbed conversion and dies peacefully reconciled to his childhood religion. The rest of the novel takes as its central question how to interpret this final act. To Mrs. Horace Blake, a lifelong atheist, it is a sign that the disease had affected her husband's brain and that the local priests had been harassing him. To his daughter Trix, Horace's conversion is not only real but saintly.

The main issue, however, is how the conversion is to be interpreted by Blake's biographer, Stephen Tempest, who will be the one to explain it to the world.<sup>31</sup> When he witnesses the conversion, knowing Blake only as a great author, he believes in its authenticity completely. After Blake's death, he first plans to write a biography that reveals the "real Horace Blake" to the world as a man whose ideals were so pure that he deplored everything that fell short of

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<sup>31</sup> Mrs. Ward's manner of giving her characters significant names is part of the charm of her style. Stephen Tempest is tormented by doubt through much of the novel; Trix is tricked for most of her life into believing she is Kate Blake's daughter when she is in fact the illegitimate child of Horace and a victim of his seduction; Horace Blake shares some similarities with William Blake in his violent disdain for hypocrisy in organized religion and yet his ultimate faith in the supernatural.

them. But after Tempest receives Blake's letters and papers from Mrs. Blake and reads the awful details of the life, Tempest feels utterly disillusioned, and in a few days he goes from idolizing the man to hating him.

It is at this crisis that the narrator's descriptions of Tempest's struggles become relevant to the student of Wilfrid Ward and his own work as biographer.<sup>32</sup> Mrs. Ward's narrator probes deeply into the conflicted mind of a biographer disillusioned by his hero who yet feels a duty to preserve his memory in the eyes of those who love him. He contemplates presenting a whitewashed picture, and the reader perceives the temptation as Tempest's mind attempts to justify an approach that would present the facts without compromising either the biographer's distaste at the man's life or his assessment of Blake's literary greatness:

He was sure he could catch the tone; nothing that could be contradicted, because nothing would be definitely asserted. . . . He knew exactly how it could be done. There would be no verbal lie in it. . . . All day the thing went on, and all day he receded farther and farther away from his own habitual standards, from the creed of his intellectual life. (310-12)

In the end, Tempest's intellectual conscience prevails, and he refrains from presenting this false view. Unable to go forward, yet unable to let go of his sense of Blake's true talents, he finally perceives that "the greatest difficulty of all lay in his own limitations" (420). Tempest's wrestling with the shadow of Horace Blake shows him his own weaknesses:

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<sup>32</sup> This is not the first time one of Mrs. Ward's characters reminds readers of her husband; in her introduction to his *Last Lectures* she protests against the identification some readers had made between Wilfrid Ward and George Sutcliffe from *Out of Due Time* (xxxix). Stephen Tempest certainly differs in many significant ways from Wilfrid Ward, but as a career biographer struggling to compose his masterwork about a writer who has been his idol, he invites comparison.

Civilised, sympathetic, cultured, reverent as he was, he had never had a large enough scale for his work. Later on he would tell himself contemptuously that he had worked with an inch measure all through, and that even his vision of the realistic picture of Horace had only been a modern decadent taste for impressionism. . . . Only he discerned the impossibility of the task, he felt that it was beyond the compass of his powers, and he was too sincere as an artist and as a man to be willing to undertake what he honestly felt to be beyond him. (420)

Kate Blake capitulates, stating quietly as the final words of the novel, ““Better no biography at all than a false one”” (422). The biography therefore remains unwritten. *Horace Blake* is the most psychologically realistic of Mrs. Ward’s novels and attests to the author’s daily, intimate knowledge of the doubts and insecurities that frustrate a literary biographer. At its ambiguous conclusion, Stephen Tempest opts to remain silent where he feels his words will be inadequate. Did Wilfrid Ward, too, retreat into silence at times in order to execute his task without compromising his own intellectual conscience? Though it is difficult to know how far this novel may reflect the private history of Ward’s struggle with the Newman biography, its somber ending adds a quiet note of doubt to the story of what is otherwise almost universally held to have been Ward’s great triumph.

No biographer since Ward has claimed such high literary status for Newman as did Hutton or Barry, and none has taken so much for granted its audience’s familiarity with a significant body of his poetry. A survey of the many subsequent biographies and their comments on Newman’s merits as a poet and novelist reveals more, perhaps, about the changing tastes and standards for literary criticism over the past century than it does about Newman’s own works, but it also suggests the cumulative influence of a trend of negative assessments that begins in Ward’s own neglect of these works. For much of the twentieth

century, opinions about Newman's literary works seem to have fallen into three main camps: some give him credit as a poet but reject the novels, others praise the novels but disregard the poetry, and there is a third group that deplores or ignores both.

To the first group belong those who dismiss either or both of Newman's novels. John Moody (1946) praises and quotes from a number of Newman's poems—interestingly, the same poems quoted by Wilfrid Ward (23-5, 119, 164, 202). At the same time, Moody's treatment of Newman as a novelist reveals how little importance he attaches to these works. *Loss and Gain* is valuable because it is a "more readable" autobiography than the *Apologia pro vita sua* and therefore appeals to a wider audience, and *Callista* is likewise "a slice of his own life," "less of a novel than a sermon" with occasional dramatic flashes (112, 155-6).<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, Louis Bouyer (1958) introduces quotations from several of Newman's poems—usually those with an autobiographical element but occasionally in order to praise the beauty of his verse—but dismisses *Loss and Gain* as having "little but a documentary interest" (310).<sup>34</sup> Owen Chadwick (1983) willingly acknowledges "The Dream of Gerontius" to be "one of the enduring poems of

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<sup>33</sup> Moody is unambiguous in making *Callista* a kind of autobiographical allegory: "[W]hen *Callista* talks, it is really Newman himself who is talking; when she reasons, it is Newman reasoning as he did during that unsettled period at Littlemore. In fact, like *Loss and Gain*, the story of *Callista* is fundamentally autobiographical" (156).

<sup>34</sup> Bouyer does assert that *Callista* preeminently among Newman's works reveals "the rich humanity of his heart, as well as the very delicate but healthy sensibility which was ever his," suggesting that he finds more merit in Newman's second novel than in the first (372).

Christian literature," but seems even surprised at Newman's having indulged in writing fiction, the quality of which he dismisses immediately (12, 14).<sup>35</sup>

On the other hand one finds several biographers who stand up for Newman's fiction in preference to his poetry. Maisie Ward refers frequently to *Loss and Gain* in her 1948 *The Young Mr. Newman*, especially where it seems most autobiographical.<sup>36</sup> However, she also condemns the artistic value of his poetry: "I confess to a feeling (in spite of critics far more fitted to judge than myself)—one thinks of Hutton—that, except for a very few occasional lines, Newman's verse cannot be called poetry. That he was a poet no one can doubt—but surely a poet in prose" (48).<sup>37</sup> Meriol Trevor (1962-3) echoes this assessment in her two-volume biography; she praises the power of both novels but emphasizes Newman's own self-effacing assessment of his own merits as a poet (*The Pillar of the Cloud* 421; *A Light in Winter* 69, 365). Brian Martin (1982), likewise, mentions only *St. Bartholomew's Eve*, "Lead, Kindly Light," and "The Dream of Gerontius" among Newman's poems (20, 51, 53, 150-1). He summarizes Newman's work as a poet thus: "[O]nly a small part of Newman's genius lies in his poetry. The greater part is in his prose. . . . He did not want to be a poet like Wordsworth or

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<sup>35</sup> Chadwick writes, "He took weeks off to do work extraordinary in so fundamental a thinker. He wrote a couple of novels, neither of them good, both worth reading only for the author" (14).

<sup>36</sup> As Wilfrid Ward's daughter, Maisie Ward's own treatment of Newman's literary works in her 1948 *The Young Mr. Newman* is particularly interesting. Maisie Ward clearly sets out to fill in a gap left by her father's extensive biographical work on Newman, as she focuses entirely on the period of Newman's life that Wilfrid Ward summarized in his first chapter.

<sup>37</sup> This comment notwithstanding, Maisie Ward does quote far much more extensively from Newman's poetry than does her father, indicating poems that have at least an autobiographical interest as being worth preservation. These include several humorous poems included in letters (5, 7, 9, 11), youthful compositions such as "Pastoral Scene" and *St. Bartholomew's Eve* (7-8, 46-7), and the *Lyra Apostolica* poems, including "Consolations in Bereavement," "Memory," "England," "The Good Samaritan," "Our Future," "Warfare," "Zeal and Patience," "Day-Labourers," and "Lead, Kindly Light" (151, 191-2, 221-2).

Tennyson, or a novelist like Scott, no matter how much he admired them. The real power of his intellect lay behind the style of his prose writings" (151). Martin offers a more thorough review of the novels than do many of his fellow biographers, quoting from contemporary reviews and remarking on points of similarity with Newman's literary contemporaries such as Matthew Arnold and Thomas Hardy (148-50).

In a third group are those for whom Newman's literary output is, as a whole, either something of an embarrassment or an afterthought among his works or is not significant enough to deserve mention. Bertram Newman, for example, writing in 1925 and subtitling his biography *A Biographical and Literary Study*, proclaims that Tractarian poetry is, overall, very bad (54). Though Newman was sometimes better than the rest, he argues that, "for the poetical treatment of Christian dogma and mystery, a stronger and rarer poetic gift is required than that which he possessed" (55).<sup>38</sup> *Loss and Gain* he finds to be merely "a propagandist novel" and "hardly one of Newman's best books"; despite its "considerable autobiographical interest" it is "rather dreary reading to-day" (109-110). Though *Callista* receives some praise for its most dramatic sections—the descriptions of the plague of locusts and of Juba's possession—he finds the characterization to be "rather thin" (111). Geoffrey Faber's 1933 biographical portrait of the major figures of the Oxford Movement, unsympathetic overall, criticizes Keble's and Newman's poetry more specifically, more harshly, and more in the line of T. S. Eliot (to whom he dedicates the book)

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<sup>38</sup> Bertram Newman singles out "Lead, Kindly Light," "The Dream of Gerontius," "The Elements," and an unspecified "one or two or three" other lyrics as exceptions to what he finds to be the generally poor quality of Tractarian verse (55). He does not provide a justification either for his general criticism or for these exceptions.

than any biographer or critic before him (91-3). Alone among Newman's critics, he even attacks "Lead, Kindly Light" for its romantic landscape and metaphors, which he finds bizarre given Newman's age and state of life at the time they were composed (56).<sup>39</sup>

Charles Stephen Dessain (1966) gives very little space to discussion of the novels or the poetry; he mentions *Loss and Gain* only briefly as "an amusing reply to a story" and the *Lyra Apostolica* not at all, while his treatments of *Callista* and "The Dream of Gerontius" are superficial (94). To Americo Lapati (1972), Newman "lacks dramatic quality" as a novelist and can write neither plot nor character to great effect (53, 77). Lapati accounts for the fact that they are in print by pointing to their "historical and biographical value" and their humor (53). He has nothing to say about the merits of Newman's poetry, opting instead, like Ward, to summarize the history of their composition, publication, and positive reception during Newman's life (28, 98-100). In his 1973 *Cardinal Newman and His Age: His Place in English Theology and Literature*, Harold Weatherby offers a valuable study of the place of Newman's philosophical, theological, and controversial works in the history of English theology—particularly with regard to the gradually waning influence of the Metaphysical poets and Caroline theologians and the rise of the Romantic poetic and theological turn toward subjectivism. Weatherby helps delineate Newman's relationship to Coleridge and Wordsworth—a relationship to which I will return in Chapters 3 and 4. And

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<sup>39</sup> Faber's critique of Newman's poetry is not unqualified. "Newman's own poetry," he writes, "was a mixed product. His instinctive artistry, working almost without his own knowledge, fashioned occasional superb lines and images, to be found embedded in the lava-like flow of the *Lyra Apostolica*. Now and then he displays an inventive command of rhythm. Once and again art has her way with him and uses his romantic sentiment for a universal purpose. But most of his poetry is really bad" (93).

yet nowhere does Weatherby address the place of Newman's *literature* in the history of English theology and literature. "Lead, Kindly Light" is the only poem mentioned (and that only in passing), and he, like Moody, interprets *Callista* purely as a kind of allegorical autobiography (131).

Outside the world of literary biography, in the later twentieth century interest in the implications of Newman's and his fellow Tractarians' theology for aesthetics and artistic practice began to gain momentum. A 1973 essay by Geoffrey Wamsley offers an interpretation of "The Dream of Gerontius" based on Newman's 1829 "Poetry, with Reference to Aristotle's *Poetics*" and the *Parochial and Plain Sermons*.<sup>40</sup> Stephen Prickett's 1976 *Romanticism and Religion: The Tradition of Coleridge and Wordsworth in the Victorian Church* and G. B. Tennyson's seminal 1981 study of Tractarian poetry, *Victorian Devotional Poetry: The Tractarian Mode* stand out as attempts to redress the relative critical neglect Tractarian poetry in general had suffered. Both of these works are foundational to the present study.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, Ian Ker's substantial 1988 biography attempts to address some of the gaps left by what he considers to be the only two other major biographies, that of Wilfrid Ward and that of Meriol Trevor, and in doing so he brings to light the need for a reexamination of Newman's work as a literary artist in the context of his biography. One of his stated aims is to "break new ground" "in shedding fresh light on Newman's rhetoric; in highlighting an exuberance of imagery and

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<sup>40</sup> See p. 187 herein.

<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of Tennyson's argument about Newman's poetics, see p. 92-5 herein. His arguments about Newman are most relevant with regard to Newman's Tractarian period, and I have attempted to build on his work by examining how Newman's theory of the imagination continued to develop after his separation from the Tractarian movement and during his Catholic period.

metaphor which at times invites comparison with Dickens; in evincing the fecundity of one of the most remarkable and prolific letter-writers in the English language; and in drawing attention to Newman's (neglected) genius as a satirical writer" (viii). And to a great extent he succeeds: he examines *Loss and Gain* and *Callista* with close attention and restores both novels to a place of significance among Newman's works (332-6, 419-22). Moreover, in addition to displaying Newman's talents as a writer, he devotes several pages to Newman's understanding of the role of the imagination in the growth of religious belief, yet he makes no attempt to associate this understanding of the imagination with Newman's exercise of his poetic and literary imagination (351-2, 354, 39-640). At the same time, his investigation of Newman's skills as a satirist and his relationship to Dickens focuses on the nonfiction writings, while his discussions of Newman's poetry are comparatively thin.<sup>42</sup>

In Ker's 1990 *The Achievement of John Henry Newman*, while the author expresses some regret over the fact that "Newman's literary achievement is still not only underrated but also to a considerable extent unperceived," still he defends his omission of Newman's poetry by asserting that he has "deliberately concentrated on those aspects of Newman's achievement which seem to [him] to constitute his *essential* genius" (ix, emphasis mine).<sup>43</sup> Ker summarizes the critical consensus of the 1980's thus: "Newman's claims as a writer have been too often underestimated by literary critics and historians for whom his achievement

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<sup>42</sup> Ker singles out very few of Newman's verses for quotation, including one stanza of "The Good Samaritan," a couplet from "Lead, Kindly Light," and a few stanzas of "The Dream of Gerontius" (79, 575-6).

<sup>43</sup> His chapter on "Newman the Writer" focuses exclusively on his gifts as rhetorician and satirist and excludes any discussion of the novels or poetry.

consists principally of his autobiography, the *Apologia*, and to a much lesser extent his two novels and poetry, which are recognized to be of interest, and even of some originality, but hardly of major significance" (153). Victor Lams argues against Ker, "Are we to concur in the prevailing opinion that Newman failed to produce any significant work of literature? By no means," and yet he identifies Newman's most significant literary achievement as the *Parochial Sermons*, which, he argues, belong to the genre of the georgic (Lams, *Newman's Anglican Georgic* 1).

Still, Ker's biography, along with Prickett's and Tennyson's works, seems to have encouraged serious study of the place Newman's poetry and fiction among his other works. Ker includes a chapter by Alan G. Hill on Newman's novels in his essay collection *Newman After a Hundred Years* (1990). Four of the eight essays in the 1992 collection *Critical Essays on John Henry Newman* address his literary works.<sup>44</sup> Sheridan Gilley's 1990 biography *Newman and His Age* includes quotation from several of the poems, although Gilley still echoes the surprise of many at Newman's turning novelist in 1848.<sup>45</sup> Rodney Stenning

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<sup>44</sup> Not all of these studies are adulatory. To Roger Sharrock, for example, the primary interest of Newman's poetry to a modern audience is in its skepticism, which places him in a tradition that extends from Pascal to Baudelaire, T. S. Eliot, and Graham Greene. However, he argues that the recognition linking all these figures of "the 'vast aboriginal calamity' under which mankind labours" did not, in Newman's case, give rise to the imaginative work of the same caliber as that produced by the others, leaving instead a "bewildering" gap between "the conventional rhetoric of most of these poems and the exceptional mind behind them" (45, 51).

<sup>45</sup> Quoted poems include "A Winter Eclogue," *St. Bartholomew's Eve*, "To F. W. N.," "Snapdragon. A Riddle," "Consolations on Bereavement," "Reverses," "Angelic Guidance," "Wanderings," "England," "The Greek Fathers," "The Good Samaritan," "Lead, Kindly Light," "The Married and the Single," "The Pilgrim Queen," and "The Dream of Gerontius," as well as one of Newman's translations of the Roman breviary hymns and unpublished poems appearing in Newman's correspondence (*Newman and His Age* 31, 32, 61-2, 69, 70, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 101, 108-9, 110, 127, 171, 183-4, 324, 351-2). Of *Loss and Gain*, to which he devotes only a single paragraph, Gilley quotes the remark of a surprised reviewer in *Fraser's Magazine*: "a book of this kind, a book of jokes and gossip, of eating and drinking, of smartness, levities and most probably personalities—appears as a somewhat undignified vehicle for the opinions of one who has long been revered as a prophet and a saint" (263). When he comes to *Callista*, he again seems

Edgecombe's *Two Poets of the Oxford Movement: John Keble and John Henry Newman* (1996) analyzes Newman's contributions to the *Lyra Apostolica* and his relationship to John Keble and Isaac Williams. Though deeply critical of Newman's poetic achievement overall, Edgecombe nevertheless demonstrates the insight that can be gained through examining Newman's poems with close attention. Victor Lams includes chapters on both *Loss and Gain* and *Callista* in his 2007 *The Rhetoric of Newman's Apologia Pro Catholica, 1845-1864*. Briefer studies of Newman's fiction include those by Maria Poggi Johnson (1999), Vincent A. Lankewish (2000), Bernadette Waterman Ward (2004), and David Bradshaw (2010).<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the study of Tractarian poetics has enjoyed a recent flourishing: for example, the spring 2006 issue of *Victorian Poetry* celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of G. B. Tennyson's *Victorian Devotional Poetry* by focusing entirely on Tractarian poetry, and although none of the articles take Newman as their primary subject, his work and the relationship between his poetic theories and those of his fellow Tractarians receives sustained attention. Both the 2002 *Companion to Victorian Poetry* and Kirstie Blair's 2012 *Form and Faith in Victorian Devotional Poetry* devotes chapters to Tractarian poetics. These recent studies along with the editions of *Callista*, *Verses on Various Occasions*, and *Loss*

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surprised, noting that "[t]his was not an obvious time to produce a piece of light literature" and that the novel "illustrates Newman's facility for turning his pen to anything," even "minor recreations" like novels (291-3).

<sup>46</sup> Again, these include negative assessments of the literary quality of Newman's imaginative works. For example, comparing *Callista* to Charles Kingsley's *Hypatia*, to which Newman's novel was in some sense a reply, Maria Poggi Johnson concludes that, "while Newman is a brilliant and Kingsley merely a good rhetorician, Kingsley is a good and Newman a downright bad novelist" (130). Waterman Ward judges that his novels pale in comparison to those of the great Victorian realists in their special area of excellence, "the connection of closely observed detail to the moral drama of human life" ("Faith, Romance, and Imagination" 177).

*and Gain* which appeared shortly before Newman's 2010 beatification indicate a burgeoning scholarly interest in Newman as poet and novelist.<sup>47</sup>

However, the tradition of neglecting these works in Newman's biography persists: Cardinal Avery Dulles's 2002 biography, which is specifically oriented toward Newman's work as theologian, affords the novels, "Lead, Kindly Light," and "The Dream of Gerontius" only passing mentions; Dulles does not address the role of imagination in Newman's thought, even in his discussion of the *Grammar of Assent* (4, 8-9, 11, 17, 27, 29, 43-4, 48-50, 58-9). Frank Turner's 2002 *John Henry Newman: The Challenge to Evangelical Religion* has nothing to say about Newman's poetry or fiction.<sup>48</sup> The biographical summary that opens John Connolly's 2005 *John Henry Newman: A View of the Catholic Faith for the New Millennium* makes no mention of either novel or of "The Dream of Gerontius"; the only poem referred to is "Lead, Kindly Light." The 2009 *Cambridge Companion to John Henry Newman* includes no essay on the novels or poetry, making reference to these works only in passing in the context of other questions, and no essay or section on the place of imagination in Newman's thought.

Wilfrid Ward's biography has been deservedly influential on Newman studies in the past century. His sagacity shows in the depth of his reading, his comprehensive familiarity with Newman's letters, and his judicious selection

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<sup>47</sup> In the 2006 *Victorian Poetry*, Tennyson confesses the pleasant surprise with which he found that the work he had believed to have "sunk without a trace" had in fact inspired "a kind of coeducational confraternity of learned and sophisticated readers, academic and otherwise" ("Afterward" 113-4).

<sup>48</sup> Turner focuses exclusively on Newman's Anglican years, which seems a valid excuse for his choice not to mention "The Dream of Gerontius" and the novels, all of which were written after Newman's conversion, although *Loss and Gain* is a clear reflection of his experience as an Anglican and seems pertinent. However, Turner's total neglect of the poems composed for the *Lyra Apostolica* is surprising.

from and commentary on Newman's papers; the end result maintains an admirable balance between generosity and criticism that easily justifies its prominent place in the canon of Newman scholarship. And yet it also seems possible that his neglect of Newman's literary works and of the place of imagination in his thought has had a proportional influence that is less beneficial to Newman studies overall. I suggest that the views of Ward's Catholic contemporaries, particularly those within the Church hierarchy, toward art and the imagination are crucial to understanding why Newman's novels and poetry fell so quickly so far into the background. This context will be the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Imagination and the Roman Catholic Hierarchy, 1850-1912

The Victorian era was an age of great faith and profound doubt, and by its end religious leaders everywhere were prophesying the ascendancy of doubt. A mere three years after Newman published his *Apologia pro vita sua* Matthew Arnold nonetheless expressed the spirit of the age with the haunting image of the old "sea of faith" "Retreating, to the breath / Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear / And naked shingles of the world" ("Dover Beach" 26-8). As the century progressed the voices of agnosticism and atheism were working strongly to carve out a space for themselves in the public discourse. Immanentism in theology, subjectivism in religion:<sup>1</sup> to the custodians of Catholic doctrine, these trends represented an intellectual and spiritual rebellion against rightful authority that took many forms in many places. In short, the Modernist conflict in the Catholic Church took place in the context of a broader crisis, an extension of the nineteenth-century clash between religion and the modern world.

In his 1983 biography of Newman, Owen Chadwick broadly summarizes the English Catholic response to the nineteenth century's cultural and intellectual trends: "The Roman Catholic Church of the nineteenth century was occupied in closing its mind. It shrank from this new knowledge. It felt horror at evolution, officially condemned toleration, saw many of its best historians leave its embrace

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<sup>1</sup> By "immanentism," I mean here the idea that the divine exists only as immanent in earthly things, such as in the natural world or in human nature. By "subjectivism" I mean the belief that religion consists entirely of an individual's personal experience and is fundamentally emotional. Both of these ideas were accepted by some of the Catholic Modernists, as shall be seen.

in disgust at its attitude to history, and tried to stop any good Catholic from belonging to the political left" (1-2).<sup>2</sup> Similarly, John Coulson describes the church Newman entered in 1845 as "a community standing off defensively from a changing world, alienating its members, by hesitating on the margins, and so confusing essential distinctions as to imply that beliefs might be imposed independently of our experience of faith" (*Religion and Imagination* 79). These generalizations pass over what was in fact a heated controversy among Catholics that simmered throughout the latter half of the nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth centuries and boiled over at least twice. However, they do identify the group whose position of ecclesiastical power gave its cautious approach to modern thought authoritative sanction and weight.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the conflict, the conservative side maintained the upper hand, and its attitude toward intellectual innovation may be described as that of a ruler threatened by rebellion from

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<sup>2</sup> There was an intellectual Catholic response to Modernism and the questions raised by historicism, but it centered in Germany. A number of German scholars, Richard Schaefer argues, engaged in an attempt to distinguish between a "true" and a "false" kind of Enlightenment so as to redefine "true Enlightenment" as a specifically Catholic possibility:

Focusing . . . on the potency of Enlightenment as a certain kind of thought, they construed it in connection with a wide variety of strands from intellectual history, including Gnosticism, pagan philosophy, Protestant reason, and rationalism. By eliding historical specifics and talking about the Enlightenment as though it stretched from the pre-Socratics to the present, scholars underscored its potential as a continuing source of danger. But they also created a space for elevating Catholicism to the level of its world-historical antidote. (40-1)

Schaefer laments the absence of any corresponding activity in either England or France (42).

<sup>3</sup> The clash over liberalism of the 1860's ended with the 1864 publication of Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors* which "rejected the liberal Catholic policy of reconciliation" with modern thought (Schoenl 9). Schoenl records, "After the Munich brief and the *Syllabus of Errors*, liberal Catholicism had been able to do little more than try to limit the reach of the neoultramontane (sic) triumph," and ultimately "[n]eo-ultramontanism and the First Vatican Council accelerated the development of a centralized, disciplined Church—the Roman Church as it was to be for another century" (17, 18). The conflict that arose in the 1890's effectively ended with the appearance of the conservative *Pascendi dominici gregis* in 1907.

within and attack from without.<sup>4</sup> As Wilfrid Ward succinctly put it, “Rulers do not choose a time of mutiny as the moment for far-reaching concessions” (“Liberalism and Intransigence” 970). Instead, as shall be seen, the princes of the Church acted strongly against what were perceived as the greatest internal threats, and in doing so they emphasized the need for control, reserve, and obedience for all Catholics, clergy and laity alike. Activities that clearly and safely promoted the spiritual welfare of the flock were encouraged; all activities that resisted control and had even the potential to destabilize or damage this spiritual welfare were strongly discouraged.

Even prior to the Modernist crisis, English Catholics lived in an uneasy relation to intellectual culture, including literature and the arts. The censorship of books was a well-established practice. The Vatican set itself as a watchful guardian over the reading material proper to the faithful when the Index Librorum Prohibitorum was first established in 1559 and then sanctioned by the Council of Trent. According to George Putnam, whose two-volume 1906 study offers a valuable guide to a contemporary understanding of the history and purpose of the Index, the tradition of official Roman Catholic censorship of books

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<sup>4</sup> The terms “liberal” and “conservative” cannot be applied to the sides of this controversy without some qualification. John Henry Newman, frequently identified with the “liberal Catholics” of the 1860’s for his progressive understanding of the development of doctrine and his advocacy for consulting the laity in matters of doctrine, nevertheless claims in his 1879 “Biglietto Speech” that he has waged a lifelong campaign against “liberalism” in religion. His clearest definition of the term can, of course, be found in the appendix to the *Apologia pro vita sua*. In the 1890’s, both sides of the Modernist controversy claimed that the term “conservative” properly applied to them; for example, in a letter to the editor of *Pilot*, George Tyrrell claimed that the neo-scholastics were guilty of “heretical innovation” in their arguments for the extent of magisterial authority (Schoenl 120). Wilfrid Ward thought *Pascendi dominici gregis* “a piece of ‘modernism’” because the Pope used an encyclical to teach on intellectual matters, which he believed to be unprecedented in Church history (Schoenl 196). At the same time, as the “liberals” and Modernists argued in favor of intellectual freedom while the neo-ultramontanes and neo-scholastics consistently maintained the importance of respecting the Church’s hesitancy in embracing modern thought, the terms may clearly be applied in the sense in which I have chosen to use them.

began in the year 150 A.D. and was practiced by popes and councils throughout the early and high middle ages even prior to the Index's establishment (1:1). Jesuit author Francis S. Betten, writing in 1909, claims that the Church's authority to maintain such an index is based in Scripture, offering support from Christ's exhortation to Peter to "Feed my lambs" and to the Apostles to teach "the faithful to observe all, whatsoever I have commanded you," and he elsewhere associates the Christian's obligation "to guard our soul from serious danger" with the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" and the petition, "Lead us not into temptation" (5, 20). Betten offers a historical summary of the Church's practice of suppressing dangerous literature.<sup>5</sup> "Bad literature," he concludes, "is one of the worst enemies of mankind. The Church can never allow it to corrupt the hearts of her children or to undermine the foundation of their faith, without at least raising a warning voice" (6).<sup>6</sup> "It is deplorable enough," he later laments, "that the modern novel is the catechism of millions outside the Church. We must not allow it to displace the Catholic catechism or to unteach, totally or in part, the truths taught by it" (Betten 23-4). The 1900 version of the Index contained nearly 7000 entries, and yet these represent only those works not already condemned under the general decrees (Putnam 2:379).<sup>7</sup> Writes Betten, "It is by no means the

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<sup>5</sup> The term "literature" here applies to all written material and not merely to imaginative literature; the Index is concerned primarily with suppression of heresy and a majority of the works therein are theological.

<sup>6</sup> Betten offers an instructive anecdote that describes what he considers to be an appropriate approach to forbidden literature: "There was [a] priest, who has meanwhile died the death of the just, a celebrated author and art critic. In writing a work on Voltaire he had to study the books of that arch-agnostic. He obtained the requisite permission, but, while perusing Voltaire's writings, he was on his knees, to implore, as it were, by this humble posture the protection of God against the wicked influence to which he was exposed" (22).

<sup>7</sup> Pope Leo XIII revised the Index and the rules governing which books should be included in 1897 and, in fact, removed roughly a thousand titles which time and obscurity had made no longer dangerous (Betten 12).

intention of the Roman authorities to catalogue all the literary virus that has been vomited forth by printing presses all over the world in the course of four and a half centuries" (14). In the constitution "Concerning the Prohibition and Censorship of Books" of Pope Leo XIII, which was included in the 1900 revision of the Index, the pope warns that "pernicious books" are "the worst kind of poison" (Putnam 2:389). Virus, poison—the images describe a foreign substance that enters and then attacks from within, leaving the victim helpless and debilitated. Such is the official view of the plight awaiting the reader of dangerous material. In addition to theological works, the 1900 Index included the novels of Samuel Richardson, Laurence Stern, Maurice Stendhal, Frédéric Soulié, Victor Hugo, George Sand, Honoré de Balzac, Eugène Sue, Alexander Dumas (father and son), Gustave Flaubert, Gabriele d'Annunzio, Alberto Moravia, Daniel Defoe, and Emile Zola (see Putnam, vol. 2; Halsall).<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, Victorian English Catholics had to overcome a long tradition of isolation from the nation's main intellectual life. Outside of the Catholic periodicals, as John Root notes, "[I]t is difficult to discern a solid basis for an English Catholic intellectual life during the high Victorian period. What of English Catholic university life? The answer is damning; there was none" (461). Cardinal Manning, who was made Archbishop of Westminster in 1865, banned Catholics from attending Oxford and Cambridge, convinced "that their anti-Catholic atmosphere would be injurious to faith and piety; moreover, he

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<sup>8</sup> While a majority of the fictional works condemned were "*fabulae amoralitiae*," the Index includes a general prohibition against the broad category "obscene books," while the "Brief of Leo XIII" asserts that the Index is intended to protect the faithful both from heresy and from "books hurtful to piety or morals" (Putnam 2:382, 395, 404). These broad categories leave room for many works to become suspect without being specifically condemned in the Index.

regarded them as centers of growing unbelief. Better that young Catholics not attend university at all" (Schoenl 15). This ban remained in place until 1895 and was only lifted "reluctantly" by Cardinal Vaughan after a strong appeal by the Duke of Norfolk (56). In 1861 Cardinal Wiseman attempted to address the widespread ignorance of the laity by founding an "Academia of the Catholic Religion"; however, almost from its inception the Academia served as a forum for Manning's and William George Ward's neo-ultramontane agenda (Root 467). Ward delivered an address in 1861 on "The Dangers of the Uncontrolled Intellect," while in 1866 Manning's inaugural address asserted that the Academia existed for the "maintenance and defense of the Catholic religion" rather than for any purpose of intellectual dialogue or discovery (469-72). Between 1861 and 1874, "only two papers dealt with scientific questions," while "[t]here were no papers on civil or ecclesiastical history and none on literature, except for two on hagiography" (473).<sup>9</sup>

Meanwhile, the majority of English Victorian Catholic poetry and fiction—much of it devotional or didactic—appeared only in Catholic periodicals such as the *Lamp*, *Tablet*, and *Month* and was widely regarded by their own readers as "light" literature. The Church could boast of Irish poet Aubrey de Vere, as well as the converts Coventry Patmore, Frederick William Faber, and of course John Henry Newman as having audiences that extended beyond the Church's own sphere, but Gerard Manley Hopkins's poems were to remain unpublished and unknown until 1918. Among Catholic novelists, only John

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<sup>9</sup> The historian of this ill-fated project concludes, "Regardless of their motivation, both Wiseman and Manning had hoped that the Academia would become a positive unifying force among Catholic intellectuals. But to the chagrin of both, the Academia experience exacerbated the division of the English Catholic intellectual leadership into parties" (Root 478).

Henry Newman and, to a lesser extent, Thomas Moore and Nicholas Wiseman were at all widely read by non-Catholics. In his lecture on “English Catholic Literature” in *The Idea of a University*, Newman denies that one exists in his own time. “[W]e cannot undo the past,” he asserts, and “English Literature will ever *have been* Protestant.” Creating an English Catholic literature will be a “perplexed and arduous” task (235).<sup>10</sup>

In the Protestant literature that comprised the English national literature, meanwhile, Catholics had grown accustomed to finding themselves misrepresented or abused. Members of the clergy in particular found themselves depicted as stock villains. Despite the increased legal tolerance of Catholics signified by the Catholic Relief Act of 1829, literary expressions of anti-Catholicism were popular throughout the nineteenth century and particularly during the No-Popery agitation of the 1850’s. The first issue of the *Dublin Review* contains a review of *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (1836), and the reviewer assumes a tone of weariness over anti-Catholicism and bigotry in Protestant fiction (Joseph). Charles Kingsley’s 1848 *The Saint’s Tragedy* depicts Elizabeth of Hungary’s spiritual director “as a harsh tyrant, confirming contemporary prejudices against the power of Roman Catholic priests to turn women against their husbands” (Clarke 973). Charlotte Brontë’s 1853 *Villette* provoked criticisms for its presentation of continental Catholicism as morally lax and

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<sup>10</sup> In the ninth of his *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England*, Newman reiterates the fact that the Catholic Church did not encounter nineteenth-century literature from the point of view of a body with a flourishing English literary tradition of its own. Here, he describes Protestantism as a language spoken by the cultural establishment in England: “As English is the natural tongue, so Protestantism is the intellectual and moral language of the body politic. The Queen *ex officio* speaks Protestantism; so does the court, so do her ministers. All but a small portion of the two Houses of Parliament; . . . All the great authors of the nation, the multitudinous literature of the day, the public press, speak Protestantism” (366).

decadent. Kingsley's *Hypatia*, which appeared in the same year and which presents a negative view of early Christian monasticism, most probably furnished the impetus for Newman's resuming work on *Callista* in answer (Clarke 967-8; Dorman 175).<sup>11</sup> Cautionary, angry, or weary reviews of anti-Catholic fiction appear in several issues of the *Dublin Review* over the course of the nineteenth century (see, for example, Russell, Rev. of *The Monk*; Francis, Rev. of *The Lady*; Rev. of *Cecile*; Barry, "Rev. of *John Inglesant*"; Mallock).<sup>12</sup> In the July issue of 1869, the year after William George Ward assumed editorship, a lengthy review of Browning's *The Ring and the Book* castigates the poet as "the dupe of most fantastic prejudices" against Roman Catholics and particularly the clergy (Doherty 48). Toward the end of the century, the *Review* celebrates the appearance of a humorous compilation of the more absurd examples of anti-Catholicism in fiction, entitled "Protestant Fiction," which aims to point out the "unconscious humour" of a "perennial fountain of misrepresentation and slander" (J. I. C. 415). In the face of such prejudice, it is understandable that many Catholics, clergy and laity alike, would feel themselves under attack and

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<sup>11</sup> Newman began writing the tale that would become *Callista* in 1848, but soon laid it aside, only to resume and complete it in 1855.

<sup>12</sup> As Turner and others have pointed out, Newman himself became one of the most prominent counter-influences against this dominant theme of anti-Catholic prejudice, especially with his *Apologia pro vita sua*. By writing in an unmistakably English style and demanding "that he be judged as an Englishman," Newman created "a major example of autobiography emerging from a minority culture defending itself to the majority and asserting its inherent right to respect, if not necessarily approval, from that culture" ("Editor's Introduction" 44). As the *Dublin Review* articles referenced here make plain, the détente Newman helped begin could not fully reassure conservative Catholics that they were no longer members of a persecuted and misrepresented minority.

would react defensively, with distaste and suspicion, to literary works in general.<sup>13</sup>

And so they did. A survey of the articles that discuss fiction and poetry in the nineteenth-century *Dublin Review* reveals a broad spectrum of attitudes toward imaginative literature, but a general tone of indifference mixed with suspicion is unmistakable.<sup>14</sup> In general, novels, religious or otherwise, are accused of manifesting or participating in a degradation of public taste and morals. This view persists through the entire century. In 1838, for example, one writer introduces a review with the words, “We have here an assemblage of works which, to the thinking mind, may seem to belong to the lighter and more trifling literature of the day; being all works of fiction, in other words—*novels*” (Bagshawe, Rev. of *Father Clement* 533). In an 1843 review, the same author is willing to concede a certain importance to the form, while still lamenting that all the flights of imagination that characterized the heroic age “have shrunk and vulgarised for us into the modern novel” (Bagshawe, Rev. of *Harry Mowbray* 530). “Do we, then,” he continues, “recommend novel reading as a consolation in the troubles of life? We shall not be so far mistaken: but as an alleviation of some of its minor evils,—a pleasure, harmless (after the age of sixteen), easily attainable, and easily laid aside,—we think it may claim the indulgence of the wise;—that they are not likely to accord it more” (531). In April of 1885, upon

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<sup>13</sup> For a much more complete study of anti-Catholicism in Victorian England, see D. Paz’s 1992 *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England*.

<sup>14</sup> A majority of the articles cited below as representative of trends in Catholic opinion come from the *Dublin Review*. This journal was by 1907 the oldest and most prestigious of English Catholic periodicals and acted more or less as the organ of the conservative party. Modernist writers had to send their works elsewhere; many of them appeared in the non-Catholic *Nineteenth Century*.

becoming editor of the *Dublin Review*, Herbert Vaughan introduced a new section called “Notes on Novels”, whose purpose was to “make known those ‘current works of Fiction which may be *safely* perused by different classes of Catholic readers’” (emphasis added), with the following apology:

Whilst fully recognizing the important functions which may be discharged by chaste and healthy works of fiction, we wish emphatically to state that our ‘Notes’ are NOT intended to *advocate* novel-reading. Our purpose is NOT an invitation to read any novels. But, it being assumed that many people do read them, and that many novels are unworthy of the time they demand, others unfit for the perusal of youth, and not a few unsuited, perhaps dangerous, to any Catholic reader—we propose to offer a judgment on the quality of certain novels that are in more general demand, raising the note of warning wherever we discover need for doing so. (“Notes on Novels”)

In 1892, when Canon James Moyes took over editorship of the journal, the section disappeared without any explanation.<sup>15</sup>

One aesthetic trend singled out for censure is French and Italian realism. The anonymous reviewer of a series of articles in the Italian periodical *La Civiltà Cattolica* describes the poetry of Carducci and his “tribe” as fraught with “shameless obscenity and demoniacal impiety,” ultimately Satanic in its rejection of all authority (“Italian Periodicals” 511-2). Elsewhere, another anonymous writer criticizes the *Veristi* because they attempt to mirror nature too photographically, imitating the base and the imperfect rather than interpreting nature in the light of a philosophical ideal (“The Ideal in Art” 446). Such realists do have an unstated ideal, this writer argues: the “Jacobin” ideal (447). In his two-part article on “Minor Poets of Modern France,” George Masson complains of the same tendencies in French realism: he convicts “the new poets” of France,

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<sup>15</sup> In subsequent issues, notices for novels appear in much briefer form as part of the general section, “Notices of New Books.”

particularly Théophile Gautier and Louis Bouilhet, of the “sensuality” and “blasphemy” that results from abandoning a belief in the ideal, comparing their school to the *Veristi* in “its intensified paganism, and its idolatry of license” (366, 372). These writers saw in the Italian and French realist schools aesthetic expressions of the political liberalism and republicanism against which Pope Pius IX struggled during the mid-century. In 1848, only the third year of his papacy, Pius IX was forced to flee Rome by Italian revolutionaries; thereafter, to the pope,

modern civilization meant the Roman Republic, the murder of his minister Rossi, and his flight to Gaeta. It meant Cavour, anti-clerical legislation, the suppressing of monasteries and convents, and the seizure of the papal states. And it signified Mazzini and the proclamation of a new religion of humanity in the same breath as the proclamation of political liberalism. (Schoenl 8)

In England, views on the Pope’s conflict with the Italian revolutionaries divided the Church. The neo-ultramontanes argued that the temporal power of the Pope, his right to sovereignty over the papal states, was a fundamental issue of faith, while to the liberal Catholics the question was merely political.<sup>16</sup> In response, a number of articles appeared in the *Dublin Review* that warned against

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<sup>16</sup> Manning’s support of the temporal power of the Pope in the papal states was so vehement that “he gave the impression that the temporal power of the pope might in due course become a dogma of faith . . . . So extreme was he on the latter count that there was even some talk in Rome of placing his works in defense of the temporal power on the *Index*” (Schoenl 5). “In contrast to Manning,” Schoenl recounts,

Acton and his associates of the English liberal Catholic periodical, *The Rambler*, viewed the question of the papal states not as a matter of obedience to the pope but as a contemporary political and historical question. They considered it subject to individual inquiry and opinion as were other political and historical questions. The basic division between the insistence of Acton and his *Rambler* colleagues on free scientific inquiry and the insistence of the neo-ultramontanes on ecclesiastical authority was thus expressed in their differences over the question of the papal states. (5-6)

revolutionaries of all kinds—advocates of democracy, writers of realist or liberal fiction and poetry, and political liberals.<sup>17</sup>

Other literary works were condemned for the presence of elements shocking or obscene to contemporary Catholic mores. For example, even as one reviewer warns in 1888 against a new edition of the works of John Dryden for containing “gross material coarseness and sensual impurity,” he still prefers Dryden to “the shameless moral abominations in prose and verse, in newspaper and novel, which pass current, at least in upper-class society, in our day” (Orby 462-3).<sup>18</sup> As literature became increasingly explicit about sexual matters in the late nineteenth century, Catholic reviewers grew more and more alarmed. The reviewer of Ibsen’s “Hedda Gabler” writes caustically of the growing discrepancy between public taste and Catholic standards: “It would seem as if in the present phase of public taste no literary work can be too dull or too dreary to command a large audience, provided it be sufficiently subversive of established forms of religion or morality” (485).<sup>19</sup> Alongside an impassioned plea on behalf of the dignity of the artistic imagination, William Barry nonetheless advocates legal censorship of much of popular fiction, especially what comes from France, which he finds to be obscene and morally anarchic.<sup>20</sup> The immoral tendencies in

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<sup>17</sup> Wilfrid Ward later draws an explicit analogy between the Italian revolutionaries of the 1840’s and the Modernist agitators of the 1890’s (“Liberalism and Intransigence” 966).

<sup>18</sup> In a similar vein, another warns of a new edition of Ben Jonson’s works: “The advisability of such editions is certainly, to say the least of it, questionable. After making all due allowances for the blunt outspokenness of Jonson’s age, there still remains much that is shocking and dangerous which is best unread, and quite prevents the volume being put in the hands of the young” (450).

<sup>19</sup> A later reviewer protests even more vehemently against open references to marital intimacy in Ibsen’s “Little Eyolf” (Spender 121-5).

<sup>20</sup> In this and other articles, Barry’s is one of the only contemporary Catholic voices raised in serious defense of the artistic imagination. Taking Plato’s and Milton’s arguments

popular art stem, he claims, from a public rage for the enlargement of freedom, “cost what it may to society” (“The Censorship of Fiction” 113). Contemporary English fiction, influenced by the French and driven by the publishing market, fails in what should be its primary purpose: “contemplation of a world made visible which else had remained unseen” (115, 121-2, 126). Finding a majority of contemporary fiction so far out of sync with what they considered to be the purpose of works of art, these Catholic readers found the *belle lettres* to be in a state of rebellion against virtue, decency, marriage, life, love, church, and God.

Another type of fiction that fell under suspicion is much more surprising: several articles warn against the potential dangers of religious fiction. For some, the mixture of theology and literature is simply a matter of bad taste. In reviewing Frederick W. Faber’s poem “Sir Lancelot,” for example, Murphy Dominick blames those who “have called lighter literature to the aid of theology, and by strewing the dusty field of theological argument with the sweet flowers of poesy, have tried to make the desert blossom like the rose.” “Writers such as these,” he notes, “employ poetry but as an accessory and an auxiliary in the

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regarding censorship of the arts into consideration, Barry describes what is lost in a Puritanical religious hostility to all art:

If . . . only the real, in [a] hard, tangible sense, is the moral, it follows that the imagination, the mother of Arts, never was or will be anything but immoral—in Nietzsche’s challenging phrase, ‘beyond Good and Evil.’ The censor would thus be put out of court, his occupation gone, for . . . Art for Art is none of his concern. The tables are broken up in laughter; amusement, like virtue in the Lutheran system, has now only a secular significance. It is no longer a mystery or a miracle play. (“The Censorship of Fiction” 119)

What follows he considers both inevitable and historically demonstrated: “*ecce signum*, in Geneva or Lausanne we have beheld the cathedral, once Catholic, barred and bolted between the few ‘Sabbath’ services, while hard by the shop windows were crammed with yellow French novels, their pages unblotted by censor’s ink” (119). And thus extremes meet, the Puritan’s rejection of imagination leaves it in the hands only of the decadent and the anarchist, and “Théophile Gautier is justified of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* as an artist’s production, the end of which is beauty, by a purblind intolerance which cannot recognize anything divine in that which is sincerely human” (120).

cause which they have at heart. It is but a means towards an end" (321).

"Perhaps," he continues:

when we find [theology] with the muses spending a holiday beside the sacred fount of Helicon, good breeding should prevent us from seeming to recognize our acquaintance, or at least from entering at such an unseasonable time on any thing like serious business. Nor shall we henceforward presume to do so. We shall indulge her in the enjoyment of the hour, and permit her to drink of the sacred spring without pretending to observe those flights of fancy which are scarcely consistent with the decorum of her character. (322)<sup>21</sup>

Of Faber's attempt to be both poet and theologian, Dominick warns that "No man can serve two masters" (331).<sup>22</sup> Later in the same year, Emily Bowles remarks:

Religious novels are, in general, no favourites with us. We feel in their regard somewhat of the same distaste, as we do on finding the sacred subjects of theology treated in a newspaper, which, of course, in the same breath, reports the amusements of the court and the newest lines of railway. In a religious novel we must necessarily look for one of two evils—either the religious subjects treated will be hastily and irreverently dragged into time and place utterly unfit; or the religious discussions will be gathered apart, and carried on in systematic dialogues, equally strained and unnatural in themselves, and untrue to real life. (Rev. of *Hawkstone* 129).

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<sup>21</sup> Subsequent reviews echo the sentiment. The reviewer of *Father Felix, a Tale* and a number of other novels complains, "In spite of all objections that may reasonably be entertained for such a mixture of divine and worldly subjects, and such a mode of inculcating the most solemn truths, we nevertheless find an increasing demand for works of fiction, by which the attention of young people may be caught, and lured on by degrees to subjects of importance" (258-9).

<sup>22</sup> It is interesting to note that this criticism of Faber's mingling of poetry and theology appears prior to his conversion to Roman Catholicism. None of his Catholic works receive any such censure from the *Dubin Review*; instead, they are found to be evidence of his having consecrated his "powerful imagination" "to the Divine service" (Russell, Rev. of *Poems* 249). The reviewer of the second edition of "Sir Lancelot" asserts that "What the author once spoke in a spirit of aestheticism he now speaks in the spirit of faith" and that *therefore* "The old 'Sir Lancelot' was to the new, what one of the noble windows of our old cathedrals, in the dull light of a December day, is to the same window lighted up by the full glory of the evening sun" (Rev. of "Sir Lancelot" 515).

The *Dublin Review's* first notice of Newman's *Loss and Gain* in 1848 exhibits this same dislike for religious novels in general but, clearly taken with the novel, gets around it in a clever fashion. "It is almost a necessity of the age," reviewer Jeffrey Francis laments,

that the most important and even solemn subjects should be put forward under a disguise, however slight, of fiction. . . . But to call the work before us a novel, or even a story, would be a misapplication of terms. . . . In fact, the object of this beautiful work is to trace the gradual working of Grace upon a mind. (Rev. of *Loss and Gain* 218)

*Loss and Gain* is saved, in other words, by not being a true novel at all.

For others, however, the presence of religious or theological elements in imaginative literature has a more sinister potential. An important voice in this group is that of William George Ward.<sup>23</sup> In 1846, early in his career as a contributor to the review, he warns that "the more highly we think on the value and influence of imaginative writing, the more carefully we are bound to watch its nature and probable influence," explaining that greater caution is needed in evaluating imaginative works than others because "our perception of the awful or the beautiful" has a greater power over the reader's "moral impressions" than any work that does not touch the imagination (108). For Ward, poetry and fiction have the potential to rival the Catholic Church's appeal to the

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<sup>23</sup> William George Ward was, of course, his son's primary experience of neo-ultramontane opinions and prejudices. The elder Ward undoubtedly had a profound influence on what Ward perceived to be the conservative attitude toward the imagination and imaginative literature. In Wilfrid Ward's biography of his father, he quotes Lord Selborne's recollection from their schoolboy days that W. G. Ward "despised, or affected to despise, poetry and romance," refusing to work "seriously" at verse composition because he claimed "that he had no poetry in him" (*William George Ward* 6-7; see also 132, 220). Wilfrid Ward comments that this memoir of his father's youth shows that "in many points of character 'the boy was father to the man'" (5). Describing him to Dean Vaughan in 1836, Stanley noted that "he has no taste for beauty of scenery and not very much taste for beauty in poetry" (qtd. in Ward, *William George Ward* 401).

imagination: “The true Church has *her* exhibitions of grandeur and loveliness; and false churches and false religions have theirs.” “And surely,” he goes on,

. . . it is a very hazardous and anxious matter, to say the least, that in a land calling itself Christian, . . . so large a proportion of minds are to be moulded in their tenderest years on a poetry (for all these works may most truly be called poetry,) which, with few exceptions, makes not so much as a profession of being the expression and organ of Christian ideas. (108)

Ward clarifies repeatedly that he is not warning against didactic, or romantic, or allegorical fiction, but against works “which more directly appeal to the imagination as a *religious* faculty; where the effect is produced by the immediate introduction of the invisible world; by the avowed and direct, though of course necessarily economical, representation of religious truths, where the symbols employed have *no* meaning short of the supernatural” (108). The main target of Ward’s warning is the fiction of “modern Anglicans” containing elements from pagan and pre-Christian religions, but his plea for extreme caution applies to religious fiction of all kinds. Ward is alarmed at the power of the imagination and responds by urging caution and control.

In a similar vein, Henry Bagshawe warns in 1838 against works of religious fiction because in them “[d]isputes upon subjects in which our eternal happiness is involved escape from the responsibility incurred by the learned theological treatise . . . under the modest shelter of the marble-papered half-binding” (Bagshawe, *Rev. of Father Clement* 533). “[T]he religious novelist,” he argues further,

has powers of mischief at his disposal, which, skilfully (sic) worked, are most incalculable;—he constructs an interesting story—its perplexities and moral involvements turning altogether upon religious tenets and practices, until the awful consequences of these supposed opinions have been so clearly delineated, and placed in so many points of view, that they become *facts* to the

mind of the reader, and the chances are greatly against his enquiring into the *truth* of the ground-work of these hypotheses. (534)

Elsewhere, even so purely Catholic a religious poem as the *Divine Comedy* poses potential problems to writers in this group: for its commixture of pagan and Christian elements and for its censures against ecclesiastical figures, one writer warns that it “is not a book to be placed in every young person’s hands without a guide” (Rev. of *Translation of the Divina Comedia* 522).

These writers’ suspicion of religious fiction may further stem from a change that was taking place in the genre of conversion narratives, one of the most popular subjects for the religious novelist. As R. M. Scheider argues in a now dated article, whereas mid-century conversion narratives (Catholic and non-Catholic alike) tended to illustrate conversion from a position of error to the embrace of some preferred denomination or religious group, many novels of the late nineteenth-century focused more and more on what was then referred to as “perversion,” the abandonment of a specific group’s orthodoxy. “[L]ater writers,” Scheider finds, “see something genuinely perverse in the orthodox positions; they write not to accept or defend, but to reject” (33). Though Scheider makes a rather broad generalization about what was a richly varied genre, those among the Catholic hierarchy who were anxiously on the watch for such literary trends may well have found cause for alarm in later Victorian conversion narratives such as, for example, Mrs. Humphrey Ward’s *Robert Elsmere* (1888).

Of course, not every contributor to the *Dublin Review* agrees that imaginative literature is dangerous; there are many for whom some literature, especially poetry, holds an elevated status, has a divine purpose, and constitutes a means toward human perfection. At the same time, many of this class of

writers and reviewers ascribe far less importance to a work's aesthetic merits than to its religious tendency.<sup>24</sup> Praising a new poetry collection, one reviewer admires "the taste, the genius, and above all the piety" (Rev. of "Hymns of the Heart" 252)—the order speaks for itself—while in another case a certain Catholic novel is recommended as a tale "of fair ability, and undoubted good tendency" (Rev. of "The Heiress" 520). Literature can be useful in instructing the young; the nineteenth-century *Dublin Review* is peppered with adulatory notices of Catholic children's fiction designed to inculcate moral and theological virtues. Thus, while granting a dignified and important role for literary works in the propagation of the Catholic faith, these writers still downplay all aesthetic considerations.

A late review of Aubrey de Vere's essay on Wordsworth makes the doctrine underlying this position clear:

Poetry cannot supply religion. The essence of poetry is that intellectual sculpture of the naturally beautiful and true which affects our human susceptibilities. But this goes only a very short way in making a man pray continually, mortify his passions, submit to teaching, or humble his head to sacraments. Poetry, if made too much of, rather substitutes emotion for virtue; and that 'moral' emotion, which the Wordsworthian poetry promotes, if it is somewhat nearer to Christian virtue than other emotion, is not the less a useless substitute. . . . [B]esides that the Protestant poet's views of Christianity are necessarily fragmentary and inadequate—for he never mentions the Crucifix, the Real Presence, or the supernatural holiness of the saints—you can no more be a Christian by a poetic view of Nature than you can plant trees by waving your hands from a hill-top. (453-4)

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<sup>24</sup> This trend reveals a similarity between the aesthetics of these Roman Catholic writers and the poetic theory of John Keble, who was influential in shaping and defining what has come to be called "Tractarian aesthetics." As Elizabeth Jay clarifies, "Keble's aesthetic was in the strict sense 'instrumentalist.' Poetry was to be understood as the handmaid of religion" (48; see also 92-6 herein).

This review appeared in 1888 at a time when the Modernists in England were becoming increasingly radical in their public opposition to the authority of the Catholic hierarchy. Here, the purpose for which “a man” (or a woman) lives is to “pray,” “mortify,” “submit,” and “humble his head,” and to this end poetry “goes only a very short way.” Throughout the passage runs a criticism of revolt on several levels: a human being must pray, mortify, and submit because his or her fallen soul is in a state of revolt against its Creator; poetry—particularly Wordsworthian poetry—promotes a substitute and rival emotion in place of real Christian virtue; and as a Protestant, Wordsworth is already in a state of revolt against the Catholic Church and its doctrines. Recall that the collaborative work of Wordsworth and Coleridge in and around 1798 resulted in what Stephen Prickett has described as “a new way of perceiving and experiencing the world that was essentially *internal*: at once organic, creative and aesthetic” and in which “[t]he ambiguities evident in human perception reveal corresponding ambiguities about the meaning of ‘nature’” (“From Novel to Bible” 14). In Chapter 13 of the *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge makes his famous association between all perception and the artistic imagination, both of which involve “a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM” (*Coleridge’s Poetry and Prose* 488). The reviewer here is not merely behind the times; he is arguing pointedly against Wordsworth and Coleridge in asserting that poetry is “intellectual sculpture of the naturally beautiful and true”—beauty and truth come from an external source which the poet represents but does not author. The poet or perceiver does not create: he (or she) cannot “plant trees by waving [his] hands from a hill-top,” and a “poetic view of Nature”—a subjective act of artistic perception—cannot make one a Christian by giving one access to a

truth that might serve as “The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, / The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being” (Wordsworth, “Tintern Abbey” 109-111). To claim otherwise, to assert with Wordsworth that the poet half-creates the beauty he or she sees and with Coleridge that this participates in the divine act of creation, is to make the artist rival God and his or her art rival the Church and the Christian faith. At the same time, one detects less of pious horror at artistic presumption than impatience with it, with what to this reviewer is its absurdity. To prevent this error, poetry must be kept in its place, and aesthetic considerations may not supersede concern for religious truth in evaluating the merits of a work of art. The Christian has more important concerns than a “useless substitute” for virtue like poetry.

To this group also belong those for whom a non-Catholic religious worldview constitutes—or inevitably leads to—an artistic failure. The reviewer of the Anglican *Lyra Catholica* claims that, “no matter how great may be the artistic beauty of the language, the imagery, and metrical harmony in which they are presented,” the Anglican religious poems “have little power to touch the heart” because of “the vague generalities of religious sentiment” they express (Russell 302). On the other hand, because of their special access to truth, John George Wenham proclaims that “Catholics prefer Catholic writers even upon non-religious subjects” (440). John Charles Earle argues extensively from this position in the article “The Vices of Agnostic Poetry,” in which he outlines an aesthetic theory that judges poetic merit according to the philosophical and religious views of the poet. Poets cut off from “the chief sources of sublimity,” religion and especially the Catholic religion, write shallow and superficial

poetry, which he variously describes as “dismal,” “revolting,” “cloying,” “impious trash,” “despondent wailing,” and “rabid nonsense” (105-9).<sup>25</sup> Along with lesser figures, he includes Algernon Charles Swinburne, William Blake, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Oscar Wilde, and Victor Hugo in this criticism. Tracing their philosophical vices to the influence of Shelley (whom he admits to have been a talented poet), he finds fault with all members of what he terms the “Hellenic school” that has provoked a resurgent interest in paganism (113-5). This school originated, he argues, in Germany with Goethe, moved to England through Shelley and Keats and from them to Walter Savage Landor, Swinburne, and William Morris, while it also found a voice in Italy in the writings of Pietro Cossa. This last becomes the point of connection between the Hellenic school and Garibaldian Republicanism, which recent history had placed in direct opposition to papal authority (112). Shelley’s God-defying Prometheus may be seen as a spiritual father to all Republican, pope-defying, lawless revolutionaries. Earle concludes in no uncertain terms: “Poets to be great must be Christians. . . . Unbelieving poets have to write like Christians when they would become great and make a deep impression on their kind” (125).<sup>26</sup> Another writer characterizes Goethe’s *Faust* in much the same terms: “The sublime and great religious ideas

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<sup>25</sup> In 1881 William Barry makes an argument along the same lines against George Eliot’s merits as a novelist, asserting that her melancholy ultimately makes the “unbelief” that underlies her religion of humanity unattractive (“The Religion of George Eliot” 439).

<sup>26</sup> Rather conveniently, Earle claims that the great pre-Christian poets ought to number among Christians: “True, Homer, the Greek dramatists, Pindar, and Virgil were not so, but they had instincts identical with those of Christians. They had a reverence for the unseen world and divine authority. They never dreamed of atheism, agnosticism, positivism, materialism, or rationalism” (125). In another 1882 article, Earle provides a list of the Catholic authors who have, he feels, influenced English literary history and whose merits have been neglected by the Protestant mainstream (“English Men of Letters”). He includes Newman among these, but the inclusion must be qualified by its context, as he also claims Wordsworth and Byron for the Catholic cause, arguing that their poetry helped counter Protestant prejudice against Catholicism (41, 42-3).

embodied in the “Faust” are borrowed from the Catholic religion, whilst its shortcomings show the ceaseless weariness of a genius who willfully betrayed the faith in our Lord, and sank to the level of a pagan” (Rev. of *Goethe* 229). Tennyson is susceptible to the same fault: a reviewer of the “Idylls of the King” finds that it pales in comparison to the medieval (i.e. Catholic) *Morte D’Arthur*: “Comparing the ‘Idylls of the King’ with it we are sometimes reminded of those Catholic books of devotion ‘adapted’ for members of the Church of England: all that savours too much of Catholicity is left out. . . . It is to be regretted; for, from a mere dramatic point of view, much that he rejected is finer than anything he took” (Stone 259-60).

The various attitudes toward fiction, poetry, and literary artists voiced in the pages of the *Dublin Review*, above all the general consensus that works of the imagination need to be grounded in an authentic and orthodox theology in order to be “safe” for devout Catholics, form a backdrop to the drama that took place at the end of the century, the controversy over Catholic Modernism. While this controversy was not directly concerned with imaginative literature, it nevertheless affected every aspect of Catholic intellectual life in the first decade of the twentieth century. Many scholars have described various aspects of this crisis, and it exceeds the scope of the present study to attempt to articulate it in full. Any study of the complex issues involved in the Modernist crisis should begin with William J. Schoenl’s valuable work, *The Intellectual Crisis in English Catholicism: Liberal Catholics, Modernists, and the Vatican in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries*. Schoenl chronicles the events that led to a division among English Catholics into what amounted to five separate groups—not quite parties, as they were neither organized nor internally united, yet groups

recognizable to those living at the time and not merely perceptible through the eyes of the historian—consisting of radical liberals (Modernists), liberals, moderates, moderate conservatives, and radical conservatives (neo-ultramontanes).<sup>27</sup> These arose gradually and became distinct from one another at moments of crisis over time, and it was the cumulative impact of these moments on their participants which created the atmosphere of suspicion and paranoia surrounding the publication of *Pascendi dominici gregis* in 1907.

Among the many questions debated between Catholic Modernists and conservatives, the two most relevant to the present study center on the question of authority and that of fact. In the face of the challenges which historical and scientific research posed to traditional doctrines of the faith, both the ecclesiastical hierarchy and the intellectuals and researchers “found it more difficult to distinguish between intellectual suppression and legitimate demands for obedience” (Schoenl 3). Official actions at the time of the First Vatican Council by and large resulted in the intellectual submission and then relative silence of the group of intellectuals who had come to be known as “liberal Catholics” (Schoenl 18). However, the 1890’s saw a reemergence of the central problem of liberal Catholicism, the reconciliation of the Church and the modern world, among a new and more radical generation. The intervening years witnessed a dramatic increase in the specialization and professionalization of scholarly research that was to have a profound impact on the Modernist crisis.

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<sup>27</sup> The term “neo-ultramontane” is more accurate than the commonly used “ultramontane” to refer to the Catholic right wing of the 1860’s and later. Schoenl clarifies the difference: “The earlier ultramontanes had looked to the papacy to support the Church against the new secular state that had arisen out of the French Revolution. The neo-ultramontanes believed, in addition, that authority within the Roman Church should be fully centralized in the hands of the papacy” (5, n. 4).

As “knowledge was becoming more specialized,” Schoenl points out, “. . . [t]he non-professional found it more difficult to compete with, or even to keep informed of, the results of professional scholarship” (19).<sup>28</sup> Partly because of the increased specialization in research, the generation of the 1890’s was, in England, almost entirely comprised of members of the laity (Schoenl 24).<sup>29</sup>

Thus, the resurfacing of the conflict over liberalism coincided with the appearance of a new class of believer within the body of the Catholic faithful. In the past the Church had divided between the clergy, entrusted with the *Magisterium*, or teaching authority of the Church, and the laity; now, trained professionals began to assume a degree of authority that reflected their specialized knowledge, while ecclesiastical authorities still expected these intellectuals to submit to their authority of office, derived from the Sacrament of Holy Orders and from the Apostolic Succession, as readily and fully as any other member of the laity.<sup>30</sup> In his article “Liberalism and Intransigence,” Wilfrid Ward reflects on the new specialist class:

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<sup>28</sup> Schoenl clarifies another difference between the liberal Catholics of the 1860’s and the Modernists of the 1890’s: “The English liberal (Roman) Catholics of the mid-nineteenth century had not felt their own position threatened by the rising Biblical criticism but welcomed it as an effective point of argument against Protestantism. In their view it helped to show that Scripture was not the ultimate norm of faith, a claim Protestants had made for the Bible” (33). These liberal Catholics were less interested than the Modernists in challenging ecclesiastical authority within the Catholic Church; they were primarily interested in meeting the challenges posed by the advance of science and historical criticism from without.

<sup>29</sup> Exceptions include George Tyrrell, a Jesuit priest, and Francis Aidan Gasquet, who was eventually made a Cardinal. Even including these two, Schoenl notes that “[n]one was directly involved in ecclesiastical administration in the 1890’s, but they thought they had an intellectual role to fulfill within the Church” (24).

<sup>30</sup> It was to this emerging rivalry between intellectual and ecclesiastical authority that Wilfrid Ward directed most of his attention during the 1890’s. “Unlike Hügel,” Schoenl comments, “he was only indirectly interested in the scholarly problems of scientific specialists” (29).

In an age which is pre-eminently one of transition—when new lights on matters scientific, historical, critical; new points of view and new overmastering impulses on matters social, political, philosophical are making their appearance year by year, it is only those few who have made these subjects specially their own, and who, at the same time, have the interests of the Church at heart, who can be, in the nature of the case, equal to the situation. They alone have the perceptions and knowledge needed to see how Catholic thought can deal with and assimilate what is sound or true, can effectively resist what is dangerous. They are the natural eyes of those in power, in matters where only specialists have the training and knowledge to see accurately. And when the ruling power is really alive to the situation, its first wish is to find such assistants. (962)<sup>31</sup>

Here Ward presents an ideal of cooperation and mutual assistance between scholars and clergy that seems to have been almost entirely unrealized during the Modernist controversy.

Wilfrid Ward exemplifies the moderate position; on both sides the extremes were less temperate in their language and less optimistic in their understanding of the relationship between Catholic intellectuals and the Church hierarchy. Robert Dell, one of the English Modernists, reacted indignantly to another's excommunication in 1900 by discrediting the intellectual credentials of the ecclesiastical authorities: "Catholic theologians and philosophers are out of touch with modern thought; it is not merely that they adhere to philosophical ideas which have long been abandoned by thinking men, they speak a language that is unintelligible to the modern mind" (674). The argument for the rights and authority of a professional scholarly class was also tied to the rising influence of

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<sup>31</sup> To Wilfrid Ward, such a relationship between intellectuals and clergy is part of the Church's tradition; he names Origen, St. Augustine, and St. Thomas Aquinas as examples of "men of insight," the "very pivots on which intellectual progress within the Church has turned," while meanwhile authority, "the guardian of tradition, fulfilled its work in the Providential scheme, overlooking the process, checking startling innovation, taking care that wisdom should not be obscured by new light" ("Liberalism and Intransigence" 962). Josephine Ward quotes this passage as a reflection of the spirit of the age (*Last Lectures* xxiv).

democracy. Many Modernists accepted a form of immanentism, the idea that God was the divine presence in all human beings. George Tyrrell argued in *Through Scylla and Charybdis: Or the Old Theology and the New* (1907) that “the source of authority was from God immanent in the community. Thus, authority remained directly from God but it was also inherent in and inalienable from the community itself. All authority was from the Heavenly in man. . . . In any case, democracy had come to stay, and the generations of the near future would accept no other conception of authority” (Schoenl 179).<sup>32</sup> In proposing that the clergy acknowledge the authority of a trained professional class of theologians or the democratic authority of the immanent divine presence in all, the Modernists directly challenged the traditional structure that placed all teaching authority in the hands of the pope and bishops and was transmitted sacramentally by the laying on of hands in Holy Orders.

Many associated Newman with ideas that resemble these Modernist arguments, and his advocacy for an educated class among the laity had gotten him into trouble with the Catholic conservatives and ecclesiastical authorities of his own time. The hierarchy showed little sympathy for Newman’s liberal arts plan for the Irish university even in the 1850’s, and in 1859 he resigned as editor of the *Rambler* after the furor that arose over his article “On Consulting the

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<sup>32</sup> Wilfrid Ward describes his own attitude toward the connection between the growing intellectual class and the rising influence of democracy, which shows the clear influence of Newman’s essay “On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine”:

In [Thomas] More’s time a learned work was written in Latin. Thus the utmost freedom of expression among experts did not unsettle the mob. Now all classes, ‘master and man, tinkers and tillers, colliers and cobblers’ read what is published in the magazines; and not even the experts would read a Latin pamphlet. To educate the democracy (therefore) and give them concurrently some responsibility, some voice and influence in the conduct of affairs (though it be indirect and unofficial) is a practical necessity both in State and in Church. (“Liberalism and Intransigence” 966)

Faithful in Matters of Doctrine.” The conflicts between Newman and the Church authorities in these cases have been well documented (see, for example, Ward 1.355-89; Barr). Outside the Catholic Church, Newman’s name was becoming associated with the rise of a specially trained class of the cultural elite. David De Laura has shown that Walter Pater’s interpretation of Newman (heavily influenced by that of Matthew Arnold) ascribes disproportionately great importance to the sermon “Many Called, Few Chosen” which the still Anglican Newman delivered in 1837 (De Laura, “Pater and Newman” 41; *PS* 1110-1119). Arnold appropriates Newman’s commentary on the biblical text and applies it to human knowledge and culture in general, citing Newman as an authority in arguing for the existence of a cultural elite whose superior capacity for knowledge and truth set them above “the many” (“Pater and Newman” 41). Pater, meanwhile, turns the division between the few and the many into an argument for the existence of “a special class of aesthetically susceptible souls” (44).<sup>33</sup> In both cases, the idea of a small group of gifted cultural leaders responsible for bringing heaven to the populace at large may be traced to Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s idea of the “clerisy” described in his essay *On the Constitution of Church and State* (1829) (42-4). Coleridge argues emphatically that the “clerisy” may not be equated with the clergy of any church, but is instead comprised of learned people who may sometimes, accidentally, also be members of the clergy

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<sup>33</sup> De Laura names “Aucassin and Nicolette” (1873) and *Greek Studies* as examples of Pater’s theory “that certain refined religious experiences are the highest states of aesthetic consciousness, open only to certain elite souls.” Throughout the 1860’s and 1870’s, Pater’s writings contain “frequent iteration of the Calvinistically tinged doctrine of the few and the many, in characteristically ‘aesthetic’ contexts (“Pater and Newman” 44).

(55).<sup>34</sup> The Coleridgean clerisy is an early articulation of the type of intellectual class for which the Catholic Modernists advocated during the 1890's.

Meanwhile, a number of the liberal and Modernist Catholics also showed interest in literary pursuits, which would have further associated the literary world with everyone the conservative neo-ultramontanes meant to oppose. The combative Richard Simpson, Lord Acton's advisor during the controversy over *The Rambler*, was also a Shakespeare scholar (Schoenl 18). William Barry, the liberal Catholic (though not a Modernist) who praised Newman's art in his 1904 biography, wrote articles on literature for the *Dublin Review* as well as a number of novels. His fiction combines the influences of Newman, who was "the chief influence on the formation of Barry's prose, which has a singular grace, liveliness, and lucidity," with that of George Eliot, "whom he compared favorably with the 'immoral' French novelists of his time like George Sand, Flaubert, and Zola, though unlike some of their English critics he paid them the compliment of reading them" (Gilley, "Barry, William Francis").<sup>35</sup> William L. Sullivan, an American Modernist who eventually left the Paulist order and the Roman Catholic Church to become a Unitarian minister, also wrote fiction and poetry (Ratté 260, 263, 279).<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> For an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Coleridge's idea of the clerisy and its influence on his readers, especially Mark Pattison, F. D. Maurice, and the Cambridge Apostles, see Prickett, "Coleridge and the Idea of the Clerisy."

<sup>35</sup> Barry's fictional works include *The New Antigone: a Romance* (1887), *The Place of Dreams: Four Stories* (1893), *The Two Standards* (1898), *Arden Massiter* (1900), *The Wizard's Knot* (1901), and *The Dayspring* (1903) (Gilley, "Barry, William Francis").

<sup>36</sup> Sullivan's notebooks contain copied poems of Browning, Byron, and Wordsworth, and his notes from the late 1890's include the following wistful passage: "How little of *life or heart, of warm-bloodedness* in our classrooms! We refute Arius and Sabellius and construct syllogisms . . . and how many have ever felt their eyes wet because a Wordsworth, an Emerson, a Burke, a deQuincey found not the Church. These men are laying bare bleeding hearts" (qtd. in Ratté 279).

A frank acknowledgement of these connections, broad though they may be, between Newman and Coleridge, Pater, and Arnold—all of them literary artists as well as leading thinkers of their time—would have undermined the conservatives’ determined attempts to claim Newman as a straightforwardly orthodox Catholic in 1912. Arnold and Pater, especially, had too much in common with the Catholic Modernists to allow their names to be associated with Newman’s in the minds of Catholics of Ward’s generation. *Marius the Epicurean* (1885), Pater’s most sustained engagement with Newman, is especially concerned with Newman’s fiction and contains several explicit or implicit references to both of Newman’s novels (De Laura, “Pater and Newman” 45).<sup>37</sup> Like *Callista*, the novel is set in the early days of Christianity, traces a similarly “subtle exploration of the stages of conversion,” includes a plague that sparks violence against Christians, and ends in a martyrdom. Both *Callista* and *Marius the Epicurean* use an ancient setting to comment on contemporary Victorian religious debates (Coates 184; De Laura, “Pater and Newman” 45-6). Moreover, as De Laura has pointed out, there are several similarities between Pater’s hero, Marius, and the protagonist of *Loss and Gain*, Charles Reding, as well as four occurrences of the phrase “loss and gain” in Pater’s novel (45-46). Like *Loss and Gain*, *Marius* describes its hero’s weighing of many religious possibilities in a “dialectical and autobiographical marking out of philosophical and religious avenues open to an aesthetic youth” (46). Finally, “the central argument of

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His novel *The Priest: A Tale of Modernism in New England* was published in 1911; for an analysis of the novel, see Ratté 297-316.

<sup>37</sup> Just prior to writing *Marius*, Pater began an unfinished article on “The Writings of Cardinal Newman” that focused on the *Grammar of Assent* (Coates 181-2).

Marius's 'conversion' is taken almost bodily from the *Grammar of Assent* (1870) and other religious writings of Newman" (47; see also Coates 181). At the same time, as John Coates argues, "Pater's approach to religion [in *Marius the Epicurean*] is one made upon his own terms"—in particular, Marius's old Roman religion and its rituals are depicted as "predominantly the product of a nostalgic literary imagination" which has "not survived in unbroken psychological connection with the remote past" but has instead "been revitalized as a focus for the imagination and spiritual needs of Marius"—one thinks of Arnold's poetic speaker in the "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse" (183-4). Marius's religion lacks dogmatic content; he is first "impelled by a love of his home, his family and their traditions" which leads to a "moral development" (Coates 185, 187.) Pater also departs from Newman in his insistence on "the spiritual value of aesthetic experience" in its connection with conscience (Coates 191, 202-3). Thus, while making reference to both of Newman's novels, Pater presents his own novel of conversion to an aestheticized religion based on private experience—something very different from the final religious convictions of either Charles Reding or Callista. A portrait of Newman that emphasized his literary artistry as both poet and novelist might have invited this unwelcome comparison.

It would also have served as another reminder that Newman did not begin life as a Catholic but came to the Church only in middle age, after having served as a central figure in a university-centered Anglican religious movement—one which had no qualms about uniting poetry and theology in service to a religious renewal. Poetry played an important role in the Oxford Movement, from Keble's enormously popular *The Christian Year* (1827) to the *Lyra Apostolica* (1833), the work of Newman, Froude, Keble, Williams, and others.

Non-Catholics like Arnold and Pater felt little discomfort in pointing out the artistic aspects of Newman's work. R. H. Hutton, whose praise for Newman's poetry and novels was discussed in the previous chapter, was neither Catholic nor Anglican but began as a Unitarian and, heavily influenced by Newman and F. D. Maurice (whose theological essays, incidentally, were placed on the Catholic Index), eventually converted to faith in the Trinity but never to Catholicism (Gilley, "Newman, Hutton and Unitarianism" 116-136). William Barry, equally open about Newman's role as artist, was numbered among the liberal Catholics (Schoenl 65). Most telling, perhaps, is the issue of the *Dublin Review* containing "In Memoriam Literature" upon Newman's death. This issue contains a number of articles, reflections, and reminiscences by Catholics who mention none of Newman's works of imaginative literature except for "Lead, Kindly Light." Finally, in Henry Hayman's article "Cardinal Newman: Our Loss, and Now Our Gain: a Tribute from the Standpoint of an Anglican," one finds references to his novels and "The Dream of Gerontius" (comparing the latter's themes to those of Dante and Milton), quotations applied to him from Shakespeare, Wordsworth, and Byron, affiliations noted between his style and that of Charles Lamb, Thackeray, and Swift, and praise for his "fine interplay of aesthetic qualities" and the "sweet and pure and lofty" notes of "his lyre" (Hayman 426-7, 431, 434-6). Thus, in counting Newman among the leaders of "culture" in Arnold's sense, the secular humanist, Unitarian, liberal Catholic, and Anglican writers rushed in where the conservative Catholic feared to tread.

For both Arnold and Pater, Newman was not only an advocate for a class of the cultural elite but was an exemplary member of it. Both emphasize his masterful prose style as his special qualification. "In seeking to define," De

Laura writes, “. . . the qualities of mind which he grouped under the labels of ‘criticism’ and ‘culture,’ Arnold repeatedly associated those qualities with Oxford and, above all, with the person and writings of Newman,” while on the other hand “Pater, in his attempt to trace out the lineaments of a highly refined aesthetic awareness, especially in the ‘eighties and ‘nineties, found Newman and Newman’s example an equally essential point of departure” (“Pater and Newman” 39). In Pater’s essay on Coleridge, De Laura notes the recurrence of Arnoldian syntax in his comments on Newman: “*Culture, genius, charm, delicacy*: the words, and the ideas, are Arnold’s; and both men associate them centrally with Newman” (39, emphasis original).

Indeed, a product of the Oxford of the 1820’s and 1830’s, Newman came from a very different background than that of the either side who engaged so heatedly in the Modernist controversy. The later generations on both sides were steeped in scholasticism and in the rising influence of science and specialization in education (see pp. 79-80 herein). Meanwhile, the educational background of the Oxford Movement converts, their basic assumptions, and their mode of discourse was so different from that of their new fellow communicants that, alongside the surprised delight felt among Catholics, a certain feeling of what might be called resentment arose in some quarters.<sup>38</sup> Father Ignatius Ryder’s comment about some Catholics’ reactions to Newman offers a helpful illustration of the problem: “[Newman] was a formidable engine of war on their side, but

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<sup>38</sup> This was partly due to the long history of legal suppression of Catholicism in England, which had contributed to a strict isolation of Catholics from English culture at large. Schoenl writes, “The old English Catholics and the new converts often continued to feel toward each other the same antagonism that had long existed between ‘Papists’ and Englishmen in general” (10). For a description of this aspect of the conflict between Newman and neo-ultramontanes, see Turner 43-6.

they were distinctly aware that they did not thoroughly understand the machinery, and so they came to think, some of them, that it might perhaps one day go off of itself or in the wrong direction" (Ward, *Life of Cardinal Newman* 1:18). During much of this period Thomism dominated theology as it was taught and practiced in Rome. Newman clashed with the "schoolmen" in Rome; his teachers "were very slow to comprehend his drift, and ready to find fault with him. For it often happened that he did not reason along the lines with which they were familiar" (1:17).<sup>39</sup> To some, Cardinal Manning among them, Newman's literary style went hand in hand with his liberal tendencies. On Feb. 25, 1866, Manning wrote to his friend Monsignor Talbot, who served in Rome as chamberlain to Pope Pius IX:

I see much danger of an English Catholicism, of which Newman is the highest type. It is the old Anglican, patristic, literary, Oxford tone transplanted into the Church. It takes the line of deprecating exaggerations, foreign devotions, Ultramontanism, anti-national sympathies. In one word, it is worldly Catholicism, and it will have the worldly on its side, and will deceive many. (qtd. in Schoenl 6)

The "literary, Oxford tone" of which Manning complains was part of a tradition of discourse and ideas that links Newman with Coleridge, Arnold, Pater, and other important literary figures in Victorian England, some of whom were pioneers in the very directions in which the Modernists later tended and for which they were eventually condemned. In particular, Coulson notes that when

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<sup>39</sup> Ryder further explains, "His distinctions in argument . . . instead of being clean cut and mutually exclusive, are for the most part based upon the predominance of this or that element, because the treatment aims at dealing with the living subject without reducing it to a *caput mortuum* of abstraction.' This is, of course, the antithesis to the logical distinctions of the schoolmen" (Ward 1:18). In particular, Prickett notes the difficulty many "Catholic critics, as distinct from Anglican converts," found in initially understanding Newman's argument in the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, the Roman neo-scholastics finding it "almost unintelligible" because its method different so dramatically from their habitual mode of practicing theology (*Romanticism and Religion* 156).

Newman explores the important role of the imagination in religion he is “obliged to modify or abandon the precise vocabulary of philosophical usage for that of literary criticism” (*Religion and Imagination* 52).

In response to the Modernist’s arguments in favor of the authority of the professional scholarly class, the conservative Catholic hierarchy affirmed the traditional relationship between the clergy and laity and left little room for intellectual authority. In 1900 the English bishops issued a joint pastoral letter that condemned several Modernist ideas and anticipated some of the condemnations of *Pascendi*. The bishops describe what they consider to be the proper relationship between the *Ecclesia docens* (“teaching Church”), comprised of “the pope and the bishops, the successors of Peter and the Apostles,” and the *Ecclesia discens* (“taught Church”), including “the laity, ecclesiastics, and bishops as private individuals” (Schoenl 110). Schoenl summarizes their position: “No matter how learned, members of the *Ecclesia discens* had no right to teach in the Church, although even the laity might be encouraged to write or lecture on matters concerning religion—but only in strict subordination to the Church’s authority” (110-11). The bishops argue that the Modernists desire “that the distinction between Shepherd and Sheep should be blended by entitling the more learned among the laity to the rank no longer as disciples, but as teachers and masters in Israel; that the growth of popular interest in ecclesiastical affairs and the spread of education render it right and expedient to appeal from ecclesiastical authority to public opinion” (qtd. in Schoenl 111).

In 1907, the Holy Roman and Universal Inquisition under Pope Pius X issued *Lamentabili Sane Exitu*, officially condemning the Modernist position that “[i]n defining truths the *Ecclesia discens* (Church learning) and the *Ecclesia docens*

(Church teaching) collaborated in such a way that it only remained 'for the Church *docens* to sanction the opinions of the Church *discens*'" (Sabatier 219). Reinforcing the argument and the language of the English bishops' joint pastoral letter, the pope took a firm stance against the idea that professional intellectuals have any authority to correct or authorize the teachings of the *Magesterium*. The perceived "rebellion" of the *Ecclesia discens* was not merely an intellectual difference of opinion. Ultimately, as shall be seen, it merited excommunication for many: it was declared sinful. To these church officials, the Modernists' uprising against authority corresponded to and manifested a state of disorder within their individual souls. They made their own intellects the measure of the authenticity of divine revelation and the authority of the divinely-established Church, and out of this disorder they created a novel theology that marked a radical departure from orthodox Catholicism. In *Pascendi*, Pope Pius X accuses them of "the employment of a thousand noxious arts" in order to "double the parts of rationalist and Catholic" (3); "under the sway of a blind and unchecked passion for novelty," they act on revelation like painters and artificers (11, 13, 43). To the pope, their imaginative approach to theology had broken free from salutary ecclesiastical control to run wild, and their errors rapidly descended into heresy.

This debate over competing authorities arose as a result of the major clash between the Church hierarchy and the Modernists over questions of science and of historical criticism of the Bible (Schoenl 23). In this context, the arguments between liberals and conservatives centered on questions of facts, as both sides argued from their separately recognized authorities to claim they had objective

reality on their side.<sup>40</sup> For this reason, as both Baron von Hügel and George Tyrrell were quick to point out, the tone and method of the arguments put forward by both liberals and conservatives were similarly “rationalistic” and reflected the neo-scholastic training shared by all (Ward, Maisie, *The Wilfrid Wards* 323-4; Schoenl 91-2). The liberals and Modernists trusted the “facts” as presented by scientific and historical research; where they believed doctrines contradicted these facts, they proposed that the Church either change or abandon its doctrines or reformulate its whole understanding of dogma to account for the scientific explanation.<sup>41</sup> The conservatives and neo-ultramontanes argued that doctrinal formulae were the real “facts”—permanently valid in their particular linguistic form and not merely the garments in which some essential truth was dressed at a given time and place. Both sides were anxious to claim that reality was in their camp. Therefore, neither side had much use for fiction. Fiction was the pejorative term with which each labeled the conclusions of the other. The conservatives were outraged that the Modernists might consider the virginity of

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<sup>40</sup> Indeed, in England the Modernist controversy was primarily a debate over authorities rather than over the details of historical research. The English Modernists were somewhat set apart from the continental Modernists in that “there were no Roman Catholic Biblical scholars of major importance in England in 1890” (Schoenl 46; see also 126). Baron von Hügel helped disseminate the conclusions of continental scholars among English Catholics, but their primary focus was on the conflict between church authorities and lay scholars (46). This may have led English Modernist intellectuals to exaggerate the authority and reliability of “scientific” historical conclusions arrived at by others.

<sup>41</sup> In his study of three principal figures among the Modernists, John Ratté makes the significant observation:

What distinguished [the Modernists] from both their predecessors and their successors was their scientism . . . . In this, and more particularly in their enthusiasm for what they considered scientific history, and what we would perhaps call historicism, they were paradoxically behind the times: at the moment when they saw salvation in science, the drift of Western intellectuals was away from positivism toward the poetry of hypothesis, *als obs*, and ‘ideal types.’ They mistook the bare beginnings of the scientific study of the bible for a mature and infallible discipline. (342)

His use of the term “infallible” highlights the extent to which the Modernists treated science as a rival to ecclesiastical authority.

Mary a mere “myth”; the Modernists were anxious that the Church keep up with the times so as not to become mere “poetry.” Meanwhile, the conservatives feared that, if Modernist subjectivism and the symbolic understanding of doctrine were embraced, the Church itself would serve no more than a “poetic” function. The observation of an anonymous contributor to the *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science, and Art* is worth noting: commenting on a Modernist-conservative debate between St. George Mivart and James Fitzjames Stephen, the writer remarks that Mivart’s appeal to science and reason as ultimate authorities would end with the Catholic Church “reduced to a kind of glorified Positivism, supplying the poetical and romantic element which Comte’s system clumsily attempts but entirely fails to provide” (qtd. in Schoenl 45). In this climate, imaginative literature had little currency with either side.

On the liberal side, professional scholars became convinced and persuaded others that scientific and historical research had conclusively demonstrated that certain tenets of traditional faith could no longer be held to be literally true. This trend extended far outside the Catholic pale, advanced by the influential work of the former seminarian Ernest Renan (whose work in biblical criticism led to his abandonment of the Christian faith) (Schoenl 14-15, 38).<sup>42</sup> For the Modernists, miraculous events such as the perpetual virginity of Mary, the Incarnation, and the Resurrection were included among the events which science was believed to have disproved—at least in the literal sense. They would have to

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<sup>42</sup> Renan’s *Vie de Jésus* (1863) “assumed that the supernatural could be admitted in no part of human history” and interpreted the life of Jesus accordingly as that of a morally exemplary human being (38). David Friedrich Strauss’s *Leben Lesu* (1835-6), translated into English by George Eliot in 1846, was similar in tendency though less influential than Renan’s work (Schoenl 38).

be believed in another sense, and here the Modernists made use of the term “symbolic” to describe a way in which something could be true in essence though not in fact. This mode of being true was connected—for some, not all of the Modernists—with a subjectivist approach to religion that emphasized the religious experience of the individual believer as being the only authentic revelation.<sup>43</sup> To Laberthonnière, for example, one could discover “true symbols” in certain doctrines “only if taken in a subjectivist or immanentist sense” rather than by insisting on their being “representative of objective realities” (Schoenl 142).<sup>44</sup> George Tyrrell criticizes the scholastic alternative in his article “Semper Eadem,” one of the works that drew ecclesiastical censure. He argues that “[t]he ‘constant,’ the *semper idem* of liberal theology . . . is the reality dealt with, and not any doctrine, or representation of that reality.”<sup>45</sup> This liberal theology, Tyrrell explains, is “the old ‘Natural Theology’ enriched and improved by an application of the inductive historical and experimental method to the religions of mankind”; it is therefore concerned with evidence of God drawn from nature and from human religious experience (114). In *Lex Credendi* (1906), Tyrrell advocates a

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<sup>43</sup> Baron Frederick von Hügel is an important representative of the Modernists who did not adopt a completely subjectivist approach to religion (Schoenl 249). In *Essays and Addresses on the Philosophy of Religion* (1921), he expresses his long-held conviction that “an abiding nucleus of factual happenings is essential to Catholicism, as Christian, as incarnational” (Hügel 240). Like Wilfrid Ward, Hügel occupied a moderate position between liberals and conservatives, and though he often sympathized more closely with the Modernists than did Ward, he nevertheless played an important role in the Modernist crisis in attempting to keep dialogue open and prevent more extreme thinkers like Tyrrell and Loisy from offending ecclesiastical authorities rashly.

<sup>44</sup> Schoenl argues that this specific aspect of Laberthonnière’s thought resulted in his works being placed on the Index (142).

<sup>45</sup> Tyrrell later notes in *Lex Credendi* (1906) that liberal theology raises the question, “in what sense was Christian dogma true if some dogmas were not historically true?” (qtd. in Schoenl 161). Schoenl summarizes his answer: “he made a sharp distinction between the Christian revelation of the inspired Apostolic era and the theology that sought to explain it. He argued that revelation was prophetic in form and involved an idealized reading of history. No one could presently tell which elements of revelation were historic fact and of literal value and which were idealization and only of symbolic value” (161).

religion based on a balance of “elements of feeling, or sentiment, and moral conduct” with mysticism (Schoenl 158). His and others’ tendency toward subjectivism was explicitly condemned in *Pascendi*.

The Modernists’ use of symbolism shares a basic assumption with the popular philosophic movement of pragmatism, which maintained that “conceptions of things bear *no* likeness to things-in-themselves [and] that truth need not imply the conformity of conceptions to objective reality” (Schoenl 144).<sup>46</sup> Thus to George Tyrrell, “the truth of the Church’s creed was now to be tested by its practical value in promoting spiritual life and growth; dogmas might or might not correspond to objective realities or facts” (149). To the neo-scholastics, preservation of the faith meant preservation of the form in which it was received as well. Part of the debate arises from an ambiguity in the word “symbol” itself. For centuries it had been used to signify a “formal or authoritative statement or summary of the religious belief of the Christian church,” in particular the Apostle’s Creed; the earliest occurrence of this usage in English is 1450 (“Symbol” Def. 1.a).<sup>47</sup> Its wider and more literary definition of “[s]omething that stands for, represents, or denotes something else” first appeared over a century later (“Symbol” Def. 2.a).<sup>48</sup> In adopting this term to describe their own approach

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<sup>46</sup> George Tyrrell and Edouard LeRoy were both influenced by philosophic pragmatism (Schoenl 145). Moreover, as Schoenl maintains, “[m]ore important than any specific intellectual influences on the thought of the leading modernists was the general pervasiveness of immanentism and subjectivism in the intellectual atmosphere at the turn of the century” (145).

<sup>47</sup> It is this first definition that Johann Adam Möhler draws on in his 1832 comparison of Protestant and Catholic doctrines, *Symbolik* (Reardon 143-5).

<sup>48</sup> According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the first use of this second definition appears in Spenser’s *Fairie Queene* (“Symbol” 2.a).

to doctrinal formulae, the Catholic Modernists construct a meaning that combines the two standard definitions.

It may occur to the reader at this point that the perceived conflict between the Modernist idea of symbolism and the Catholic hierarchy's insistence on the trans-historical reality of Church doctrines and formulae obscures a third possibility, an understanding of symbolism that ignores neither its inseparable relation to particular, historically-conditioned expressions nor its orientation toward something universal. In this context, Coleridge's distinction between symbol and allegory in, for example, *The Statesman's Manual* allows for an understanding of religious symbolism in which the time-bound symbol participates in what it signifies, pointing to something beyond itself. Writing of biblical symbols, he argues that "a Symbol . . . is characterized by a translucence of the Especial in the Individual or of the General in the Especial or of the Universal in the General. Above all by the translucence of the Eternal through and in the Temporal. It always partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part of that Unity, of which it is the representative." Coleridge laments the predominance of literal readings of Scripture on the one hand and allegorical on the other, the second being the "counterfeit product of a mechanical understanding" consisting of "empty echoes which the fancy arbitrarily associates with apparitions of matter" (30). Writing in 1816, he seems to anticipate the false dichotomy into which the Catholic debate will descend nearly a century later. As will become

clear in the next chapter, his description of the symbol also bears striking resemblance to Newman's mature articulation of poetic experience.<sup>49</sup>

Advocates of a subjectivist approach to religion found food for thought in Newman's preoccupation with the personal aspect of knowledge and the imagination's role in religion from the *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*. Here again, Walter Pater's engagement with Newman offers an example. Even as Pater holds up Newman as an exemplary prose artist in the essay "On Style," he takes a highly critical approach toward the religious content of the works he praises. Writes De Laura:

The 'great structure' of life, a vision of which Pater caught in Newman's Oxford humanism, was not disassembled, reduced, and reconstructed according to new blueprints, as in Huxley. Instead, we have a tastefully simplified renovation of the old edifice, its emotional and imaginative façade and super-structure still intact, although the metaphysical substructure had in fact been systematically if unobtrusively removed. For Pater's delicately framed 'temperament' was able to take into its architectural pattern large amounts of what was central in Newman, sometimes almost verbatim, and systematically change its import, its focus, its spiritual exigency. ("Pater and Newman" 66-7)

Convinced that "post-Kantian religion was to be incapable of receiving a coherent *intellectual* formulation," Pater's interpretation and use of Newman's ideas as well as his focus on Newman's role as a literary artist would have been a

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<sup>49</sup> Newman's engagement with Coleridge betrays at times an anxiety, especially during his Anglican years when, as shall be seen in the following chapter, he was far less likely to follow Coleridge in the exploration of similarity or identity between religion and the poetic. In an 1835 letter, for example, he wrestles with Coleridge's good influence over the "young Cambridge men" despite his "doctrinal defects" and concludes that he will "prepare them (please God) for something higher" (*LD* 5:27). In 1836, he criticizes Coleridge for "looking at the Church, sacraments, doctrines, &c. rather as symbols of a philosophy than as truths—as the mere accidental type of principles" (*LD* 5:225). His critique in the second example resembles the late nineteenth-century conservative Catholic criticism of the Modernists for their own idea of symbolism.

source of anxiety to any member of the Catholic hierarchy paying attention (De Laura, "Pater and Newman" 56, emphasis original).

One such was William Barry, who directly addresses the problematic position of a Catholic reader of modern literature the 1885 article, "Catholics and Modern Literature." He begins by describing the modern literary "school" for whom, following Goethe, "it is the province of literature to interpret, and partly to create, sentiment." Among those for whom religion is sentiment, "it follows that literature will have religion in its keeping" (45). Barry predicts that many who find themselves unable to accept supernatural religion will turn with Matthew Arnold to embrace or create a literary "substitute." What is Arnoldian "culture," he asks, but "an attempt to introduce fresh gods, a novel worship, a morality, and I might even add in spite of disclaimers from many sides, a metaphysics that shall take the place of Christian systems? And thus has arisen a "Church of Literature" of which the apostle is Matthew Arnold" (46). At the same time, Barry recognizes that he is in a distinct minority among his Catholic contemporaries for apprehending the seriousness with which theologians ought to approach the works of Victorian literature. "[T]he notion that literature has a bearing on religion, or should be studied in that light," he remarks,

is so strange at first sight, so remote from the thoughts in which dogmatic Christians, and especially theologians, are brought up, as, I dare say, to seem in the eyes of both clergy and laity, far-fetched, if not grotesque and false. . . . When I tell [theologians] that Wordsworth, Shelley, Browning, Tennyson, or again Victor Hugo, Balzac, George Sand, Emile Zola, or, to speak of German writers, Heine, Goethe, and Schiller, must be seriously studied as exponents of various new creeds and systems of religion, I shall doubtless seem to be uttering a paradox, and to mean something else by religion than our scholastics mean. (46)

Once again, then, it is clear that the focus of the Church—both its hierarchy and its intellectuals—was turned elsewhere than on poetry and fiction. As much as many of Barry’s literary “theologians” might have given them cause for alarm, they were preoccupied with internal disagreement about the Church’s proper attitude toward science and the facts of history.

Another potential source of suspicion against imaginative literature comes from the method of biblical historical criticism. The early pioneers of the Higher Criticism “utilized the tools developed by scholars of other ancient literatures to ascertain the circumstances of the documents’ origins and to determine their meaning within the context of the historical situation of the author or compiler” (Schoenl 36). For some scholars, this method blurred the distinction between the Bible and other instances of early literature. In an article on the development of doctrine and the inspiration of Scripture in the *Nineteenth Century*, St. George Mivart queries (in Arnoldian language):

Who indeed that recognises the immanence and universality of the Divine Activity can fail to regard That as the real Author of all that is best and noblest in the thoughts, deeds, and words—spoken or written—of mankind? Can we venture to deny that Homer and Plato, Aeschylus and Aristotle, Virgil and Tacitus, Dante and Shakespeare, were in various degrees inspired? (60)

Thus some biblical narratives acquire the status of a myth. “No man of education,” writes Mivart in the same article, “now regards the Biblical account of ‘the fall’ as more than ‘a myth intended to symbolize some moral lapse of the earliest races of mankind’” (64).

In exercising its authority to curtail the influence of the liberal Catholics and Modernists, the ecclesiastical hierarchy took strong action. In 1863, Pope Pius IX censured the ideas of Count Charles de Montalembert (1810-1870), a

French scholar who promoted “political liberalism and the separation of church and state” (Schoenl 4, 8). J. J. I. von Döllinger (1799-1890), a German priest and theologian who promoted historical biblical criticism and intellectual freedom, received his censure in the same year in the form of a published papal brief known as the “Munich brief” (4, 8).<sup>50</sup> The same brief led Lord Acton to discontinue publication of the British journal *The Home and Foreign Review*, which had attempted to promulgate Döllinger’s ideas in England (8). Among the Modernists of the 1890’s, French abbé Alfred Loisy (1857-1940), one of the foremost scholars working in historical biblical criticism of his time, eventually “put forward a completely symbolical and evolutionary interpretation of dogma” and was excommunicated in 1908, his works placed on the Index (Schoenl 46, 129-33, 210).<sup>51</sup> In England, St. George Mivart, who argued in favor of the integration of Darwinian biology into the Catholic understanding of history and entered theological controversy through an article on the fallacy of hell as a place of eternal suffering, found his works placed on the Index in 1892 and, refusing to submit an acceptable profession of faith, was excommunicated in 1900 (13, 55-6, 88-9). In 1906, French philosopher Père Lucien Laberthonnière’s works were placed in the Index. George Tyrrell, an Irish Jesuit, theologian, mystic, and student of historical biblical criticism, was dismissed from the Jesuit order in 1906. Finally, in November of 1907 Pope Pius X excommunicated “all who defended any of the doctrines or views condemned by *Lamentabili* or

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<sup>50</sup> Döllinger later refused to submit to the decrees of the First Vatican Council and was therefore excommunicated (Schoenl 18).

<sup>51</sup> Schoenl asserts that “[t]he publication of Loisy’s *L’Évangile et L’Église* may be regarded as marking the onset of the modernist crisis in the Roman Church” (140).

*Pascendi*” by the *motu proprio Praeestantia* (208). In February of 1908, the Archbishop of Paris even went so far as to threaten anyone who read Alfred Loisy’s most recent publications with excommunication (210). After the publication of *Pascendi*, liberals and Modernists alike were justified in exercising extreme caution in their public statements. In 1910, a *motu proprio* of Pius X’s required all members of the clergy to “take an anti-modernist oath that included submission to *Lamentabili* and *Pascendi*.” Then “[t]he suppression of modernism was accompanied by a virulent anti-modernist reaction which affected not only modernists but orthodox scholars and thinkers as well.” “In fact,” Schoenl records, “the number of titles added to the *Index* from 1907 to 1914 was twice the number from 1900 to 1907.” Denunciation of Modernists became so prevalent that a secret and unofficial European society, called the *Soladitium Pianum* in evidence of their loyalty to Pius X, organized for the purpose of hunting out and denouncing Modernist sympathizers (224-7).

Thus, at the time Wilfrid Ward was engaged in the struggle to write a publishable biography of Newman that would satisfy his theological censors and the anxious overseers at the Birmingham Oratory, the long tradition of the conservative *Dublin Review* and the immediate controversies over Modernist ideas both indicate that his relative silence about Newman’s fiction and poetry may have been a prudent choice. In some quarters, religious novels were suspect; realist novels were suspect; many of the best-known poets and authors of the Victorian age were condemned as pagan, blasphemous, rebellious, ignorant, or bigoted; novel-reading was a frivolous activity, permissible only as a temporary escape from more serious concerns or as a way of sweetening pious lessons for the young; the unrestricted exercise of intellectual faculties, especially

the reason but also the imagination, was sinful; symbolism was a watchword; and too great an emphasis on personal religious experience, such as, perhaps, that of a protagonist in a narrative of conversion, meant religious subjectivism and heresy.

Much has changed since 1907. The twentieth century saw a flowering of Roman Catholic fiction in English: one thinks of Graham Greene, Evelyn Waugh, Walker Percy, and Flannery O'Connor, to name a few of the major examples. The writings of Swiss theologian and Cardinal Hans Urs von Balthasar's on theological aesthetics and dramatic theory have significantly advanced the study of the beautiful as a theological enterprise. The Index Librorum Prohibitorum was discontinued in 1966 (Halsall). The Church's relationship to the arts and the role of imagination in religion continue to be fruitful areas of study and debate, and Newman's contributions deserve careful consideration.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### The Imagination in Newman's Nonfiction Prose

As the previous chapter has made clear, those who were influential in determining how Newman's legacy would be received and interpreted in the generation after his death worked in an environment that emphasized control and submission to Catholic authority in order to protect what was perceived as a pure doctrinal heritage against both external and internal threats. Intellectual investigations were not to be pursued for their own sake but for the sake of the advancement of the Catholic religion, and any Catholic thinker intent on venturing beyond the Catholic pale ought to do so with fear and trembling lest he or she be led astray. Newman began with an attitude toward the imagination that seems at times very similar to the spirit motivating this cautious approach; however, the warnings against excesses and corruptions of the imagination found especially in his *Parochial and Plain Sermons* gradually gave way before a developing theory of the imagination that discerns the aesthetic and the religious imagination as separate manifestations of the same activity, that describes real religious experience in terms similar or identical to aesthetic experience, and that ultimately accords to the imagination a place of high dignity in the soul's journey toward a real encounter with the living God. Most importantly, Newman never loses his early appreciation of the dangerous potential of the imagination, even while he affirms its essential role in authentic religion, and he advocates not a stern ascetic control over this powerful faculty of the mind but rather a

sensitivity and reverence toward its ability to recognize and surrender to an encounter with a living idea.

Newman has left no comprehensive definition of the imagination as he employs the term. Writes John Coulson, “It is certainly not an appeal to a simple process of ‘imaging’” (*Religion and Imagination* 46). In fact, his philosophical notebooks leave a trail that might strike some readers, as Nicholas Lash has suggested, as expressing a “radical incoherence in Newman’s account of ‘imagination’” (though Lash’s interpretation seeks to counteract this impression) (*GA* 14-15).<sup>1</sup> In the mid-twentieth century, Merritt Lawlis attempted a description of Newman’s understanding of the imagination based mainly on two texts,<sup>2</sup> Newman’s 1829 essay “Poetry with Reference to Aristotle’s *Poetics*” and an

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<sup>1</sup> Lash quotes three entries from Newman’s philosophical notebooks, one from 1861 in which he writes, “We can imagine things which we cannot conceive. . . . In like manner we can believe what we can imagine, yet cannot conceive,” while “Two years later, he jotted on the opposite page: ‘Imagination is the habit or act of making mental *images*.’” Lash continues, “Later, he seems to have realized that this was not very helpful because, in 1868, he added: ‘I have not defined quite what imagination is. I began by saying ‘making images.’ And there he left it” (*GA* 14). So much for Newman’s philosophical notebooks. Lash resolves the problem of Newman’s definition—or various definitions—of the imagination by affirming John Coulson’s judgment (given in “Belief and Imagination”) that “‘to speak of an appeal to imagination as being one to a distinct mental faculty’ is ‘a trap to be avoided’”; “Newman’s distinction is . . . between two modes of rationality or, in his own words, between two ‘habits of mind’” (*GA* 15). This understanding of the imagination is affirmed in a late article Newman wrote in response to an essay by A. M. Fairbairn appearing in *The Contemporary Review* in 1885. In his reply, Newman argues that the imagination, like the reason, memory, and other faculties of mind, “is the exercise of a power of the mind itself, and that *pro re nata*; and, when the mind ceases to use it, we may almost say that it is nowhere. Of course, for convenience, we speak of the mind as possessing faculties instead of saying that it acts in a certain way and on a definite subject-matter; but we must not turn a figure of speech into a fact” (*TP* 155). However, Lash’s argument that Newman held a consistent view of the imagination applicable equally to the religious and to the literary imagination at work is based entirely on Newman’s *Grammar of Assent*, one of his last full-length works. While this is appropriate in the context of an introduction to the *Grammar* and as an acknowledgment of the point Newman’s mature thought eventually reached, it does not acknowledge the long growth of Newman’s thought on this subject.

<sup>2</sup> Lawlis makes use of passages from *The Idea of a University, An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent, The Arians of the Fourth Century* and a few early letters, but the bulk of his argument rests on the 1829 essay and 1856 letter.

1856 letter from Newman to Thomas Arnold.<sup>3</sup> From these, Lawlis concludes that, while when writing about poetry in particular Newman's rhetorical "flourishes" show the influence of the poetic theories of Coleridge and Shelley, when he turns to moral and religious questions he reverts to a Neo-Classical understanding of the imagination as "a passive faculty subordinate to reason" but dangerous in its potential ability to usurp the sovereignty of reason (73). This Neo-Classical view of the imagination, Lawlis argues, either derives from or harmonizes with Newman's reading of Addison and Johnson. While a number of flaws may be found in Lawlis's argument, the greatest is that it is simply too brief and superficial to account for Newman's developing understanding of the imagination across his long career. Nevertheless, Lawlis's analysis is important for two reasons: first, because, he recognizes affinities between the poetic theory articulated in the early essay on Aristotle and those of Newman's Romantic contemporaries; and second, because he opens the question of whether Newman found their Romanticism to be theologically problematic, a finding which would lead him to employ a different definition of the imagination when writing of poetry and literature than when writing of morality and religion.

To the second question G. B. Tennyson has answered firmly in the negative. Arguing unequivocally that Newman's literary artistry can in fact

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Arnold was preparing to assume the post of professor of English Literature at the Dublin Catholic university then in genesis. Invited to the position by Newman, he communicated his ideas for the English curriculum in a previous letter and receives Newman's suggestions in this reply, dated 24 December, 1856. Lawlis is not the first to place heavy importance on Newman's proposals for what their undergraduates ought to read of English literature; in 1933 J. Connop Thirlwall published the letter in full for the first time under the somewhat misleading title, "Cardinal Newman's Literary Preferences." Thirlwall includes a brief caveat at the end of his article pointing out that Newman was in fact detailing a curriculum, not describing his own favorite works of English literature, but Lawlis seems to overlook this cautionary note in his reading of the letter.

never be separated from his heartfelt engagement with Christianity, Tennyson finds that Newman's art throughout his career follows Tractarian aesthetic practices and theory ("Removing the Veil" 209).<sup>4</sup> Tennyson's thorough studies of Tractarian aesthetics lead him to conclude that they are based on two principles which are at once theological and aesthetic: the "Doctrine of Analogy," which recognizes a symbolic relationship between the visible and the spiritual worlds, and the "Doctrine of Reserve," which recommends reticence in speaking or writing of religious matters out of reverence for their sacred character (209-10).<sup>5</sup> Such reserve, Tennyson argues, prevents "an overwhelmingly religious impulse

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<sup>4</sup> For Tennyson's work on Tractarian aesthetics, see also *Victorian Devotional Poetry: The Tractarian Mode*, "The Sacramental Imagination," and "Tractarian Aesthetics."

<sup>5</sup> The most widely-circulated explication of the doctrine of reserve was written by Isaac Williams. During the Tractarian Movement's ascendancy at Oxford, he composed two of the *Tracts for the Times* on the subject, numbers 80 and 87, both of which were entitled "On Reserve in Communicating Religious Knowledge" (the second was a clarification and expansion of the first, offering additional evidence in support of its thesis). As Williams originally defined the term, "reserve" refers to the fact that, in every form of revelation of and communication of religious truths, revelation is accompanied by a deliberate concealment. Reserve is exercised by God and by humanity, each employing it in similar ways but in order to serve very different purposes. Although Williams sees God's exercise of reserve as a manifestation of charity toward humankind, he nonetheless believes humankind's need for this practice to be evidence of moral fault (Tract 80 3, 8).

Between the two tracts on the subject, the reader comes to understand that God exercises reserve in three specific areas: in his self-revelation to the Jews and then to the Christians, which has been recorded in the Scriptures; in his self-revelation in nature, and in his moral governance of human history, including Williams's own day. Later in the same tract, Williams exhorts his readers to exercise reserve in speaking of religious subjects in recognition of their sacred character (79-81). In this context, Williams and his fellow Tractarians pay particular heed to the biblical injunction not to cast pearls before swine (Mat. 7.6). A human being's exercise of reserve in speaking of the mysteries of the Christian faith is, for Williams and for the other Tractarians, a laudable form of *imitatio Dei* (Johnson, Margaret 33). In Tract 87 Williams reiterates the idea that reserve in divine revelation is "not confined to God's Word" but appears in nature and in the sacraments—the life of the Church (27). In Tract 89, John Keble extends the discussion of nature and history as, not merely revelations of God, but also revelations of God that employ a similar typological mechanism to that of the Scriptures and can be probed using the same *Disciplina Arcana* which the Church Fathers used to interpret Scripture (170-1). The tract includes an extended discussion of the typological significance of several elements of nature.

Both Williams and Keble, moreover, characterize reserve as something particularly appropriate to Christian poetry. In Tract 80, among the many types of mysteries concealed in the world by the operation of reserve, Williams includes "all strong and deep feeling, so much so that indications of it have been considered the characteristic of genuine poetry, as distinguishing it from that which is only fictitious of poetic feeling. It is the very protection of all sacred and virtuous principle, and which, like the bloom which indicates life and freshness, when once lost cannot be restored" (53).

. . . from becoming vulgar and profane and merely emotional. One might say that Reserve was the means of insuring that what would come forth from the artist would be Tractarian, i.e. Catholic, rather than simply Romantic, or worse, Evangelical" (211). In other words, Tennyson implies that the Tractarians employed reserve as a literary technique to ensure that their writings remained doctrinally sound. The Tractarian influence on Newman's literary style consists, for Tennyson, in his exercise of relentless control over his own deep religious feeling; the Tractarian view of aesthetics "represents," he writes, "the ultimate subordination of art to theology" (209).<sup>6</sup> As Emma Mason writes, building on Tennyson's articulation of Tractarian poetics, "catholic Anglicans sought to propose and enact their belief in the manner they knew would have the greatest impact: by writing poetry" ("Tractarian Poetry" 1). Tennyson refers to these principles as "the central Tractarian (and hence Newman's) aesthetic positions" (210); however, he concentrates almost entirely on Newman's Anglican period (214). While the Tractarian doctrines Tennyson describes so well and the aesthetic theory arising therefrom undoubtedly had a formative influence on Newman's early understanding of the literary imagination, the evidence presented hereafter suggests that his own aesthetic theories and practice continued to develop after his separation from the Tractarian Movement and in ways not consistent with the special emphasis on control which Tennyson's analysis describes.

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<sup>6</sup> In his detailed study of Keble's and Newman's poetry and poetics, Robert Edgecombe affirms Tennyson's judgment of the relative importance in which Tractarians held theology and art. "Newman's literary criticism," he writes, "reveals a disappointing indifference to formal issues," while "[f]or Newman, as for many who follow him, poetry must function first and foremost as a theological platform; any formal or structural or textural felicities remain tangential" (18-9). However, as Edgecombe's work is focused exclusively on Newman's contributions to the *Lyra Apostolica* collection, this assessment of Newman's view of poetry must be taken to apply only to the early period of his work.

T. R. Wright has suggested another possible account of Newman's approach to literature that acknowledges a turmoil brewing beneath his "cloistral silver-veined prose," as Joyce has called it (203). This sense of anxiety, Wright claims, stems from Newman's ambivalence toward the ability of literature, even of language itself, to be controlled:

[I]t seems to me that there is more tension within Newman's attitude towards literature than he admits. Deconstructive critics argue that there will always be a tendency for the suppressed half of these binary oppositions to rise up in rebellion and subvert the conventional hierarchy. This is particularly true of the Romantic, literary, subjective half of Newman, which continually resisted the pressure (mainly from within) towards objectivity. Like Keble, Newman liked to think that literature could be made 'safe', that language could be regulated and controlled, kept within acceptable limits. But his practice, I want to suggest, subverts his theory. His suspicion of literature, most evident in his discussion of the subject in *The Idea of a University*, makes him insist on its rigorous control. But the more he insists, the more his writing undoes him with a range of metaphors, similes and other rhetorical figures which elude such discipline. ("Newman on Literature" 182)

Wright finds that Newman denies to literature any important role in the Church at all, going even beyond Keble's insistence that art subserve religion to claim that "literature is altogether unnecessary," while meanwhile his own writing "threatens at times to subvert his theological project, which is to bring his imagination under control" (183, 184, see also 188-9, 191). If this were Newman's theological project, and if it could be shown that it remained so throughout his career, then Wright's analysis would be persuasive.<sup>7</sup> However, I suggest that this presents too rigid, too ascetic, even too autocratic a view of the author of *Loss and Gain*, *Callista*, and "The Dream of Gerontius." Newman did not uphold self-

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<sup>7</sup> Wright does acknowledge that he has presented a simplified account of Newman's view of literature which was in fact more complicated ("Newman on Literature" 192-3). However, the complications do not lead him to qualify his larger thesis or to describe any kind of chronological unfolding of Newman's understanding of the literary imagination.

control as the ultimate goal of his theological project, though he often treats of it as an important step along the way. But his project was something else, and though it exceeds the scope of the present study and the theological acumen of its author to describe the nature of that project in full, the imagination came to play not a subversive but an openly-acknowledged and legitimate part.

Newman's first approach to a definition of the work of the imagination appears in one of his few works of literary criticism. As Lawlis rightly observes, Newman's 1829 essay "Poetry, with Reference to Aristotle's *Poetics*" deals with poetry and its relationship to the imagination in a way fundamentally different from Newman's treatments of the imagination in a moral and religious context from around the same time. He makes use of two distinct but not contradictory definitions of poetry in the course of the essay. First, celebrating the works of the Greek dramatic imagination, he gives special preference to works that seem most "natural," "unaffected," and "spontaneous." Criticizing Aristotle's criteria for dramatic excellence as being accidental rather than essential to the true spirit of poetry, Newman writes that Aristotle's rules "require a fable not merely natural and unaffected, as a vehicle of more poetical matter, but one laboured and complicated, as the sole legitimate channel of tragic effect; and thus tend to withdraw the mind of the poet from the spontaneous exhibition of pathos or imagination to a minute diligence in the formation of a plot" (*Ess.* 1:4-5).

Newman's elevation of the "natural and unaffected" over the "laboured and complicated" as well as his implication that the poet's mind ought to be engaged in the "spontaneous exhibition of pathos or imagination" suggests that Newman

had been reading Wordsworth and Coleridge's "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*."<sup>8</sup> Moreover, this essay appears in the year after R. Hurrell Froude brought him to a relationship of mutual understanding and esteem with Froude's teacher, John Keble (*Apo.* 145-50). Keble, whose poetics (especially as articulated in his 1832-41 Oxford *Lectures on Poetry*) and poetry collection *The Christian Year* (1827) had a profound influence on the Tractarians and with whom Newman would collaborate on the *Lyra Apostolica* collection a few years later, was in many ways a Wordsworthian poet and literary theorist; Wright characterizes his theory as "a domesticated, tame version of Wordsworth's" ("Newman on Literature" 183). Newman will later characterize Keble's theory of poetry in terms similar to those he uses in the Aristotle essay, writing that for Keble poetry is "a method of relieving the overburdened mind" through the "safe, regulated expression" of powerful emotion (*Ess.* 2:442).<sup>9</sup>

When a few pages later Newman faults Aristotle for treating "dramatic composition more as an exhibition of ingenious workmanship, than as a free and unfettered effusion of genius," he allies himself with a larger vein of poetic theory already sixty years old (*Ess.* 1:7). Mina Gorji describes a "shift in literary

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<sup>8</sup> See Coulson, "How Much of Coleridge Had Newman Read?" (*Newman and the Common Tradition*).

<sup>9</sup> For discussions of Keble's relationship to Wordsworth, see the first chapter of Tennyson's *Victorian Devotional Poetry*, as well as Elizabeth Jay's "Charlotte Mary Yonge and Tractarian Aesthetics." Kirstie Blair examines Keble's poetic project as a quest to soothe the reader into acceptance of the religious principles in his poems, a motive Emma Mason applies to as well to the other Tractarians who followed Keble's model, including contributors to the *Lyra Apostolica* (Blair, "John Keble and the Rhythm of Faith" 129-30; Mason, "Tractarian Poetics" 2, 3). Blair notes that the stricter control Keble habitually exercises over meter when compared with his Romantic contemporaries, a control also exemplified in Newman's *Lyra Apostolica* poems, acts as a model for the disciplined and appropriately regulated expression of religious feeling (131-2, see also 135). Treating Newman's contributions to the *Lyra Apostolica* as embodiments of this poetic theory, Roger Sharrock finds that they suffer in poetic effect because of Newman's "tendency to view poetry as a form of relief for overcharged feelings, a palliative for violent emotions anesthetizing in its function" (46).

taste and sensibility” whose origins she finds in the mid-eighteenth century essays of Edward Young and Tobias Smollett. Their preference for “originality” and “organic growth” over “mere learning and mechanical reproduction” inspired a passion among literary audiences for poetry untainted by technical education, literary allusion, or imitation (16).<sup>10</sup> Gorji notes that such poems were often referred to as “effusions.”<sup>11</sup> Wordsworth and Coleridge were heirs to this literary model,<sup>12</sup> adding to it a philosophical grounding and depth, and Wright also notes similarities between Newman’s language here and that of Shelley (“Newman on Literature” 184).<sup>13</sup> Unlike the peasant poets, Newman never maintains that a poetic genius needs to be unschooled in order to be “free and unfettered,” but he does insist that great poetry is not and cannot be deliberately constructed according to Aristotle’s “scientific,” “cold and formal” rubric (4, 9). Thus, in this early essay Newman expresses an understanding of the nature and

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Burns, Thomas Gray, and John Clare all participated in the tradition of the “peasant poets,” and their popularity testifies to the widespread influence of this literary taste (Gorji 16).

<sup>11</sup> “In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries,” Gorji writes, the word ‘effusion’ was often used to signal sincere, passionate verse, a heartfelt, natural, artless outpouring that was uncrafted and spontaneous. . . . By the early nineteenth century, ‘effusion’ was used as a term to describe an artless, natural style of expression that was recognized as a distinct poetic mode, one in which wildness, irregularity and warmth were called on as signs of genuine feeling, imaginative transport and poetic genius. . . . According to this literary model, inspiration and passion were privileged over polish and art and ‘genuine’, ‘unreflective’ effusions of the heart were signs of genius, of true poetry and inner feeling” (25-6).

Interest in the “peasant poets” was still high at the time of Newman’s writing the essay on poetry; two years after its publication Southey, whom Newman considered a poet of a high order, wrote a study of *The Lives of Uneducated Poets* (1831) (20; *Ess.* 1:16, 22)

<sup>12</sup> For example, Coleridge published thirty-six “Effusions” in his early collection, *Poems on Various Subjects* (1796), while his reflections on the difference between organic and mechanical form testify to his engagement with this literary tradition (*Coleridge’s Poetry and Prose* 3).

<sup>13</sup> For a line-by-line comparison of similar passages in Shelley’s “A Defense of Poetry” and Newman’s “Poetry with Reference to Aristotle’s *Poetics*,” see Ryan 173.

purpose of poetry that is firmly within the tradition of the “Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*,” preferring the free and spontaneous to the ornamented and affected and revealing a conviction that, while a critic may describe poetry, he or she ought not attempt to circumscribe it (26).

At the same time, however, Newman betrays a certain uneasiness about the degree of freedom he is granting to the poet. Later in the same essay, he adopts a second definition of poetry that apparently solves the difficulty by insisting that only the right kind of person will write true poetry at all. It is with regard to this second definition that one sees the justice of Blanco White’s criticism of the essay as “Platonic,” a remark that a more mature Newman later endorses by quoting it both in his *Apologia* and in republished versions of the essay (*Apo.* 141).<sup>14</sup> Newman defines poetry as “a representation of the ideal,” asserting that “the poetic mind is one full of the eternal forms of beauty and perfection” (*Ess.* 1:10).<sup>15</sup> “It is called imaginative or creative,” he further argues, “from the originality and independence of its modes of thinking, compared with the commonplace and matter-of-fact conceptions of ordinary minds, which are fettered down to the particular and individual” (10). Abstraction is the poet’s activity: not abstraction from the real to the notional (these terms from the *Grammar of Assent* do not really apply to Newman’s argument here, though already in his *Oxford University Sermons* the basic premises of the later work were beginning to take shape), but abstraction from the particular, the “mass of

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<sup>14</sup> White was editor of the *London Review* when the essay first appeared in that magazine.

<sup>15</sup> As Wright has pointed out, there are also suggestions of Coleridge’s influence throughout this discussion (“Newman on Literature” 184-5).

common phenomena," to the ideal (10).<sup>16</sup> And it is the genius whose effusions can participate in this ideal world of eternal forms. The word "genius," so important to Newman's Romantic contemporaries, means for him a person whose natural talent places him or her above and outside of the normal rules. A genius for Newman belongs to a special class; his or her poetry is born of native talent and separate from the limited versification of the common masses.

Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" memorably describes the fear and awe with which the ordinary reader approaches one who has communed with the sources of poetic beauty:

And all should cry, Beware! Beware!  
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!  
Weave a circle round him thrice,  
And close your eyes with holy dread:  
For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drank the milk of Paradise. (49-54)

The lines, indeed the whole poem, are fraught with mystery: they are part, the reader is told, of a "fragment" of a "vision" of a half-remembered dream from a drug-induced slumber—the details throw the reader into uncertainty and forbid any kind of stable interpretation (*Coleridge's Poetry and Prose* 180-1). Coleridge's poetic genius in this poem is dangerous. Newman's genius in his essay is one whose capacity for abstraction from the common to the ideal is based in moral virtue; this genius is apparently safe. Newman maintains that "poetry is ultimately founded on correct moral perception" and that "a right moral state of the heart is the formal and scientific condition of a poetical mind" (*Ess.* 1:20-1); in

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<sup>16</sup> This second definition is also what suggested to both Lawlis and Wright that Newman was influenced by Shelley poetic theory (Lawlis 73; Wright 184-5).

other words, one's capacity for realization of the "eternal forms of beauty and perfection" corresponds to one's correct moral state.<sup>17</sup>

Actual poetic compositions vary widely in their realization of this high poetic model, even as actual poets vary in their possession of poetic genius. Newman judges that Pope expresses a poetic spirit at times, Virgil and Milton consistently, Moore rarely, and Byron hardly at all (*Ess.* 1:17-18, 26). Newman's principle admits of degrees in "poetic-ness" based on degrees in moral virtue: "[a]s motives short of the purest lead to actions intrinsically good, so frames of mind short of virtuous will produce a partial and limited poetry. But even where this is instanced, the poetry of a vicious mind will be inconsistent and debased; that is, so far only poetry as the traces and shadows of holy truth still remain upon it" (21-2). Though he does not say so directly, his implication is that poetry—in the sense of written composition—is as much the *imago Dei* as the poet is, and that while this image can be "debased," as long as any vestige of true poetry—in the sense of a representation of the ideal and eternal forms of beauty and perfection—remains, the image cannot be entirely effaced. Poetry "delineates that perfection which the imagination suggests, and to which as a limit the present system of Divine Providence actually tends" (9). According to this theory, the realization of the ideal is the work of providence, the articulation of it the work of the poet.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, a free and spontaneous effusion of true

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<sup>17</sup> In arguing that a certain kind of person with the right moral disposition was required to engage in the activity of abstraction that would elevate the poet's mind from the common to the eternal forms, Newman here opens himself up to Walter Pater's interpretation of some of his works. As discussed in the previous chapter, Pater drew on Newman's authority in support of his own arguments for a special class of the cultural elite whose greater susceptibility to aesthetic impressions set them apart from the common majority (see 70-4 herein).

<sup>18</sup> This articulation, for Newman, always falls short of a full and perfect expression of that ideal which is the poet's special vision. It is important to note that Newman does not equate the

poetry may be celebrated without fear or moral scruples because, in order to be poetry at all, it must be the effusion of one whose heart is in the right moral state and reflects the image of God through his or her art.

Among the many ideas at work in this early essay, Newman will develop some and discard others in his later works. Most interestingly, it is the former definition—with a refinement in vocabulary and ideas that transforms a theory clearly influenced by his contemporaries to one very much his own—that becomes part of Newman’s mature understanding of the nature and value of aesthetic experience. The connection between poetry and the emotions suggested by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keble, and others becomes part of Newman’s understanding of the role of the imagination in both religious and aesthetic contexts.<sup>19</sup> Of the second definition of poetry, Newman will adapt and develop his claim that poetry requires and reflects a “right moral state of the heart,” while he will move away from the argument that poetry represents ideal and eternal forms abstracted from the commonplace and particular.

The pains Newman takes to guarantee that his poetic genius will be a moral genius as well reflect an uneasiness about the imagination characteristic of his early works. His lofty estimation of the poetic imagination represents a very

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term “poetry” with the works of particular poets. He remarks on this distinction himself: “There is an ambiguity in the word ‘poetry,’ which is taken to signify both the gift itself, and the written composition which is the result of it. Thus there is an apparent, but no real contradiction, in saying a poem may be but partially poetical” (*Ess.* 1:11). Of the gift of poetry itself, he writes, “Figure is its necessary medium of communication with man; for in the feebleness of ordinary words to express its ideas, and in the absence of the terms of abstract perfection, the adoption of metaphorical language is the only poor means allowed it for imparting to others its intense feelings” (10).

<sup>19</sup> In his *Apologia*, just after quoting White’s judgment that the essay was “Platonic,” Newman criticizes his own essay for omitting “one of the essential conditions of the idea of Poetry, its relation to the affections” (*Apo.* 141). He is clearly critiquing his second definition of poetry rather than the first, in which poetry’s relation to the affections is of central importance.

different view of the imagination than that which he presents in sermons and tracts from roughly the same period. When he discusses the imagination in a religious or moral context, it becomes for him a faculty particularly susceptible to error that, though not in itself or necessarily a source of sin, nevertheless serves as an instrument of temptation with a dangerous potential. In a number of places, he argues that the first of the Christian's three traditional enemies, "the world," appeals in a special way to the imagination. Its influence operates through the senses, especially the senses of sight and hearing. In his seventh Oxford University Sermon (delivered in 1832), "Contest Between Faith and Sight," Newman defines the world as "the visible course of things," not visible merely as a collection of phenomena, but "as some False Prophet, promising what it cannot fulfill, and gaining credit by its confident tone" (120).<sup>20</sup> The world thus personified becomes a speaking voice addressing "our senses and imagination" until "[i]t seems to us incredible that any thing that is said every where and always can be false" (122; 149).<sup>21</sup> According to an 1840 sermon, the

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<sup>20</sup> Though Newman speaks of "the world" in general rather than of literature or poetry in particular, still there is an underlying attack on public language throughout the sermon. Newman repeatedly uses two metaphors for the means by which the world imposes on the imagination: it uses both images and language, and these seem not only equally suited to the task but in some ways indistinguishable. As a false prophet, the world persuades by means of its "confident tone," implying verbal communication (*US* 120). Newman includes "its Babel of languages" in his catalogue of the persuasive images by which the world seduces the believer (132). In a wonderful mingling of the two metaphors, he writes that the world's message is that "the outward face of things speaks a different language from the word of God"—the face speaks within the imagination (122).

<sup>21</sup> Similarly in Tract 20 of the *Tracts for the Times*, published in 1833 as Newman's third letter on the topic of "The Visible Church," he describes the world before birth of Christ as using the visible to captivate the imagination: "The Jews excepted, men, who had portions of the Spirit of God, knew not their privilege. The whole force and current of the external world was against them, acting powerfully on their imagination, and tempting them to set sight against faith, to trust the many witnesses who prophesied falsehood (as if) in the name of the Lord, rather than the still small voice that spoke within them" (1).

goodness of the world's promises, such as "large estates, magnificent domains, houses like palaces," etc. "depends on the imagination" (*PS* 1122).<sup>22</sup>

As an enemy of the Christian, the world leads the imagination—and through it the whole person—into deceit and captivity; Newman variously speaks of the imagination under the world's influence as fascinated, enchanted, seduced, "brought into bondage," self-deceived, intoxicated by sin, and "deeply criminal, turning away, as they do, from the bread of heaven, to feed upon ashes, with a deceived and corrupted imagination" ("The Visible Church" 1; "Random Recollections of Exeter Hall" 191; *PS* 1238, 1327, 339; *US* 284; *PS* 1656).

Newman's notion of an imagination impressed by the world is a captive or captivated imagination, one subject to a kind of slavery and prevented from exercising its full and proper sovereignty. The metaphor of captivity for humanity's spiritual condition has, of course, Old Testament origins in the stories of Israel's captivity in Egypt and later in Babylon which reverberate in New Testament imagery and throughout later Christian tradition.<sup>23</sup> The captive imagination is not merely the passive state of one who has received the world's impression. Those subject to it "feel its fascination; they flock after it; with a strange fancy, they ape its gestures, and dote upon its mummeries" until, when they encounter Christian doctrines and images, "how utterly unreal do these appear, and the preachers of them, how irrational, how puerile!" The captive imagination views the Christian with "compassion" bordering on "contempt"

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<sup>22</sup> See also the sermon on the "Vanity of Human Glory" in which he argues that praise of a certain kind "is a mere imagination, which can give no solid or lasting pleasure" (*PS* 1655).

<sup>23</sup> To give a famous example, Newman's use of the term "captivate" here also evokes Donne's Sonnet 14.

(US 132-33). Thus Newman paints the captive imagination not as a thing imprisoned under protest or enslaved against its will but rather as a thing converted away from its intended course, willingly acceding in treason, assimilated into a way of life contrary to that for which it has been made.

In addition to the association of captivity and imagination with falsehood and false perception which Newman uses to such effect in these sermons, he elsewhere associates it with the difference between reality and unreality, which Ian Ker has called “a, or even *the*, distinguishing feature of Newman’s thought” (*The Achievement* 161). In the sermon “Forms of Private Prayer” (1834), Newman describes a form of religion that is unreal because it is located entirely in the imagination and emotions and practiced only in words. “Men may speak in a high imaginative way,” he writes,

of the ancient Saints and the Holy Apostolic Church, without making the fervour of refinement in their devotion bear upon their conduct. Many a man likes to be religious in graceful language; he loves religious tales and hymns, yet is never the better Christian for all this. . . . [H]e who does one deed of obedience for Christ’s sake, let him have no imagination and no fine feeling, is a better man” (*PS* 170-1).

Note that in this passage Newman’s example of one whose religion is unreal and sentimental loves “religious tales and hymns,” works of the religious imagination. Soon after he follows with another sermon on “The Religion of the Day” (1834) in which he associates a religion of propriety, which lacks any “intrinsic claim on our hearts,” with the “beauty and delicacy of thought” and distaste for vice found in books; against such a religion he warns his audience to “know the weight of your sins, and that not in mere imagination, but in practice” (*PS* 197, 204). In his eighth Oxford University Sermon (preached in 1832 just a few months after the “Contest Between Faith and Sight”) he points out that

“nothing is more easy to the imagination than duty in the abstract, that is, duty in name and not in reality” (US 141). Citing the 1831 sermon “The Danger of Accomplishments” and passages from Newman’s 1833 correspondence from Sicily, Wright points out that Newman was frequently outspokenly suspicious of “the tendency of poetry and literary composition ‘to make us trifling and unmanly’ by separating feeling from acting” and permitting an excessive indulgence of emotion that has no outcome in practice (185). In each of these examples a religion based in the imagination has an unreal quality because it does not translate into action. Newman contrasts that which exists only in language—“in name”—and in the imagination with that reality.

In the second volume of his *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, which were delivered in 1835, Newman begins to contrast an ideal held in the imagination with a real encounter with God. The church’s creeds, he argues, “speak of no ideal being, such as the imagination alone contemplates, but of the very Son of God, whose life is recorded in the Gospels” (324). Here, the ideal and the imagination are both on the side of the unreal as opposed to the personal encounter with God described in the Gospels and referred to in the creeds. When one recalls that he has defined poetry in his essay on Aristotle to be a “representation of the ideal,” one is tempted to conclude that Newman’s definition of poetry at this point in his life is of something fundamentally unreal. And indeed, in perhaps his most direct and severe condemnation of a certain expression of Romanticism, Newman describes those who seek religion in an experience of the beautiful as practitioners of an unreal, armchair kind of religion far removed from the religion of the Gospels:

Once more, there are others of a mystical turn of mind<sup>24</sup> with untutored imaginations and subtle intellects, who follow the theories of the old Gentile philosophy. These, too, are accustomed to make love the one principle of life and providence in heaven and earth, as if it were a pervading Spirit of the world, finding a sympathy in every heart, absorbing all things into itself, and kindling a rapturous enjoyment in all who contemplate it. They sit at home speculating, and separate moral perfection from action. These men either hold, or are in the way to hold, that the human soul is pure by nature; sin an external principle corrupting it; evil, destined to final annihilation; Truth attained by means of the imagination; conscience, a taste; holiness, a passive contemplation of God; and obedience, a mere pleasurable work. (*PS* 407)

These devotees of the “Spirit of the world” who believe it finds “a sympathy in every heart, absorbing all things into itself” define conscience as “a kind of passion for the beautiful and sublime” (408). Newman argues that such passive believers have no contact with the God of scripture and do not hear his voice speaking in the conscience. Their error in believing that “[T]ruth is attained by means of the imagination” prevents them from enjoying a personal encounter with God.

Elsewhere, Newman clarifies that the imagination can be deceived not only through receiving false impressions but also by acting outside its proper sphere.<sup>25</sup> It acts out of bounds when it “usurps the functions of reason,” as it does among followers of Hume who refuse to allow for the possibility of miracles because it would contradict the vivid impression made on their imaginations by “the uniformity of nature, which they witness hour by hour”

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<sup>24</sup> Newman has elsewhere defined the “Mystic” as one who bases his religion “on the imagination and affections, or what is commonly called the heart” (*Lectures On the Prophetic Office* 133).

<sup>25</sup> This is not the first instance in which Newman warns against a field or faculty trespassing on the territory of another; he does so also in his classic definition of liberalism appended to the *Apologia pro vita sua* and as in his warning against the omission of theology from university education in *The Idea of a University*.

(GA 80). So, too, does the imagination of the Prejudiced Man from the *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England* overtake and drown out his reason.<sup>26</sup> A reiterated opinion makes an impression on the imagination that in turn affects the reason: “Let a person be told ten times over than an opinion is true, the *fact* of its being said becomes an argument for the truth of it,” and in such a case “we have a *phantasia* of truth forced upon our minds, even against our will” (“The Visible Church” 2; *Ess.* 2:181).<sup>27</sup> As an Anglican, he criticizes the Roman Catholic claim to infallibility as just such a reiterated doctrine because it “appeals to their imagination, not to their intellect” and thereby frustrates any challenge based on rational argument (*Lectures on the Prophetical Office* 115-6, 118, 126). Even as in the case of liberalism the reason deceives when it applies its methods to questions outside its scope, so here the imagination deceives by acting as if it were reason.<sup>28</sup> And thus it becomes clear that the imagination captivates when it

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<sup>26</sup> Newman’s Prejudiced Man is possessed of a mythic idea of the Catholic Church as Anti-Christ in order to counter the vivid imaginative force of the actual Catholic Church: “Catholicism appeals to the imagination, as a great fact, wherever she comes; she strikes it; Protestants must find some idea equally vivid as the Church, something fascinating, something capable of possessing, engrossing, and overwhelming, if they are to battle with her hopefully” (*Pre. Pos.* 224). Arguments, evidences, and facts that seem to disprove this mythic idea fail because the Prejudiced Man is exercising not his reason but his imagination and his will to believe in its testimony.

<sup>27</sup> In the preface to the third edition of his *Lectures on the Prophetical Office of the Church*, Newman even admits to using this method in his own argument, in which he employs the “free use of hypothesis, as a substitute for direct evidence and hard reasoning” (xx). These hypotheses “appeal to the imagination more than to the reasoning faculty, and, while by their plausibility, ingenuity, or brilliancy, they may gain from the reader more sympathy than is strictly their due, they do not admit, and on that account cannot demand, a logical refutation” (xxi). Newman is not here confessing to any attempt to mislead or falsify by means of an influence on his readers’ imaginations, but he does acknowledge the use of a rhetorical device calculated to win for him “more sympathy than is strictly [his] due.”

<sup>28</sup> In his fourth Oxford University Sermon, “The Usurpations of Reason” (1831), Newman argues that those who know the least are most subject to the imagination, “which fills up for them at pleasure those departments of knowledge to which they are strangers.” Here, he calls such minds “self-confident” and therefore “petulant and presuming” (*US* 68-9). It is a sign of how far his attitude toward the imagination shifts in a few years that he later calls them “poetic” (*HS* 2:387).

is itself out of control, “unbridled,” as he describes the imagination of the young (PS 62).

So far, Newman’s cautionary attitude toward the dangerous potential of the imagination seems to be in harmony with that of the writers quoted in the previous chapter. At best, indulgence of the imagination distracts the mind from the reality and from the daily practice of Christian discipline;<sup>29</sup> at worst, it becomes the instrument by which “the world” seduces the Christian away from truth and into sin. However, the poetry of one with “the right moral state of the heart” can become a safe and pleasant expression of powerful emotion. Even so, it seems that at this point he would agree with the reviewer in the *Dublin Review* who would maintain half a century later that poetry “only goes a very short way in making a man pray continually, mortify his passions, submit to teaching, or humble his head to sacraments” (Rev. of *Essays* 453-4; see 62 herein).

In a number of these early works, Newman has reiterated that the visible church is the divinely appointed counter-influence on the imagination (see, for example, “The Visible Church” 1-2). The church, he argues, must combat the world by addressing those same faculties, sight and imagination, with its own rival message.<sup>30</sup> Where the world leads it captive, one expects him to argue that the church sets it free. However, from the late 1830s and early 1840s, he begins to

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<sup>29</sup> In an 1838 review of *Geraldine: A Tale of Conscience* in the *British Critic*, Newman compares the total suppression of the playful side of the intellect to “stopping a safety-valve,” behind which image may be discerned the poetic theory of Keble, in which poetry relieves the overburdened mind and therefore has a therapeutic effect (71).

<sup>30</sup> Newman writes that, with the advent of Christ, God “chose means which might act as a counter-influence on the imagination. The visible power of the world enthralled men to a lie; He set up a Visible Church, to witness the other way, to witness for Him, to be a matter of fact, as undeniable as the shining of the sun, that there *was* such a principle as conscience in the world, as faith, as fear of God; that there *were* men who considered themselves bound to live as His servants” (“The Visible Church” 1-2).

describe with increasing complexity the imagination when it has not been captivated by the world but instead when it acts in harmony with a devout and operative faith. The timing of this shift in itself is interesting, but what he has to say about the rightful purpose of the imagination is even more so. When Newman presents a view of the imagination operating in right relationship to the church, to reality, and to reason, his comments describe something very different from what one would expect to be the opposite of the “captive imagination.” Indeed, the idea of a “freed” or “liberated” imagination retains the dangerous associations he gives it in his *Parochial and Plain Sermons*.<sup>31</sup> Instead, what Newman describes as the preferred state is the imagination in an attitude of voluntary surrender in acknowledgement of something greater than itself. This state is the same whether the imagination is engaged in aesthetic or religious experience, and the state of surrender forms the basic link between these two kinds of experience in Newman’s thought. It is also fundamentally opposed to the attitudes of control and enforced authority adopted by Church officials during the Modernist controversy.

Already in “The Tamworth Reading Room” (1841), Newman makes a claim for the imagination which he will reiterate later in the *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (1870) and which undermines his earlier association of the imagination with inaction and the avoidance of duty. “The heart is commonly reached,” he writes, “not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by

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<sup>31</sup> As late as the *Grammar of Assent*, Newman still insists that “in religion the imagination and affections should always be under the control of reason. Theology may stand as a substantive science, though it be without the life of religion; but religion cannot maintain its ground at all without theology” (121).

description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion" (DA 293; see GA 89).<sup>32</sup> In this passage he affirms the power of a testimony that appeals to the imagination; he has previously done so in his sermon "The Contest Between Faith and Sight" and his tracts on "The Visible Church." Here, however, he also asserts the influence this appeal to the imagination has over a person's actions, which is something new; an impression on the imagination can become a matter of life or death.<sup>33</sup> This understanding of imagination as a motive for action underlies Newman's exhortation to his followers at the end of the *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England* (1851) to impress the imaginations of those around them with their personal,

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<sup>32</sup> Wright makes much of the passage following this, in which Newman warns against "a literary religion" because "its doctrines are opinions" and therefore unreal and inadequate to command full assent, citing the words as an example of Newman's "constantly repeat[ing] his commitment to religion over literature, life over art, reinforcing the acceptable, privileged half of these oppositions which his own publications threaten to subvert" (GA 89; Wright, "Newman on Literature" 186). However, the context is important: in "The Tamworth Reading Room," Newman is directly responding via a letter in the *Times* to Lord Brougham's and Sir Robert Peel's doctrine that the populace could be taught religious principles "by acquaintance with literature and physical science, and through the instrumentality of Mechanics' Institutes and Reading Rooms, to the serious disparagement, as it seemed to me, of direct Christian instruction" (GA 88). In other words, Newman is arguing that literature cannot teach Christianity in such a way that it will secure real devotion; he is not evaluating the legitimacy of literature as a pursuit in itself. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the passage Newman chooses to quote in the *Grammar of Assent*, though it contains the disparagement of "a literary religion," does not include the more severe assertions against poetry's inability to effect moral improvement that appeared in the third section of "The Tamworth Reading Room."

<sup>33</sup> Newman presents a similar argument for the power of personal influence in the 1832 Oxford sermon "Personal Influence, the Means of Propagating the Truth"; however, in this earlier sermon he does not specifically associate personal influence with the imagination as he does in "The Tamworth Reading Room." In "The Visible Church" (1833), the Church's influence on the imagination is as a witness to the truth and a counter-force against the false images spread by "the world"; in this tract, Newman does not describe this action on the imagination as a motivator for action or for commitment until death. Thus his description of the imagination in "The Tamworth Reading Room" may be seen as a development and extension of the arguments in the 1832 sermon and 1833 tract, whereas it is a real contradiction of his description of the imagination in some of the *Parochial and Plain Sermons*.

individual, and local examples of Catholics in action and thereby combat the prejudice associated with the abstraction “Catholicism” (372-3, 381).

In the Oxford sermon “Wisdom, as Contrasted with Faith and Bigotry” (1841), Newman first presents a vivid portrait of the reason and the imagination acting in harmony and engaged in a joint encounter with truth. This comes as part of his definition of philosophy as “Reason exercised upon Knowledge; or the Knowledge not merely of things in general, but of things in their relations to one another” (US 290-1). The philosophic view of knowledge as the system of relationships between parts of a whole takes place not only in the reason but also in the imagination: “It makes every thing lead to every thing else; it communicates the image of the whole body to every separate member, till the whole becomes in imagination like a spirit, every where pervading and penetrating its component parts, and giving them their one definite meaning” (291). Thus, for what appears to be the first time in his writings, the imagination joins the reason in apprehending “the elements of the physical and moral world . . . converging one and all to their true centre” (291). In Newman’s usage, the imagination is losing its connotation of unreality and becoming instead a critical term in describing a mode of apprehending truth.

Two years later, Newman was meditating on the relationship between fiction and truth in religious legend, and his meditations yield some very interesting comments that preface his “Legend of St. Gundleus” from *Lives of the English Saints* (1843-4). Here, Newman takes pains to argue that those who imagine the details of a life in the absence of historical evidence act in a way not only consistent with good artistic practice but also with good Christian practice. The painter “is obliged to imagine” historic details or else be forced to paint “an

abstraction or a nonentity"; the Christian, who "lives in the past and in the future, and in the unseen," has a duty "to create within him an image of what is absent" (6, 5). As the painter succeeds "well or ill according to his talents, his knowledge, his skill, his ethical peculiarities, his general cultivation of mind," so the Christian succeeds in meditation according to his or her capacity to recreate the image of the subject under meditation. "Holy men" have done so in the past "not wishing to intrude into things unknown, not thinking to deceive others into a belief of their own mental creations, but to impress upon themselves and upon their brethren, as by a seal or mark, the substantiveness and reality of what Scripture has adumbrated by one or two bold and severe lines" (7). Following their example, he proposes to use fiction and imagination to help impress upon his readers "the substantiveness and reality" of St. Gundleus's life. The legends of saints' lives blur the distinction—or bridge the gap—between literary fiction and an encounter with religious truth:

The multitude forms its view of the past, not from antiquities, not critically, not in the letter; but it develops its small portion of true knowledge into something which is like the very truth though it be not it, and which stands for the truth when it is but like it. Its evidence is a legend; its facts are a symbol; its history a representation; its drift is a moral. . . . Such are some of the small elements which, when more is not known faith is fain to receive, love dwells on, meditation unfolds, disposes, and forms; till by the sympathy of many minds, and the concert of many voices, and the lapse of many years, a certain whole figure is developed with words and actions, a history and a character,—which is indeed but the *portrait* of the original, yet is as much as a portrait, an imitation rather than a copy, a likeness on the whole, but in its particulars more or less the work of imagination. (7-9)

In this passage, Newman has moved away from using the term "imaginary" simply as an antonym for "true." There is a relationship between that which is a product of the imagination (in this case, the literary imagination) and that which

is historically true, and this relationship is grounded in the moral understanding of the author (in the case of a legend, a community over time). Thus we find again a trace of Newman's definition of poetry from the essay on Aristotle's *Poetics* as "ultimately founded on correct moral perception" (*Ess.* 1:20).

What he has left behind, however, is the idea that poetry as a "representation of the ideal" is removed from the "the commonplace and matter-of-fact conceptions of ordinary minds" ("Legend of St. Gundleus" 10). In fact, it is ordinary, albeit Christian, minds over time and in many places, the minds of "the multitude," who together construct a legend such as that of St. Gundleus. Bernadette Waterman Ward has argued that Newman's understanding of poetry and of poetic language, like his understanding of religion, is essentially communal. She writes:

We learn our language from the people who love us most, and with that personal contact comes the aspect of language which can only be learned through spoken words: the sounds and rhythms that support the meanings. The sound of a language, like the Apostolic succession, must be passed on by people speaking to other people. The mother tongue enables us to share a common world among generations. . . . There is the basis of faith; we need not master all intellectually, but we need to be in community. Poetry calls to us deeply from the most fundamental sources of that community. ("The Kindly Light" 92-1; see also Coulson, *Religion and Imagination* 72-5)

Waterman Ward's analysis, based on the *Grammar of Assent*, reflects Newman's fully-developed understanding of the imagination and of the relationship between aesthetic and religious experience. Far from being the special perception of a gifted elite, as Arnold or Pater would later misconstrue Newman to argue, the experience of poetry, like that of religion, connects the individual with a vast community (see 70-4 herein). Newman's discussion of language in *The Idea of a University* supports Waterman Ward's argument by acknowledging

that the growth of language is an organic and historic process, so that the language of each generation is an inheritance that exceeds both its understanding and its control (see, for example, *Idea* 233-4, 240-5).

This emphasis on the ability of literary—especially poetic—language to draw people into community is not a break from Newman’s Tractarian background but rather an extension of it. As Joshua King has demonstrated, one of the effects of Keble’s *The Christian Year* was “the coordination of private reading with communal worship,” a poetic means by which the collection’s enormous readership could join “a print-mediated, national religious community” (n.p.). In this sense, Keble attained the goal of the great authors Newman describes in *The Idea of a University* (see below). At the same time, however, the exercise of reserve characteristic of Tractarian poetry limits the audience that will be able to enter the community it creates; only those initiated into the religious doctrines the Tractarians meant to promote would properly understand the meaning behind the veil of symbol and metaphor (Mason, “Tractarian Poetics” 3). The ubiquitous popularity of *The Christian Year* in the nineteenth century testifies to the widespread cultural familiarity with the sacred subjects about which Tractarian poets exercised reserve; its declining popularity in the twentieth reflects, at least in part, the gradual disappearance of that culture. Newman’s Tractarian poetry is directed to this specialized audience and is largely dominated by the spirit of the sermon “Many Called, Few Chosen,” as analyses of specific poems in the following chapter will illustrate; part of the change in his understanding of the purpose of poetry and fiction involves an increasing emphasis on that which is shared among Christians and non-Christians, rich and poor, educated and uneducated. This prevents his later art

from drawing even Christian readers into the sense of serene security in faith which is the effect of Keble's poetry.

In acknowledging the communal nature of language and legend, Newman appears to have greatly relaxed his early concern to justify the correctness, the "right moral state of the heart," expressed in true poetry. Instead, he openly acknowledges that the encounter with truth facilitated by a legend such as the "Legend of St. Gundleus" is partial and "defective." He writes, "It is but collateral and parallel to the truth; it is the truth under assumed conditions; it brings out a true idea, yet by inaccurate or defective means of exhibition; it savours of the age, yet it is the offspring from what is spiritual and everlasting" (9). Fact and fiction cannot be distinguished from one another in such an account, and so, Newman writes, "[w]e can do nothing else but accept what has come down to us as symbolical of the unknown" ("Legend of St. Gundleus" 10). The very imperfection of the representation inspires in the reader an awareness of his or her limitations in understanding and knowledge.

And if a Christian legend can inspire such humility, how much more so does the "National Literature," about which Newman writes in *The Idea of a University* (1852) (now having had the experience of writing his first novel), "So tyrannous is the literature of a nation; it is too much for us. We cannot destroy or reverse it; we may confront and encounter it, but we cannot make it over again. It is a great work of man, when it is no work of God's" (234-5). Addressing an audience of concerned Catholic educators, Newman completely lays aside any claim of poetry or literature to be a "representation of the ideal and eternal forms of beauty and truth." He does not speak of ideal literature but of actual literature, the English literary heritage, predominantly Protestant but above all

rich and various and *unsafe*. It will not teach truth or virtue, he warns his audience, and especially it will not teach Catholic doctrine (230, 233-7). "It is the exponent, not of truth, but of nature," he insists, "which is true only in its elements" (232). And still, there is a tone of great admiration in the catalogue of words Newman uses to describe this "great work of man":

Man's work will savour of man; in his elements and powers excellent and admirable, but prone to disorder and excess, to error and to sin. Such too will be his literature; it will have the beauty and the fierceness, the sweetness and the rankness, of the natural man, and, with all its richness and greatness, will necessarily offend the senses of those who, in the Apostle's words, are really 'exercised to discern good and evil.' . . . National Literature is, in a parallel way, the untutored movements of the reason, imagination, passions, and affections of the natural man, the leapings and the friskings, the plungings and the snortings, the sportings and the buffoonings, the clumsy play and the aimless toil, of the noble, lawless savage of God's intellectual creation" (237).

The last phrase of this description quietly reminds Newman's audience that the "natural man" is nevertheless an *imago Dei* who deserves a basic reverence as such. And there is a joyful exuberance in these descriptions which, even while the thrust of his argument warns against looking to literature for an education in virtue, nevertheless enjoys not only the animal nature but also the vital energy of the "natural man."

With this natural man Newman strongly urges his audience to have a personal encounter through the study of literature and to permit their children to do likewise. He formulates an extraordinary justification for the value of literary studies based on the nature of literary language: literature is "the expression of thought in language," and great literature expresses the thought of one who "is master of the two-fold Logos, the thought and the word, distinct, but inseparable"; to encounter this person through language is to encounter "not one

who merely has a *copia verborum*, whether in prose or verse, and can, as it were, turn on at his will any number of splendid phrases and swelling sentences; but he is one who has something to say and knows how to say it.” And this one, though he or she has not necessarily “any great depth of thought, or breadth of view, or philosophy, or sagacity, or knowledge of human nature, or experience of human life,” still “[h]is page is the lucid mirror of his mind and life,” and therefore these writers “have a catholic and ecumenical character, that what they express is common to the whole race of man, and they alone are able to express it” (*Idea* 219-20). Newman has apparently dropped the criterion that the “poetical mind” needs to be “full of the eternal forms of beauty and perfection” (*Ess.* 1:10). In *The Idea of a University*, authors are great not because of their moral but because of their literary gifts, and yet from these literary gifts flows a moral, a spiritual, even a divine consequence: “by great authors the many are drawn up into a unity, national character is fixed, a people speaks, the past and the future, the East and the West are brought into communication with each other,” and “such men are, in a word, the spokesmen and prophets of the human family” (220-1).<sup>34</sup> Thus, Waterman Ward can conclude that “[i]n the final analysis, Newman, with his roots in Romanticism, sees imagination not as a thing to be repressed, but, despite all dangers, to be set free” (“Faith, Romance, and Imagination” 176). Through the literature of great writers, through the personal

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<sup>34</sup> Coulson notes a similarity between the parallel idea in the *Grammar of Assent* that religious belief founded in the imagination unites the separate human faculties and allows the “whole soul of man” to act as one with Coleridge’s idea of an “*adunating* power—that is, one able to bring together in a living unity elements which appear to be discordant or even contradictory of one another” (*Religion and Imagination* 52, see also 57-60). This power of the imagination to make the many one, I argue, extends beyond the individual to build community among people and between separate orders of creation; this is manifested in Newman’s literary works, especially in *Callista* and “The Dream of Gerontius” (see next chapter).

encounter facilitated by literary studies, each member is incorporated into the unity of the human race.<sup>35</sup>

Not long after his conversion, Newman makes the striking claim that “Poetry is the refuge of those who have not the Catholic Church to flee to and repose upon, for the Church herself is the most sacred and august of poets” (*Ess.* 2:442). This assertion appears in an 1846 review of Keble’s recently-published *Lyra Innocentum*. What Keble had to create from the vestiges of Catholicism still present in Anglicanism, Newman argues (and one suspects the fervor of a recent convert coloring his glowing words), the Catholic Church has possessed in full and gradually expanded on since its foundation. He returns to this theme in his essay on the “Mission of St. Benedict,” originally printed in *Atlantis* in Jan. 1858 and reprinted in the second volume of *Historical Sketches*. In this later essay, Newman offers his own definition of poetry rather than borrowing from Keble (protesting all the while that he does not intend to commit to a definition); he asserts that, whatever else it might be, poetry is “always the antagonist to science” (*HS* 2:386, emphasis original). Whereas science aims for a comprehensive grasp of the subject and works from an attitude of superiority,

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<sup>35</sup> To Bernard Beatty, this consciousness and indeed celebration of being part of a long and vital literary tradition is part of what makes Newman’s writings, like those of Pope and Byron, “authentic.” Thus for all three authenticity, in which the act of writing becomes a projection of the inner self, does not mean the exercise of strict control over the text and its implications but rather signals an engagement with a tradition that exceeds the author: “The writings of all three figures can be ‘the express act’ of their authors because of the largeness of what they allow to operate through them, which remains large because they fully acknowledge but never seek to master it” (77). This is a line of Newman’s thought taken up by T. S. Eliot in “Tradition and the Individual Talent.”

poetry allows itself to be grasped by its subject and proceeds from an attitude of inferiority or humility:<sup>36</sup>

[Poetry] demands, as its primary condition, that we should not put ourselves above the objects in which it resides, but at their feet; that we should feel them to be above and beyond us, that we should look up to them, and that, instead of fancying that we can comprehend them, we should take for granted that we are surrounded and comprehended by them ourselves. It implies that we understand them to be vast, immeasurable, impenetrable, inscrutable, mysterious; so that at best we are only forming conjectures about them, not conclusions, for the phenomena which they present admit of many explanations, and we cannot know the true one. Poetry does not address the reason, but the imagination and affections; it leads to admiration, enthusiasm, devotion, love. (387)<sup>37</sup>

As in the review of Keble's poems, Newman deliberately integrates aesthetic and religious experience by claiming that the monastic orders are supremely poetic

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<sup>36</sup> The same argument presented here, that while science strives to master its subject and poetry inspires devotion to it by admitting its inferiority to its subject, underlies a critique of the Roman Catholic Church Newman puts forward in *Lectures on the Prophetic Office* (1837). He criticizes Roman Catholic theology according to his conviction at the time that it "professes to be a complete theology" which "arranges, adjusts, explains, exhausts every part of the Divine Economy," all the while "rounding off its doctrines with a neatness and finish which are destructive of many of the most noble and most salutary exercises of mind in the individual Christian." He goes on to assert specifically that this approach vitiates the *poetry* of religion: "Criticism, we know, is commonly considered fatal to poetical fervour and imagination; and in like manner this technical religion destroys the delicacy and reverence of the Christian mind" (91). Clearly, his later review of Keble's poetry shows how far his opinion of Roman Catholic theology had travelled since he wrote these words.

<sup>37</sup> Newman gives several useful examples in distinguishing the scientific from the poetic: he argues that "nature is commonly more poetical than art, in spite of Lord Byron, because it is less comprehensible and less patient of definitions; history more poetical than philosophy; the savage than the citizen; the knight-errant than the brigadier-general; the winding bridle-path than the straight railroad; the sailing vessel than the steamer; the ruin than the spruce suburban box; the Turkish robe or Spanish doublet than the French dress coat" (*HS* 2:387-8). Clearly (at least in this context) poetry for Newman is not the same thing as words written or printed in verse; he does not use the term in reference to a literary artifact but in reference to a relationship between a source of images—nature or history or one of the particular images he catalogues—and the person in whom these images "commonly" inspire surrender and admiration. None of these images has a necessary or identical impact on any two people; a child's mind tends to be "full of poetry" and an old man's "devoid" of it (387). Yet some images tend to promote an attitude of surrender in the imaginations of those disposed to receive them properly, and when they do, these images become, for Newman, "Poetical" (388). Thus it is that the Benedictine Order is especially poetical, so "diverse, complex, and irregular, and variously ramified, rich rather than symmetrical," that the mere fact of its growth and survival demands the kind of reverence Newman proposes to be the proper response to the poetical (388).

(388). The goal of both kinds of experience is not to control, not to grasp, but to be captivated by—be comprehended by—that which is larger than oneself, that which exceeds one’s imaginative capacity.<sup>38</sup>

Here the limits of Wright’s argument become clear; he asserts that “Newman does not allow for the notion that literature becomes interesting precisely when it outruns its original conception, when signifiers generate unintended meaning. That would be too dangerous” (191). Yet is not that “dangerous” superfluity of meaning exactly the basis of Newman’s definition of poetry here? As in the “Legend of St. Gundleus,” Newman again proposes that the encounter with literary discourse brings a reader into contact with what is “vast, immeasurable, impenetrable, inscrutable, mysterious,” and “symbolic of the unknown,” and he argues moreover that the effect is love.<sup>39</sup> This experience of being grasped inspires devotion; it is the same encounter with reality that motivates real apprehension and leads to real assent.<sup>40</sup> It is the same attitude of humility before something greater than oneself and acceptance of being grasped and comprehended by something outside oneself that he uses to justify the study of literature in *The Idea of a University*. It is certainly not a reaction of suspicion and alarm at the tendency of poetic language to escape control.

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<sup>38</sup> The similarity between Newman’s description of poetry here and Coleridge’s definition of a symbol in *The Satesman’s Manual* as something that “partakes of the Reality which it renders intelligible; and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part of that Unity, of which it is the representative,” is striking (30).

<sup>39</sup> Waterman Ward identifies this experience, the “passionate commitment of one’s self to another,” with Newman’s particular use of the term “romance” and makes it the “central preoccupation” of his fiction (“Faith, Romance, and Storytelling” 179).

<sup>40</sup> In early drafts of the *Grammar of Assent*, Newman used the term “imaginative assent” where he would later substitute the word “real” (Coulson, *Religion and Imagination* 60).

Further evidence suggesting that there has been a significant change in Newman's understanding of the imagination may be found in comparing two instances, one earlier and one later, in which he describes the captive imagination. In the 1832 university sermon "Contest Between Faith and Sight," he uses the a series of metaphors to describe "the world" as it impresses and captivates the believer's imagination: "The world sweeps by in long procession;—its principalities and powers, its Babel of languages, the astrologers of Chaldæa, the horse and its rider and the chariots of Egypt, Baal and Ashtoreth and their false worship" (*US* 132). The Chaldeans, Egyptians, and followers of Baal and Ashtoreth (the Canaanites) represent Old Testament enemies of the Chosen People who dealt with them violently at various times. In particular, Newman's emphasizing "the horse and its rider and the chariots of Egypt" recalls the slavery the Israelites endured in Egypt and their escape from a pursuing military force. The imagination subject to the influence of these forces is one enslaved by the threat of violence. Contrast these images with his presentation in 1850, five years after his conversion to Roman Catholicism, of a believing member of the Established Church who loses faith in it: "as in fairy tales, the magic castle vanishes when the spell is broken, and nothing is seen but the wild heath, the barren rock, and the forlorn sheep-walk" (*Diff.* 6). Newman is alluding (among other things) to Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," in which a saddened knight-at-arms recounts his captivity by a deceitful fairy who lulls him to sleep and then leaves him on a barren hill.<sup>41</sup> In this second instance, the knight's imagination is captivated by love—deceived love, but love nonetheless.

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<sup>41</sup> I am indebted to Stephen Prickett for first bringing this allusion to my attention.

Even taking into account the very different contexts in which these two examples appear, they still present radically different images for the situation of the captive imagination. Even in its deceived, enthralled state, the primary effect of the imagination at work is to motivate loving devotion.

In parallel with this shift in his understanding of the purpose of poetry, Newman also comes at this time to derive a new satisfaction in being a member of a community, both as a new Roman Catholic and even as a member of the human race. He who began life by doubting “the reality of material phenomena” and who complained of being frequently alone during his early years at Oriel left the shade of a specialized society at Oxford to enter one of the largest religious communions in the world (*Apo.* 134, 146).<sup>42</sup> This communion was full of “natural” specimens; passages in his letters from his early tour of the Mediterranean countries with Hurrell Froude reveal how Roman Catholic culture somewhat shocked his English sensibilities, while in *Certain Difficulties Felt by Anglicans in Catholic Teaching* (1850) he describes the distress felt by some Anglicans toward the “social state” and the “religious state” of Catholic countries with such sympathy that one suspects personal experience behind his remarks (*Moz.* 1:369-70, 319-20; *Diff.* 230, 249-50, 266-9, 284-8). Having finally decided, not to embrace or comprehend, but to be embraced and comprehended

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<sup>42</sup> In an essay contrasting Newman with G. K. Chesterton, David Deaval characterizes Newman as having been solitary and fundamentally isolated, self-conscious to excess and preoccupied with the difficulties of communicating *cor ad cor*. He writes, “The aloneness and self-consciousness were most certainly lodged in Newman’s nature. Despite his Spy Club activities, the later testimony of his school chums includes memories of a boy sitting on the side of games, reading or daydreaming. In later years these traits were accentuated by the fact that, whether he was paranoid or not, there actually were conspiracies against him, coming as often from inside the Catholic Church as outside” (120). This insistence on the tendencies in Newman’s character toward isolation must be qualified, however, by the passages quoted here in which he celebrates the union of human beings in shared sympathy, effected through literature as in *The Idea of a University* or by great saints like Paul, as in “St. Paul’s Characteristic Gift.”

by this massive community, ancient, worldwide, comprised of rich and poor, educated and untaught, holy and sinful human beings, his writing bespeaks a fresh appreciation for being a member of the human race.

His praise of the national literature and the work of great authors in *The Idea of a University* is part of this trend, as is the 1857 sermon “St. Paul’s Characteristic Gift.” Here, Newman confesses to feeling a special devotion to saints like Paul who “are busy in human society” and “can throw themselves into the minds of other men” above saints like John the Evangelist, who, “even while they are in the flesh, [seem] to have no part in earth or in human nature; but to think, speak, and act under views, affections, and motives simply supernatural” (92). Of saints like Paul, he writes,

While they themselves stand secure in the blessedness of purity and peace, they can follow in imagination the ten thousand aberrations of pride, passion, and remorse. The world to them is a book, to which they are drawn for its own sake, which they read fluently, which interests them naturally,—though by reason of the grace which dwells within them, they study it and hold converse with it for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Thus they have the thoughts, feelings, frames of mind, attractions, sympathies, antipathies of other men, so far as these are not sinful, only they have these properties of human nature purified, sanctified, and exalted; and they are only made more eloquent, more poetical, more profound, more intellectual, by reason of their being more holy. (92-3)

Such saints are drawn both by nature and by grace to “read” and “study” the book of the world, but they do not study it as if from above looking at something separate from themselves. His list of attributes they share with the rest of humanity emphasizes their participation in the world they study, while their powers of imagination allow them to enter sympathetically even into the minds and hearts of the human beings around them. In other words, Newman’s description of saints like Paul is remarkably similar to his description of great

authors in *The Idea of a University*. They are similar in their capacity to sympathize and comprehend their fellow human beings; what makes some great saints is their freedom from sin, while what makes others great authors is their gift for expression. Thus, the two groups can and do overlap, so that, even as “the Church herself is the most sacred and august of poets,” it follows that for Newman the inspired writers are the most sacred and august of great authors.<sup>43</sup>

Newman is here drawing out the paradox involved in being “in the world but not of the world”: to be “holy” or “sanctified” means to be “kept or regarded as inviolate from ordinary use,” but Newman insists that St. Paul reveals a way of holiness different from St. John’s unworldliness (“holy” A.1). Such saints “do not put away their natural endowments,” he maintains, “. . . they do not act beside them, but through them; they do not eclipse them by the brightness of divine grace, but only transfigure them” (“St. Paul’s Characteristic Gift” 92). Paul did not hide from “the sportings and the buffoonings, the clumsy play and the aimless toil, of the noble, lawless savage of God’s intellectual creation,” but found a way to exercise full sympathy with the human race while himself remaining uncorrupted by its sinful tendencies (*Idea* 237). This form of holiness, the transfiguration rather than the eclipse of nature by the life of grace, makes such saints “more poetical” than “other men.” Paul “is ever speaking, to use his own words, ‘human things,’ and ‘as a man,’ and ‘according to man,’ ‘foolishly’”—one is reminded of Wordsworth’s definition of the poet as “a man speaking to men” (453)—“that is, human nature, the common nature of the

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<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, this eloquent praise of the saint’s ability to throw himself sympathetically into the minds and hearts of his fellow human beings appears not long after Newman published his second novel, *Callista*.

whole race of Adam, spoke in him, acted in him, with an energetical presence, with a sort of bodily fullness, always under the sovereign command of divine grace, but losing none of its real freedom and power because of its subordination" ("St. Paul's Characteristic Gift" 95-6). "The world" has ceased to be the enemy of the Christian and seducer of the imagination that it was in the *Parochial and Plain Sermons*; it has become something precious and worthy of sympathy because it is full of human things, and Newman has found a way for one fully incorporated into the human race to live nevertheless a life of holiness.

It requires but a small leap from here to the realization that, for Newman, the experience of an *idea* (in the special sense in which he uses the term in, for example, the last of his *Oxford University Sermons* (1843) and the first chapter of his *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845)) is poetical.<sup>44</sup> Theology begins by reflection on an impression in the imagination; when undertaken properly and reverently, it is motivated, Newman argues, by "a devout curiosity [about] the Object of its adoration" (US 329). The impression of God, the "Object" of adoration, differs from that of other theological ideas in that it is one unified impression: "it is not a system, nor is it any thing imperfect, and needing a counterpart. It is the vision of an object" (330).<sup>45</sup> Newman argues that such an

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<sup>44</sup> According to Rachel Ablow, this interpretation of Newman is in keeping with Oscar Wilde's own "idiosyncratic" reading of the *Grammar of Assent*; Ablow discerns an engagement of Newman at work in "The Portrait of Dorian Gray" and argues that, to Wilde, Newman is "committed to belief's status as a kind of fiction, insofar as it is brought to life by means of our attachment to an aesthetically pleasing and erotically desirable other" (158). Ablow's study is significant not only in supporting the argument for Newman's developing understanding of imagination presented here but also for identifying this interpretation with the decadent poet Wilde, who, despite rumors of his deathbed conversion, would have been an uncomfortable name to associate with Newman's for the Roman Catholic authorities of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

<sup>45</sup> For a useful summary of critical comments on the influences on Newman's philosophy of perception in the *Grammar of Assent*, see Merrigan 8-10.

Object is more like a material object observed by the senses than a mental construct because we receive the impression of material objects as being “whole, and individual; . . . complex and manifold in their relations and bearings, but considered in themselves integral and one.” They “stand out in our minds,” he goes on, “. . . with dimensions and aspects and influences various, and all of these consistent with one another, and *many of them beyond our memory or even knowledge*, while we contemplate the objects themselves; thus forcing on us a persuasion of their reality from the spontaneous congruity and coincidence of these accompaniments, as if they could not be creations of our minds, but were the images of external and independent beings” (330-1, emphasis added). We are persuaded of the reality and integrity of these objects because they are greater than our minds. The evidence that convinces us of their reality is “beyond our memory or even knowledge”—the experience of such an idea brings before the mind its own limitations. He reiterates that to the religious mind, the “idea or vision of the Blessed Trinity in Unity, of the Son Incarnate and of His Presence” is an impression “one, and individual, and independent of words, as an impression conveyed through the senses” (331). In the *Grammar of Assent* Newman will clarify this point by arguing that, while some theological ideas are received as notions, the impression of the divine Object is really apprehended in the imagination.

Thus poetry and aesthetic experience become not the “representation of the ideal,” as Newman first argued in the essay on Aristotle’s *Poetics*, but representations of an encounter with an *idea*. This encounter brings a personal knowledge of its object, a recognition of that object’s otherness, of its being greater than ourselves, and consequently an act of surrender. In the vocabulary

of the *Grammar of Assent*, the act is a real assent subsequent to a real apprehension.<sup>46</sup> The personal mode of knowledge which involves such an encounter is one of the *Grammar's* central arguments, and Newman's apology for it one of the book's main purposes (GA 5). He writes to defend the faith of the non-specialist, the common believer, "children" and "the poor" and "the busy" who "can have true faith, yet cannot weigh evidence" (US 231). Grounding his analysis of this mode of knowledge on the action of the imagination, Newman opens himself up to misinterpretation. Nicholas Lash writes:

In an intellectual climate in which post-Enlightenment rationalism is presumed to be normative for the exercise of human rationality, Newman's lifelong hostility to rationalism is bound to be misunderstood. In such a climate, emphasis on 'the personal conquest of truth' is invariably misconstrued as 'subjectivism.' It is therefore not surprising that, from the Modernist crisis to our own day, Newman has frequently been charged with 'irrationalism,' 'fideism,' and cognate vices. (GA 8)

Yet those who take in the argument of the *Grammar* in full find described therein a mode of rationality and of knowledge that is different from rationalism but even more conducive to certitude. Lash contends that it is, "in its concreteness and irreducible complexity—closer to 'personal knowledge,' or to literary and aesthetic cognition, than it is to the 'linear' rationality characteristic of theoretical deduction" (GA 10).

In his fifth chapter, "Apprehension and Assent in the Matter of Religion," Newman describes what it means to have a real apprehension of God. This

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<sup>46</sup> John Coulson's invaluable work on the importance of the imagination in Newman's idea of belief, especially in *Newman and the Common Tradition* and *Religion and Imagination*, focuses on the priority Newman gives the imagination in *The Grammar of Assent* and describes affinities between Newman's thought and that of Coleridge (see, for example, *Religion and Imagination* 52). Where I have attempted to add to what Coulson has written is in my particular focus on Newman's understanding of the artistic imagination, how this relates to the religious imagination, and how Newman employed his own artistic imagination in the creation of poetry and fiction.

apprehension, the realization of a divine Object in the religious imagination, inspires an attitude of surrender accompanied by love, admiration, and devotion: precisely the same affective response Newman ascribes to the experience of the poetical. While it also inspires the reason to reflect on the image it has received, it humbles the reason at the same time: "Creeds and dogmas live on the one idea which they are designed to express, and which alone is substantive; . . . and thus the Catholic dogmas are, after all, but symbols of a Divine fact, which, far from being compassed by those very propositions, would not be exhausted, nor fathomed, by a thousand" (GA 332). In the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, Newman likens the formal delineation of such an idea with a talented author's realization of a *vivid* character:

Thus Aristotle draws the character of a magnanimous or of a munificent man; thus Shakespeare might conceive and bring out his Hamlet or Ariel; thus Walter Scott gradually enucleates his James, or Dalgetty, as the action of his story proceeds; and thus, in the sacred province of theology, the mind may be employed in developing the solemn ideas, which it has hitherto held implicitly and without subjecting them to its reflecting and reasoning powers. . . . This process is its development, and results in a series, or rather body, of dogmatic statements, till what was an impression on the Imagination has become a system or creed in the Reason. (114; see also *US* 329)

Yet the initial experience of the divine Object is presented as it was in the *Oxford University Sermons*, as analogous to an object perceived by the senses (GA 110-11).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The similarity Newman presents between the apprehension of an idea in the imagination and the perception of a visible object on the one hand and the representation of a fictional character on the other may remind readers of Coleridge's description in the *Biographia Literaria* of the action of the Primary and Secondary Imagination. The Primary Imagination for Coleridge, like the perception of a visible object and the imaginative encounter with an idea for Newman, are experiences available to every human mind; "children," "the poor," and "the busy" all organize and interpret the phenomena they perceive through the eyes, and thus their encounter with external reality becomes an act of creation, a "repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation of the infinite I AM." And like the literary artist's realization of a character

Thus, whereas in the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* we found Newman ranging the imagination on the side of the unreal, in the *Grammar of Assent* he argues the opposite: that the imagination is the faculty through which human beings encounter the real. As Terrence Merrigan clarifies, in the *Grammar* the original encounter with Christ is an encounter with an image—the “Thought or Image of Christ”—while “the whole life of the Church, its narrative tradition, its ethics, and its spirituality, can be regarded as—ideally—the objectification of this image in history” (6). While in the early sermons Newman presents the imagination as the refuge and recreation of those who fail to act, in the *Grammar* it becomes a primary motivator for action. “In its notional assents as well as in its inferences,” he writes, “the mind contemplates its own creations instead of things; in real, it is directed towards things, represented by the impressions which they have left on the imagination. These images, when assented to, have an influence both on the individual and on society, which mere notions cannot exert” (GA 76, see also 214).<sup>48</sup>

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in written composition, like the theologian’s delineation of a divine idea in dogmatic statements and creeds, Coleridge’s Secondary Imagination engages the “conscious will” while it “dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to recreate,” and everywhere “struggles to idealize and to unify” (*Coleridge’s Poetry and Prose* 488). Indeed, Merrigan has recognized that Newman’s description of the imagination reflects a “dual” understanding, “or, more accurately, allows one to isolate two separate, though not distinct, functions accorded by Newman to the imaginative faculty,” which he terms the “realizing imagination,” by which “attention is focused on the fact as grasped or apprehended,” and the “prehending imagination,” that “by means of which the imagination’s object is grasped, or, as it were, set before the mind’s eye.” The realizing imagination is primarily “an ‘evocative’ power,” the prehending imagination “a ‘synthetic’ power” (14). In both modes of its operation, however they are named, the imagination encounters something beyond itself, and its attempt to apprehend this other is accompanied by the recognition of the limitations and particularities of the individual mind. For a valuable study of similarities between the philosophies of Coleridge and Newman, particularly with regard to the central role of conscience in an individual’s “growth in moral self-consciousness,” as well as suggestions of the probable extent and limitations of Coleridge’s influence on Newman, see Philip Rule’s “Coleridge and Newman” (233).

<sup>48</sup> As an aside, Newman clarifies, “Strictly speaking, it is not imagination that causes action; but hope and fear, likes and dislikes, appetite, passion, affection, the stirrings of selfishness and self-love. What imagination does for us is to find a means of stimulating those

As a powerful motivator for action, the imagination has a clear relationship for Newman with the moral life, and yet its influence there is neither straightforward nor simple. The imagination may still be prejudiced and misled (see, for example, 217-8). Just as the possibility of false certitude remained for Newman the great unsolved problem of the *Grammar of Assent*, so too the imagination may be vividly impressed, may exercise its power to motivate action, over something false, illusory, or morally wrong. Newman writes that “this practical influence [of the imagination] is not invariable, nor to be relied on; for given images may have no tendency to affect given minds, or to excite them to action. Thus, a philosopher or a poet may vividly realize the brilliant rewards of military genius or of eloquence, without wishing either to be a commander or an orator” (89). His illustration hints that the imagination’s potential to act as motivator depends on more than simply the moral state of the imaginer; it varies according to his or her whole personality, education, and talents, the contents and architecture of his or her mind. Different minds imagine differently, as different minds encounter new knowledge or experience differently. For Newman, the whole history of a mind—its memories and experiences, its degree of education, its beliefs and assents—as well as its native capacity becomes involved in its every subsequent action, and every action of the mind becomes assimilated into its makeup.<sup>49</sup>

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motive powers; and it does so by providing a supply of objects strong enough to stimulate them” (GA 82-3, see also 89).

<sup>49</sup> A passage from the essay “Reformation of the Eleventh Century,” which originally appeared in the *British Critic* in 1841, can serve to illustrate this characteristic of the mind in action:

Let a likeness, taken twenty years ago, be put before two persons, now for the first time, one of whom knew the subject of it at the time, and the other did not, and the former will think it like him as he is now, and the latter will deny the

Therefore, Newman is not arguing that the mere exercise of the imagination is the highest good, nor is he reversing his earlier position so far as to argue that the imagination ought to be made superior to the reason rather than the other way around. He is in no way encouraging the accumulation of aesthetic experiences as a direct means to spiritual enlightenment or moral improvement. And yet in his later works he has come to argue that poetic language inspires humility and love, that the experience of the poetic involves relinquishing control and allowing oneself to be comprehended by something greater than oneself, that great literature enables the reader to have a personal encounter with a great author, that an appeal to the imagination alone can move one to action and the kind of commitment that lasts until death, and that an experience of the divine occurs within the imagination as a personal encounter with one's own Author, a meeting that can inspire humility and love, action, devotion, and an ultimate commitment as the imaginer recognizes the objective reality of the divine idea. In both aesthetic and religious contexts, the imagination becomes for him the mental reflex, as it were, that detects and responds to an encounter with something greater than itself.

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likeness. We colour our ocular vision with the hues of the imagination: as reason is said to deceive our eyes in the phenomenon of the horizontal moon, so memory is a gloss upon them here. Our friend has grown fat, or his temples are higher, or his face is broader, or lines have come to view along his cheek, or across his forehead, and yet in certain cases we shall be heard to say, that such a one has not altered at all since the day we first knew him. To us his youth is stamped upon his maturity, and he lives in our eye, as well as in our mind, as when we first gave him our affection. (*Ess.* 2:252)

This passage reveals how far the influences of memory and imagination extend, for not only do they affect the contents of the imagination, but they even influence impressions received through the eyes as they are actively interpreted. A related passage appears in the *Grammar of Assent* illustrating how not only visual impressions but also words are apprehended according to the character of the perceiver: "[W]ords speak to those who understand the speech. To the mere barren intellect they are but the pale ghosts of notions; but the trained imagination sees in them the representations of things" (250).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Newman's Imagination at Work

The gradual development in Newman's understanding of the imagination traced in the previous chapter is clearly manifested in his poetry and his novels. In his contributions to the *Lyra Apostolica* (1836), Newman's avowed concern was to sweeten the pill of Tractarianism, preparing his readers to receive this particular form of religious belief and practice as being more legitimate and authentic than the mainstream version of Anglicanism.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, artistic concerns take second place to the theological and religious principles these lyrics were meant to support. Among these principles, the importance of being separate from "the world," rejecting its false pretenses, and living for the afterlife—ideas found to be a strong current in the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* in the previous chapter—recur as dominant themes in the lyrics. There is something in the stern asceticism and *contemptus mundi* of Newman's *Lyra Apostolica* contributions that leads Robert Edgecombe to associate them with the

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<sup>1</sup> In 1832, Newman wrote to Hugh James Rose to propose the project: "Our object is, to bring out certain truths and facts, moral, ecclesiastical, and religious, simply and forcibly, with greater freedom, and clearness than in the Christian Year. I will not go on to say, with greater poetry" (*LD* 3:119-20). A few days later, he wrote to Frederic Rogers, "we have hopes of making an effective quasi-political engine, without every contribution being of that character. Do not stirring times bring out poets? Do they not give opportunity for the rhetoric of poetry, and the persuasion? And may we not at least produce shadows of high things if not the high things themselves" (*LD* 3:121). Both of these letters indicate that the poems' purpose was above all to serve the cause of the Tractarian party. Newman reasserts this motivation in the "Postscript" he added to the Advertisement for the 1879 edition of the poems. He writes that, along with the "Tracts for the Times" and the "Church of the Fathers" series, the poems were written with the object of "enforcing what the authors considered to be Apostolical or Primitive Christianity," adding that they were composed "with the simple purpose of startling, of rousing, of suggesting thought, and of offering battle, in the cause of the Ancient Church" (vi-vii, emphasis added). The images of enforcing and offering battle make it clear that the writers of the *Lyra Apostolica* were engaged in controversy from first to last, taking an offensive posture that attempted to overcome opposition by rhetorical and poetic force.

kind of penitential practice satirized in Tennyson's *St. Simeon Stylites*, an asceticism that rather serves personal pride than defeats it and that turns the ascetic into a kind of hero (31).<sup>2</sup> Edgecombe's analysis reflects the sense he and other readers gain from Newman's *Lyra Apostolica* poems that the poet has a didactic or controversial design upon his readers.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the concern of many of these poems is to separate and distinguish among believers, and so they present a vision of a small but faithful group of elect who struggle toward sanctity amid a world given over to what Keble called the "National Apostasy."

Beginning in the 1840's, Newman's fiction and poetry begins to turn away from the theme of *contemptus mundi* and toward a vision of the human race and created nature as united in a shared experience of God. As he refines a definition of imagination in his prose to be that which recognizes and responds to what is greater than itself, that which perceives itself to be embraced and comprehended by a reality that transcends it, his imaginative works increasingly reflect the change. In *Loss and Gain* (1848), as its Advertisement proclaims, Newman's project is not to create "a work of controversy in behalf of the Catholic Religion"

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<sup>2</sup> For example, comparing Herbert's "The Collar" with Newman's "Restlessness" (which appears in the *Verses on Various Occasions* under the title "The Gift of Perseverance"), Edgecombe finds that, while the first ends with "trustful surrender," the second offers "a bleak, stoical submissiveness based on Newman's exaltation of holiness above comfort" (179). The exaltation of holiness is but a brief step from the exaltation of the holy person, and so once again the interpretation of Newman's poem approaches Arnold's and Pater's heavy emphasis on the special role and elevated status of an elite few over the vulgar many in Newman's thought (see 70-4 herein).

<sup>3</sup> Ian Ker's close analysis of Newman's satires echoes this interpretation; for Ker, "the nature of [Newman's] literary achievement" consists in his skillful employment of rhetoric and satire to serve the controversial purposes of his occasional pieces (*The Achievement* 152-3). Ker protests against any judgment of Newman's literary achievement based mainly on the *Apologia pro vita sua*, the novels, and the poetry, "which are recognized to be of interest, and even of some originality, but hardly of any major significance" (153). Thus he argues for the primacy of Newman's controversial works among his literary productions by discounting the importance of the less overtly polemical pieces.

(LG 6). Offering his readers a representation of conversion based on Charles Reding's subjective experience, which is both individual and, to a large extent, aesthetic, Newman holds back from exercising authoritative control over the reader's response. Meanwhile, the nature of "reality" becomes increasingly complicated in the narrative. In *Callista* (1855) and "The Dream of Gerontius" (1865), Newman offers visions not of individual salvation but of a providential drama that works in individual souls in order to draw all of creation together into a worldwide process of sanctification. To this end, he breaks down barriers between believer and nonbeliever, human and nonhuman nature, and even living and dead. The experience of religion is presented as poetic and as calling forth an artistic response.

To illustrate the shift in Newman's understanding of the imagination most clearly, I will begin by contrasting two of his best-known poems, one early and one late, and then proceed to illustrate the shift as it appears in other poems and in the novels.<sup>4</sup> The well-known poem "The Pillar of the Cloud" (1833), often referred to under the title "Lead, Kindly Light," was composed while Newman was at sea on his travels in the Mediterranean not long after his grave illness in Sicily.<sup>5</sup> It is most often remarked on as expressing the new clarity and sense of mission with which he arose from what he had believed to be his deathbed, and the spirit of a humble pilgrim following divine guidance has been interpreted as

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<sup>4</sup> In the interests of somewhat limiting the scope of this analysis, I have chosen to omit commentary on Newman's first verse narrative, *St. Bartholomew's Eve; A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, written in 1821 in collaboration with J. W. Bowden. This tale, in which Hill detects the influence of Walter Scott, echoes a conventional critique of Roman Catholic practices, symbols, and rituals as tainted with worldliness and superstition ("Originality and Realism" 22).

<sup>5</sup> This poem appeared in the *Lyra Apostolica* under the title, "Light in the Darkness"; as this title is rarely used, I have chosen to refer to the poem under the title Newman gave it in the *Verses on Various Occasions*.

expressing the attitude with which Newman approached his work in the Oxford Movement. Without objecting to this standard interpretation, I wish to examine in particular the third stanza:

So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still  
Will lead me on,  
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till  
The night is gone;  
And with the morn those angel faces smile  
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile. (LA 13-18)

This stanza makes clear what has been implied throughout: that the poem's speaker is referring to his death and not merely to a journey far from his earthly home.<sup>6</sup> The "encircling gloom" and "night" of the first stanza become descriptions of the speaker's earthly sojourn which will give way to the Beatific Vision—the "morn"—and a reunion with loved ones who have passed away—"those angel faces" (1, 3, 17). As if to show how imminent passage to the afterlife truly is, the final stanza offers the reader a first glimpse of the landscape the speaker crosses—the "encircling gloom" begins to lighten, and we perceive as in a pre-dawn outline the moor and fen, crag and torrent. And yet these details, images of the earthly journey, do not matter. In the first stanza the speaker has protested, "I do not ask to see / The distant scene," and so when its shadowy forms begin to emerge in the final stanza the poem's momentum is already carrying it forward "o'er" all of them to a longed-for homecoming when this landscape will be left behind (5-6).<sup>7</sup> His earlier desire to "choose and see my

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<sup>6</sup> Newman previously used a long journey from home as an analogy for death in the poem "Distance" (1832), entitled "Memory" in the *Verses on Various Occasions*.

<sup>7</sup> The preposition is significant; Newman's poetic speaker passes over this landscape rather than through it. Its difficult contours are traversed in a single line of verse, almost as if he flies above the ground, as if, even while the night lightens at the approach of dawn, his speaker begins to rise above the earth to the level of the "angel faces" he hopes to join.

path" is ascribed to prideful will, while his love for "the garish day" implies a disordered love for something too colorful, too bright. The poem deliberately restrains the imagination in that its images are withheld until they no longer matter to the speaker. What matters is the coming of a morn different from "garish day" and a vision of smiling angel faces—an image evoking the gold backgrounds and static, contemplative atmospheres of medieval iconography.

How different the spirit animating "The Pillar of the Cloud" is from that of some of the well-known poems of the English Romantics that describe similar landscapes. In Coleridge's "Hymn Before Sunrise in the Vale of Chamounix" (1802) another landscape of "torrents" and "jagged rocks," the landscape forms part of the speaker's prayer to "the Invisible" and offers its own hymn, until speaker and mountain unite in a single act of praise to the creator of both (*Coleridge's Poetry and Prose* 39, 42, 15-20, 64-85). As the distinction between speaker and landscape collapses, the mountain becomes anthropomorphized with a "brow," a "voice," a "breast" (49, 51, 73). As for Coleridge, so also for Wordsworth, nature "is neither outside man, nor is it the creation purely of his own mind: it is rather an interaction, an 'ennobling interchange'" (Prickett, *Romanticism and Religion* 105). In Shelley's "Mont Blanc" (1817), too, the human speaker and mountainous landscape blend in a united act of creation, though to a different end than in Coleridge's poem. In "The Pillar of the Cloud," the landscape is an obstacle to be passed over in the journey toward the afterlife. Despite the Romantic features of Newman's landscape, the speaker's relationship to the natural world seems more similar to that of Bunyan's pilgrim, who must navigate and then leave behind the Slough of Despond, the Hill of Difficulty, the Valley of the Shadow of Death, etc. on his way to the Celestial City, than with

Coleridge's or Shelley's poetic speakers.<sup>8</sup> In this way, rather than sharing Romantic visions of the fundamental unity of human and nonhuman nature, "The Pillar of the Cloud" and poems like it from the *Lyra Apostolica* share in the spirit of *contemptus mundi* animating the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* (Edgecombe 31).

This spirit in many of its manifestations leads Edgecombe to argue that *as poets* "the thread that links such diverse writers as Keble, Newman, and Williams . . . [is] a shared cult of mortification, engendered at first by their noble revulsion at worldliness but ultimately tainted by a masochism no less distressing" (27). Noting instances of Tractarian praise for Catholic practices such as the use of the discipline, the hair shirt, and fasting, as well as their preoccupation with persecution, he locates "the romantic element in Tractarianism" in "the cultus of the 'romantic agony'" (27-8).<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, Edgecombe concludes, in the "world of Newman's verse"—referring specifically to his contributions to the *Lyra Apostolica*—"we hardly ever encounter the physical pleasures of trees and flowers: he moves and has his being in rocky landscapes of the mind. In their great battle against worldliness, the Tractarians forgot the world" (34). At the same time, the verses' "anti-establishment impulse," intended as they were to rouse readers out of what the Tractarians judged to be a lax and uninspired

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<sup>8</sup> Bunyan's landscape may have suggested the images of "moor" and "fen" to Newman; though Edgecombe posits another possible antecedent in Milton's description of Satan's journey "O'er bog or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare," Bunyan's pilgrim bears a closer resemblance to Newman's poetic speaker than does Milton's Satan (Edgecombe 192, *Paradise Lost* 2:948).

<sup>9</sup> This theme is even more clearly sounded in Hurrell Froude's *Remains* (1838), a work of profound influence on Tractarian spirituality. Notes Edgecombe, "At least one contemporary critic of the *Remains* commented on the absence throughout this journal of any sense of a transcendent Redeemer, and passages like this one above certainly suggest a self-sufficiency in the one fasting, as though . . . he were coldly pitting mind against body" (29).

spirituality, also gives them an impression of addressing and describing a spiritually elite group (186).

In the previous chapter, I argued that the shift in Newman's idea of the imagination was accompanied by a deeper appreciation of shared human nature and membership in community. One of the more problematic steps in allowing oneself to embrace one's full humanity while still attempting to live a Christian vocation is the acceptance of the body. The Victorians seem to have had particular difficulty with this, while for his commitment to celibacy Newman received special criticism for rejecting what his contemporaries perceived to be a legitimate and divinely-sanctioned use of the body.<sup>10</sup> In a fascinating exercise of cultural history, Tom Crook explores the underlying implications of Victorian attitudes toward dirt, matter, and the refuse of the body that strikingly illustrates the cultural background of Newman's developing attitude toward the human body as it emerges in his poetry and fiction.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, a Platonic world, one

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<sup>10</sup> Newman's avowed decision, based on what he records in his *Apologia* as a "deep imagination" and a vocation, to avoid sexual relationships has inspired wide speculation about the degree to which his celibacy influenced his life and writings, whether it be through sexual repression, latent homosexual tendencies, sexual energy sublimated into religious eroticism, engagement with the Christian tradition venerating virginity, or participation in a kind of self-congratulatory elitism in elevating the celibate above the married life (*Apo.* 137; see Wright, "Newman as Novelist" 8-9). Certainly, Newman's commitment to celibacy complicates the claim that he came to enjoy a profound satisfaction in his humanity and his engagement with the human race. Newman discusses this decision and his most serious critics in the debate on celibacy between Reding and Carlton in *Loss and Gain* (LG 191-200).

<sup>11</sup> Drawing on Mary Douglas's 1966 *Purity and Danger*, Crook defines dirt as "whatever, within a given society, eludes or threatens order and system" (200). Population increase and the trend toward urbanization presented Victorian society with the problem of human dirt and refuse on an unprecedented level. Crook argues that dirt and sewage received national attention as a social problem in the high Victorian period: "Between the 1840s and 1870s, the question of how to put human excrement in the right place elicited a mass of pamphlets and articles; engaged two parliamentary select committees and one Royal Commission; and was a consistent item on the agenda of the NAPSS" (National Association for the Promotion of Social Science); it formed the inspiration for, among other things, Lord Palmerston's address to the Royal Agricultural Society in July of 1851, an anonymous pamphlet in 1854, an 1875 editorial in *The Builder*, and another address to the Sanitary Institute of Great Britain in 1881 (202, 204-6). This was without exaggeration a matter of life and death; links between urban population concentration, dirt, the

that locates beauty in a realm of “eternal forms,” considers matter and the physical body to be more base and less real than the realm of abstract ideas (*Ess.* 1:10). Thus, for example, even in the poem “The Cross of Christ” (1832) which praises the spiritual significance of a physical gesture, the speaker refers to his own body as “this sinful flesh of mine,” while all the benefits conferred by making the sign of the cross are in the realm of thought, emotion, and spirit (*LA* 1, 3, 5, 6-12).<sup>12</sup> Whereas in many of the early poems Newman ignores or treats with suspicion metaphors directly related to the body and the senses, the human condition of embodiment and especially the sense of touch become increasingly important images in his later poetry and prose.

The change in Newman’s understanding of the imagination is evident in the contrast between “The Pillar of the Cloud” and the psychological and spiritual experience of Gerontius in Newman’s great poem of 1865.<sup>13</sup> First, while Newman’s speaker in “The Pillar of the Cloud” seems to float above the

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improper placement of the dead, and the spread of disease were serious matters to the public mind, even as they were dramatically realized in Dickens’s *Bleak House* (1852-3). Although some schemes for the proper disposal of dirt were optimistic verging on utopian, still in a cultural milieu that generally accepted cleanliness as being next to godliness, dirt retained an association with moral degradation and baseness (207-12). Astutely noting the combination of religious and scientific rhetoric present in many of these documents, Crook highlights the complexity of Lord Palmerston’s definition of dirt as “matter out of place”: “the phrase affirmed an *ultimately* meaningful, orderly, and timeless universe in which man might, in the future, achieve harmony with God. . . . Dirt, it suggested, reflected man’s alienation from divine, universal laws and therefore his worldly debasement” (205). These cultural associations are more or less in keeping with a pejorative attitude toward matter, including refuse, the physical body, and the corpse.

<sup>12</sup> In *Verses on Various Occasions* this poem is entitled “The Sign of the Cross.”

<sup>13</sup> For a description of the prevailing cultural interest in deathbed scenes and its possible influence on Newman’s choice to depict a Christian deathbed scene in his greatest poem, see Litvack 159-61. Litvack points out that, while derived from “older High Church tradition and from the Fathers,” the Tractarian approach to the communion of saints “was set within the framework of a seriousness shared with Evangelicalism and a sharp awareness that the drama of salvation was set against the ultimate choices of heaven and hell” (161). Both Tractarian and Evangelical traditions influence “The Dream of Gerontius,” Litvack argues, and the tone of Evangelical seriousness inspires the poem’s dramatic quality and contributes to its personal, emotional urgency.

landscape, Gerontius is intensely conscious of his own body and of the material, created world he has inhabited in life. Indeed, Newman opens his poem at the supreme moment in which the body takes control, when no intensity of reason, will, or passion can prevent the body from doing what it must and what every earthly body eventually does. In the poem's opening lines, Gerontius speaks of the physical symptoms of death, his "faltering breath," "chill at heart," and "dampness on my brow" (VV 3-4). He dreads total dissolution "[i]nto the shapeless, scopeless, blank abyss, / That utter nothingness, of which I came" (24-5). Having passed beyond death, the Soul of Gerontius is relieved by the impression that, though the symptoms of dying have passed—"I hear no more the busy beat of time, / No, nor my fluttering breath, nor struggling pulse" (176-7)—still he retains a sense of embodiment:

I am not dead,  
 But in the body still; for I possess  
 A sort of confidence which clings to me  
 That each particular organ holds its place  
 As heretofore, combining with the rest  
 Into one symmetry, that wraps me round,  
 And makes me man; and surely I could move,  
 Did I but will it, every part of me. (195-202)

Though he finds himself unable to see or to move his body, this lingering confidence that he is still himself, that his humanity is intact, reassures and comforts him.<sup>14</sup> Despite the absence of a narrating voice in this dramatic poem, the poet is still able to reinforce the importance and dignity of Gerontius's body in that, in the "First Phase," the living Gerontius is designated "Gerontius,"

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<sup>14</sup> The Soul of Gerontius's anxiety to feel himself still a unified whole may remind readers of Newman's description of an object—a material object perceived and understood to be "whole, and individual; . . . complex and manifold in [its] relations and bearings, but considered in [itself] integral and one" (US 330), and a spiritual object apprehended in the imagination as having the same essential integrity.

while the dead Gerontius is called “Soul of Gerontius” or simply “Soul.” In this way the poet makes clear that he is only his full self when his soul and body are united, while his separated soul can only be described as part of himself. Thus, while both “The Pillar of the Cloud” and “The Dream of Gerontius” investigate the moment of death, in the earlier poem the speaker emphasizes the triumph of a humble will over earthly obstacles, while in the first part of the later poem the speaker struggles, fails, and finally accepts the revolt of the body, breathing with his last breath the words of the dying Christ that assign a bodily metaphor even to God: “Into Thy hands, / O Lord, into Thy hands . . . .” (148-9).

Likewise, the world—the natural world as well as the world of human society—has a very different relation to the speaker of each poem and a different status in each poem’s scheme of redemption. Contrasting Keble with Newman, Edgecombe writes:

Keble has a genuine attachment to natural beauty, even though he chooses to refract it through the stylized lens of poetic diction. . . . Newman, on the other hand, when he chooses to document natural beauty, lapses into an uncharacteristic preciousness, as though it were an impertinence to the two great absolutes into which he had sublimated his life. (180)

“The Pillar of the Cloud” is concerned with the individual soul’s destiny; for the speaker in “The Pillar of the Cloud,” death—the coming of “the morn”—is a rising up away from the earth, which is left behind and remains unredeemed. Similarly, “Separation” (1833), which in many ways anticipates the deathbed scene of “The Dream of Gerontius,” nevertheless emphasizes the wide separation of souls in heaven from souls on earth and meditates on the gulf of silence

between them.<sup>15</sup> This theme recurs in "Rest" (1835), in which the speaker says of the righteous dead, "They are at rest: / We may not stir the heaven of their repose / By rude invoking voice, or prayer addrest" (LA 1-3).<sup>16</sup> These souls hear only the gentle sound of Eden's flowing river and the angelic hymn of paradise (6-12, 18).

Moreover, on earth, the speaker of "The Pillar of the Cloud" journeys alone, except for the shadowy presence of "the Cloud" that hints at divine guidance by obscuring it (Edgecombe 190).<sup>17</sup> Other *Lyra Apostolica* poems include earthly friendship among the world's deceits. In "Melchizedek," for example, Newman goes so far as to write, "Thrice blessed are they, who feel their loneliness; / To whom nor voice of friend nor pleasant scene / Brings that on which the saddened heart can lean" (LA 1-3). The speaker of "Prosperity" warns against an outward appearance of flourishing because this, he argues, is itself a sign that decay and destruction are approaching. Thus the appearance of perfect happiness, of a vital civilization, and of a close and loving friendship all foreshadow their end. "Autumn" (1833), which rivals "The Pillar of the Cloud" for its skillful execution, presents a sad and isolated wanderer watching the leaves fall off the Tree of Life while "Men close the door, and dress the cheerful hearth, / Self-trusting still; and in his comely gear / Of precept and of rite, a household Baal rear" (1, 5-7). The poem's "I" grieves alone while the rest of his

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<sup>15</sup> This poem appears in *Verses on Various Occasions* under the title "Separation of Friends," including a final twelve lines Newman added after the death of Richard Hurrell Froude in 1836.

<sup>16</sup> Newman's changes to the third line for the *Verses on Various Occasions* does not affect the argument here; the poem appears there under the title "Waiting for the Morning."

<sup>17</sup> Edgecombe points out that the poem's title highlights its central figure's solitude in contrast with the Israelites' communal journey across the desert (190).

country turns to idolatry. In other *Lyra Apostolica* poems, while the speaker is not as isolated as in "The Pillar of the Cloud," he is nevertheless presented as a member of a small and special class, the believers who are set apart from and fight against the world. In "Indulgence" (1833), for example, the speaker argues that in the face of the predominance of private judgment, in which "men have settled long / That ye are out of date," his brethren should "Use their own weapons" until "each scared boaster flies" (LA 9-15).<sup>18</sup> The martial metaphor highlights the hostility between the few and the erring many. All of these early poems make use of a fundamental opposition between the speaker (along with those share his religious convictions) and the world, natural as well as human.

For Gerontius, on the other hand, death is not a rising above but a falling into and through the material world:

. . . as though I bent  
Over the dizzy brink  
Of some sheer infinite descent;  
Or worse, as though  
Down, down for ever I was falling through  
The solid framework of created things,  
And needs must sink and sink  
Into the vast abyss. (VV 111-18)

Once again the reader is thrown into a mountainous landscape, but in this case Gerontius does not climb or fly over the mountains; he falls through them. On his journey toward purgatory, he encounters references to a fundamental unity between his own body, material creation, and the rest of the human race. In his first song, Gerontius's Guardian Angel refers to his charge as "This child of earth" and "This child of clay," emphasizing his physical nature; the angel later

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<sup>18</sup> The poems mentioned in this paragraph appeared in *Verses on Various Occasions* under the titles "Melchizedek," "Reverses," "Progress of Unbelief," and "The Religion of Cain," respectively.

calls the day of judgment “That solemn consummation for all flesh” (246, 251, 385). The Angel’s account of Gerontius’s life presents it as a composite of body and soul, earth and spirit inextricably intertwined:

Oh, what a shifting parti-colour’d scene  
Of hope and fear, of triumph and dismay,  
Of recklessness and penance, has been  
The history of that dreary, life-long fray!  
And oh, the grace to nerve him and to lead,  
How patient, prompt, and lavish at his need!

O man, strange composite of heaven and earth! (286-92)

It is the demons who prioritize spirit over body, who disdain the physical nature of humanity. In the second part, they mock humanity for being “Low-born clods / Of brute earth” (408-9).<sup>19</sup> They praise themselves for their lack of dependence or restraint; they have “the high thought, / And the glance of fire,” “The mind bold, / And independent, / The purpose free” (447-9).

Gerontius’s spiritual journey is communal from first to last. “The Dream of Gerontius” begins with Gerontius in the presence of a Priest and praying Assistants he addresses as “loving friends” (VV 17). Spiritual beings also surround him: he cries out to “Jesu” and “Maria” in the poem’s first words and claims that he hears them calling him; he hears the summons of death: “a

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<sup>19</sup> The demons’ mockery of saints is entirely focused on their aspiring to spiritual greatness while living in a physical body. They ask:

What’s a saint?  
One whose breath  
Doth the air taint  
Before his death;  
A bundle of bones,  
Which fools adore,  
Ha! ha!  
When life is o’er;  
Which rattle and stink,  
E’en in the flesh. (453-62)

visitant / Is knocking his dire summons at my door" (13-14); his Assistants evoke Mary and the angels and saints in their litany prayer; and Gerontius senses the presence of demons surrounding his deathbed: "Some bodily form of ill / Floats on the wind, with many a loathsome curse / Tainting the hallow'd air, and laughs, and flaps / Its hideous wings" (121-4). These last are so real to Gerontius they seem to have a physical form: they are "bodily" with "wings," and they exist in the natural elements of "wind" and "air."

After death, the consummation toward which the speaker of "The Pillar of the Cloud" strives is a vision of smiling angel faces. As a reunion that marks the end of life, this is a serene but silent moment, with speaker necessarily separated from the angels by some distance in order to see them. The Soul of Gerontius, on the other hand, after an initial feeling of "solitariness," senses not just the presence but the embrace of another being:

. . . some one has me fast  
Within his ample palm; 'tis not a grasp  
Such as they use on earth, but all around  
Over the surface of my subtle being,  
As though I were a sphere, and capable  
To be accosted thus[.] (VV 225-30)

Along with this feeling of being embraced comes the Soul's sense of "gentle pressure" that "tells me I am not / Self-moving, but borne forward on my way" (231-2).<sup>20</sup> And immediately this presence does more than merely smile at him; it

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<sup>20</sup> An interesting contrast may be made here between Gerontius's experience on the way to Purgatory and that of Dante in the *Purgatorio*. The souls in Dante's Purgatory move when they are ready, and Dante the Pilgrim's progress up the mountain culminates in Virgil's proclamation, "Lord of yourself I crown and miter you" (27:142). Newman's Gerontius is just beginning his journey here; still, in the Soul's insight that it is "not / Self-moving, but borne forward" in a loving embrace, Newman makes dependency and relationship the primary impulses of the Soul's forward motion rather than its own conquest over temptation and self-will. Indeed, the closest earthly equivalent to the angel's total embrace of the Soul is that of an infant *in utero*. The soul of the old man, Gerontius, has returned to an utterly childlike state.

sings, and in the beauty of its song he finds both the full realization that he has left his body and the consolation he needs to make that transition peaceful. He calls it a “heart-subduing melody,” suggesting that he recognizes that what embraces him can also overcome him (236). The angel then addresses the Soul of Gerontius as “My child and brother,” claiming kinship and testifying to the loving relationship between them (324). Gerontius acknowledges a wish to “speak with thee / For speaking’s sake. I wish to hold with thee / Conscious communion”—in other words, his primary motive in conversing with the angel is to engage in relationship with the other being, to enact through speech the same embrace he feels in a (metaphorically) physical sense, a communion between his consciousness and that of the angel (325-7). This music subdues him and brings him into conversation and communion with the one who embraces him. In other words, here the Soul of Gerontius has an experience that is at once aesthetic and religious—poetic according to Newman’s definition in the “Mission of St. Benedict”—an engagement with something beyond himself to which he responds with submission and a desire for communion.

The Angel’s gentle embrace prepares the reader for the more complete and more violent embrace of God that comes at the end of the poem:

. . . the keen sanctity,  
Which with its effluence, like a glory, clothes  
And circles round the Crucified, has seized,  
And scorch’d, and shrivell’d it; and now it lies  
Passive and still before the awful Throne.  
O happy, suffering soul! for it is safe,  
Consumed, yet quicken’d, by the glance of God. (VV 853-9)

The images of embrace culminate in the soul’s final state, doubly-enfolded by the angel and by the “penal waters” of purgatory (898-900). The Soul’s response to these embraces is submission: approaching God, he finds that words fail him

utterly (“I go before my Judge. Ah! . . .”), and he enters the purgatorial waters “without a sob or a resistance” (849, 902). By contrast, the speaker’s address to God in “The Pillar of the Cloud” is neither submissive nor does it admit of a place where even language fails. Instead, as Sharrock points out, the speaker has an “authoritative firmness which leaves no doubt that he knows the way he is going: the mode of address to God is presumably an optative but it has a commanding imperative ring about it” (48).

There are many other poems written during the Mediterranean voyage and published in the *Lyra Apostolica* collection that exhibit the same basic opposition between “the world” of nature and of human society and the Christian’s pilgrimage toward paradise found in “The Pillar of the Cloud,” an opposition consistent with the emphasis of the *Parochial and Plain Sermons* discussed in the previous chapter (see 102-9 herein). Echoing the similar assessments of Emily Bowles and Meriol Trevor, Edgecombe characterizes Newman’s contributions to the collection as “austere, severe utterances” possessing “a sort of bleak minimalism” (169-70). In the appropriately titled “Nothingness of Matter,” the speaker recalls a childhood period when he looked on nature’s seasons “All, garb’d in fairy guise” which “Pledged constancy of good” (LA 3-4). Anticipating the light/shadow contrast in “The Pillar of the Cloud,” at this time the world was bright—“Even suns o’er autumn’s bowers / Heard my strong wish, and stay’d”—whereas now for the older speaker nature’s “fair tints appear / All blent in one dusk hue” (7-8, 15-16). The impression of sameness this gives the speaker leads him to query, “Then what this world to thee, my heart? / Its gifts nor feed thee nor can bless; / Thou hast no owner’s part / In all its fleetingness” (21-4). The speaker’s task, the final stanza argues, is

to look beyond nature's deceptive and garish colors and, perceiving behind its fundamental homogeneity the "still voice divine" which is found in none of its voices, find therein an anticipation of "Heaven's Age of fearless rest" (28, 32). Newman's meter parallels the sense of this poem. Each quatrain consists of two tetrameter lines followed by two trimeter lines, giving an impression of a move from richer variety that echoes the recurrence of the four seasons to a sparer Trinitarian conclusion. The speaker of "The Pains of Memory" (1833) traces a similar progression from youthful deception by the beauties of the visible world to a mature realization that earthly beauty is not as it seems, that "earth's unhealthy ground," "Sun's ray and canker-worm, / And sudden-whelming storm" will blight the soul's innocence (3, 5-6). The poem "The Pilgrim" (1831) specifically addresses love of natural beauty, telling of one who lived in "the woods of Dart" and "who could love them, but who durst not love" (1-2). Keeping his vow and "his pilgrim-lot," the wanderer finds keeping his detachment from "each fair spot" to be a "hard humbling task," but at the end of the poem he keeps "safe his pledge" (3, 5, 6, 9). The pilgrim's vow is not to "give his heart" to any earthly site of nature's beauty, a phrase which carries overtones of a commitment to celibacy, suggesting detachment not only from natural but also from human beauty. The poem "Love of Quiet" (1833) inquires why the church would ever engage with the world on its "troubled stage," and the answer is, to wage war for the salvation of souls (3).<sup>21</sup>

A number of poems argue for a kind of vision proper to the eyes of faith and in contrast to the vision of the world. In "The True Elect," the speaker

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<sup>21</sup> The poems mentioned in this paragraph appeared in the *Verses on Various Occasions* under the titles "The Trance of Time," "A Blight," "The Pilgrim," and "Warfare," respectively.

contrasts the insignificant outward appearance of “the saints of God” with their spiritual splendor. All the world’s best lights—daylight, history, and reason—serve only to obscure the light of the saints:

They gleam amid the night,  
Chill sluggish mists stifling the heavenly ray;  
Fame chants the while,—old history trims his light,  
    Aping the day;  
In vain! staid look, loud voice, and reason’s might  
    Forcing its learned way,  
Blind characters! these aid us not to trace  
    Christ and His princely race. (*LA* 9-16)

“The Course of Truth” takes up a similar theme, meditating on the risen Christ’s choice to confer his message on “a few of meanest mould” rather than seeking support from the many or the powerful or relying on eloquence or persuasion (4-6, 8). In “Confession,” the speaker meditates on the opposite effect by which a sinner can appear to be “a type . . . / Of holy love and fear” but is revealed to an angelic gaze to be “Scar-seam’d and crippled” by the effects of sin (1-4, 9-12). In “Patriarchal Faith,” as after the flood when Noah’s family saw the rainbow and “faith could e’en that desolate scene admire,” so at the end of time, “while the gross earth melts, for judgment ripe, / Ne’er with its haughty turrets to emerge,” the faith of the elect will find that desolation to be a scene of beauty as they “mount up to Eden’s long-lost gate” (12-4). Other poems advocate resistance to the false temptations of the world. In “Chastisement” the speaker offers thanks particularly for periods of suffering and ends with the plea, “Deny me wealth; far, far remove / The lure of power or name; / Hope thrives in straits, in weakness love, / And faith in this world’s shame” (33-6). Other poems decrying earthly fame, power, wisdom, and pleasures include, for example, “Wanderings,” “England” (a stern warning against national pride), “Abraham,”

“Melchizedek,” “Obscurity,” “Forebodings,” “The Age to Come,” and “Deeds Not Words.”<sup>22</sup>

A handful of poems hold an intermediary place between the early and late expressions of Newman’s understanding of the imagination which I have illustrated here primarily through the examples of “The Pillar of the Cloud” and “The Dream of Gerontius.”<sup>23</sup> The 1833 poem “Messena” expresses—or confesses—doubt in the speaker’s true detachment from the world. He wonders that, “wedded to the Lord” (which phrase again links spiritual purity with celibacy and detachment from earthly ties), his heart should still yearn after the “scenes of ancient heathen fame” as sung by poets of “sweet art” and “shades of power” (LA 1-5). He concludes that his yearning springs from “sympathy with Adam’s race” that identifies with those long dead through their common humanity (9-10).<sup>24</sup> This is one of very few hints in Newman’s *Lyra Apostolica* contributions that sympathy, not just with the communion of saints, but with the whole human race may be a virtue in its own right. In “Prayer” (1835), the theme of sympathy recurs: Moses is represented on Mount Sinai as being first

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<sup>22</sup> The poems mentioned in this paragraph appeared in the *Verses on Various Occasions* under the titles “The Hidden Ones,” “The Course of Truth,” “The Scars of Sin,” “Hope,” “A Thanksgiving,” “Wanderings,” “England,” “Abraham,” “Melchizedek,” “Humiliation,” “Declension,” and “The Age to Come,” respectively.

<sup>23</sup> Much remains to be said about “The Dream of Gerontius,” which has been used here primarily as a point of contrast with Newman’s early work. Therefore, after describing how the transitional poems and novels fit into the chronological development of Newman’s understanding of the imagination, I will return to “The Dream of Gerontius” at the end of this chapter to explore other ways in which it serves as the last and most complete poetic expression of Newman’s late theory of the imagination.

<sup>24</sup> The poem’s epigraph is the well-known quotation of Terence, “*Homo sum; humani nil a me alienum puto.*” The epigraph fittingly describes the theme of the poem and strikingly sets it apart from verses of the same period such as “The True Elect,” which emphasize the special separation of the holy from the rest of humanity. Newman’s focus on pre-Christian ages in this poem seems to have allowed him to relax his habitual anxiety to separate faithful from reprobate, although the opening of the poem still maintains the distinction.

drawn toward the vision of paradise he receives there but then recalled to earth and to his people's need of an intercessor. He, the great exemplar of faith, descends the mountain to remain with "his flock" (20).<sup>25</sup>

One remarkable poem argues for the dignity of the human body, even of the dead body. In "The Resurrection" (1833), Newman's speaker meditates on the bodies of those whose souls are with God; it is "as if the motionless clay / Still held the seeds of life beneath the sod, / Smouldering and struggling till the judgment-day" (LA 2-4). His image of the remains of the deceased still "struggling" implies the spiritual efficacy of the veneration of relics. From this practice, "we learn with reverence to esteem / Of these frail houses, though the grave confines; / Sophist may urge his cunning tests, and deem / That they are earth;—but they are heavenly shrines" (5-8).<sup>26</sup> The destabilization of a strict separation between body and spirit, life and death anticipates an important effect in "The Dream of Gerontius," as will be discussed below. However, in this early poem the effect is described only hypothetically—it is "as if" the clay held the seeds of life—whereas in the later poem, what is here a metaphor useful for teaching a lesson becomes a reality.

The guiltless appreciation of natural beauty appears in a very few places in Newman's *Lyra Apostolica* poems. In "Taurominium," the speaker wonders that such natural beauty could be found in "[t]his blighted world" and proposes that the vision be stored in the heart against "coming pains and fears" (LA 4, 9-10). In sentiment, the poem is reminiscent of Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely

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<sup>25</sup> These two poems appeared in the *Verses on Various Occasions* under the titles "Messina" and "Intercession of Saints."

<sup>26</sup> "The Resurrection" is entitled "Relics of Saints" in the *Verses on Various Occasions*.

as a Cloud," although an important point of contrast lies in the total absence in Newman's poem of any description of the natural beauty to which the speaker refers. In the poem entitled "Removal" (1833), the speaker casts about for one who can sympathize with him in his "joy serene, / Which flows upon me from the view / Of crag and steep ravine" (2-4). Finding that neither his "sainted Friends" nor the angels can share this joy, he turns to the "Saviour Lord" who can sympathize with the speaker's joy through his shared humanity (1, 13, 21-4). This rather strange poem, though it allows for a love of the world's created beauty, isolates the speaker in his appreciation of it until the reader is left with the "two and two only absolute and luminously self-evident beings" from the *Apologia*, the speaker and God (134).<sup>27</sup>

The reader finds an appreciation for natural beauty developed much more fully in the poem "To Edward Caswall" of 1858. Whereas in the earlier lyrics Newman makes only very general references to mountains, plants, woods, and seas, in this later poem one encounters hawthorn and chestnut decked with "vernal blossoms" and "light green leaves," a "prodigal laburnum, dropping gold," and "rich gorse" (VV 3-7). Plants gaze into a pool, and angels gaze analogously into Edward Caswell's poetry, seeking to see themselves reflected there not, as Narcissus, out of self-love, but in order to find "delight" and "sympathy" in the vision of the self reflected in the other (14-6). In this complex metaphor, the poem draws together created nature, himself, the other poet, and the angels and saints in one activity, the search for oneself in another. The poem

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<sup>27</sup> "Taurominium" and "Removal" are entitled "Taormini" and "Sympathy" in the *Verses on Various Occasions*. Somewhat surprisingly, Newman later edited the line "Of crag and steep ravine" to the less visually specific "Of mountain, plain, and sea."

is a series of reflections: plants reflected in a pool, the whole scene reflected in Newman's poem, Newman's poem a reflection and sympathetic tribute to Caswell's, and Caswell's poem a reflection of the beauty of paradise. The images culminate when the angels discover in "that mirror pure" "a heaven on earth" (28, 30). This final phrase, anticipating another important theme in "The Dream of Gerontius," shows how far Newman has moved from the heavy emphasis on the enmity between the world and the Christian in the *Lyra Apostolica*.<sup>28</sup>

In "The Month of Mary" (1850), written after Newman's conversion to Catholicism, the speaker seems to go within a single poem from a suspicious attitude toward natural beauty to one that perceives its participation in a divine symbolic order. The poem takes the form of a song in which longer verses alternate with quatrains labeled "Chorus." The chorus sections do not repeat exactly, however; instead, they progress from one view of natural beauty to a contrasting view. The song begins with images of the beauties of spring, followed by a prayer in the first chorus that these beauties may not corrupt the viewer: "O Mother maid, be thou our aid, / Now in the opening year; / Lest sights of earth to sin give birth, / And bring the tempter near" (VV 9-12). In the second chorus, which echoes Revelation 12.1, elements of celestial nature—the moon and stars—become Mary's adornments (22-3). Finally, the third verse describes how the "green green grass" and "glittering grove" "image forth" the beauties of paradise, while in the third chorus, it is "Our garlands" that the

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<sup>28</sup> This move is not to be interpreted as a rejection of the need for spiritual detachment or the legitimacy of an attitude of *contemptus mundi*. The 1862 poem "The Two Worlds," indeed, returns to the treatment of the "gaudy world" as deceitful and paltry compared with the world of the spirit. I do not mean to argue that, in shifting the emphasis of his imaginative works, Newman came to reverse his position on the need for penance, the dangers of earthly temptation, or the excellence of ascetical discipline.

speaker asks Mary to “wear about thy hair” (25, 27, 35-6). Likewise, in “The Queen of Seasons” (1850), the speaker opens by proclaiming that “All is divine / which the Highest has made,” ranging “Above and below, / within and around, / From the centre of space / to its uttermost bound” (1-2, 5-8). This verse combines an uninhibited appreciation of natural beauty, which does not hesitate to call it “divine” and does not apologize for attributing spiritual excellence to material creation, with a sense of the unity of all creation.

The poems of the 1850’s praising St. Philip Neri, the founder of the Oratorian order, admire his physical appearance and sensory appeal, leaving behind any sense that the “True Elect” must appear unattractive to worldly eyes. For example, the speaker of “St. Philip in himself” praises his “sweet aspect,” “his head of snow, / His ready smile, his keen full eye,” and even the “grace of his address” and “the sweet music of his face” (VV 15, 17-8, 25-6). The speaker prays that Philip will help the Oratorians to copy his “loveliness” (31). The ascetic pilgrim wanderer, outcast from society and detached from all earthly beauty, here gives way before a new portrait of sainthood that combines physical, emotional, spiritual, and artistic appeal to address the whole person of everyone he meets. Similarly, in “St. Philip in his School,” the speaker describes Philip’s method of overcoming the allure of the world by pointing to a path that is both “holy” and “pleasant” (5-6, 13).

Immediately after his conversion to Roman Catholicism, Newman turned from poetry, which until then had been his primary mode of composing imaginative literature (except for the satirical passages and portraits in his letters), to novels. As Alan Hill points out, this change from poetry to prose fiction is accompanied by an “openness to the passing shows of the world” that

“was indeed part of his empiricist inheritance” and had long been reflected in his letters (“Originality and Realism” 21, 28). Both as a letter-writer and a novelist, Newman writes in a very different mode from the poet who could be accused of “forg[etting] the world” (Edgecombe 34). Hill suggests that Newman may have needed to gain firsthand experience before attempting to describe religious conversion in a realist novel or address “issues that might otherwise have seemed sectarian or remote” (“Originality and Realism” 25). It is likely that the relative indeterminacy of his novels, their interpretative openness compared with his earlier lyrics, may reflect the complexity of lived experience contrasted with the neater categories made possible by theoretical abstraction.

*Loss and Gain: The Story of a Convert* (1848) is in its own way a transitional work in the development of the theory of imagination traced in the previous chapter. In place of the poems’ spirit of *contemptus mundi* the reader finds instead, alongside its keen satirical portraits, a finely-realized portrait of grief at separation from friends, family, and beloved scenes. The balance between loss and gain implied by the very rhythm of the novel’s title demands that there be a certain equality between what is lost and what is gained, suggesting that the things of this world—family, friendships, and future hopes—which the protagonist sacrifices for his conversion are more than mere dross and temptation. Moreover, from its opening the novel concerns itself less with promoting a definite theological project like the verses in the *Lyra Apostolica* and more with representing the particular conversion of a particular character. In this way, *Loss and Gain* manifests Newman’s changing attitude regarding the purpose of the artistic imagination from being the abstraction from the ordinary and common-place to the “eternal forms of beauty and perfection” that is

“ultimately founded on right moral perception” to being instead the recognition that one is comprehended by that which is greater than oneself, which includes both a divinely created order and a rich, various, colorful human tradition that sometimes reflects and sometimes rejects that order (*Ess.* 1:10, 20; *HS* 2:387; *Idea* 219-20, 237).

One contemporary reviewer of *Loss and Gain* describes it as being, not a novel at all, but rather a work whose object is “to trace the gradual working of Grace upon a mind” (Francis 218). This claim assumes that the novel’s author means his readers to discern evidence of a divine agent not only influencing Charles Reding’s spiritual and intellectual journey but ultimately authorizing and confirming his conclusion, which is conversion to Roman Catholicism.<sup>29</sup> Yet in the Advertisement to the first edition, Newman explicitly declares that the book “is not intended as a work of controversy in behalf of the Catholic Religion, but as a description of what is understood by few, viz., the course of thought and state of mind,—or rather one such course and state,—which issues in conviction of its Divine origin” (*LG* 6). It is so tempting to consider *Loss and Gain* primarily as a polemical work—this was, after all, Newman’s first published work following his own reception into the Roman Catholic Church—that one can miss the deliberate restraint that makes this novel truly dialogic.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Summarizing contemporary reviews of the novel, Hill concludes that “the freshness and subtlety of *Loss and Gain* were largely lost on its early readers who divided, for and against, on predictable denominational lines” and suggests that their “initial mistake was to treat the novel as didactic, or prescriptive” (“Originality and Realism” 35-6).

<sup>30</sup> For a valuable study of the “surprisingly modern dialogical structure” of *Loss and Gain*, see Block, “Venture and Response,” in which he explores the “advance and retreat, the vision and re-vision” that is Newman’s primary technique in the novel (23-4). Reflecting on Newman’s frequently-employed method of “saying and unsaying” statements about belief in his non-fiction prose, approaching an ever more perfect expression of the inexpressible by the accumulation of many faulty images and formulae, Coulson compares his technique to that of Dostoyevsky in *The*

From the novel's opening pages, the reader is cautioned against the dangers of placing too confident an interpretation on the spiritual condition of another. This caution comes in the words of Charles's father, an Anglican clergyman who knows his son very well and who is consistently presented as a moral if not a doctrinal authority in the narrative. "'There is no telling what is in a boy's heart,'" the elder Reding reflects; "he may look as open and happy as usual, and be as kind and attentive, when there is a great deal wrong going on within. The heart is a secret with its Maker; no one on earth can hope to get at it or to touch it" (LG 11). However, the elder Reding's reflection is reversed in Part II when Charles, intimating his doubts about Anglicanism to his sister Mary, wonders whether the people around him (many of whom have suspected him of tending toward Roman Catholicism) might see him more clearly than he sees himself, and might by interpreting his exterior have a clearer view of where he is headed than he does (213-4). The question that emerges from these two scenes, whether one gains a clearer and more accurate interpretation by viewing the exterior from without or by experiencing the interior from within, remains unresolved.

This lack of resolution about so fundamental a question has far-reaching implications for an interpretation of Reding's final act of conversion. As he approaches London and finally resolves to go through with his plan, he is aided in his resolution by the assurance of the priest he meets on the train that "faith is

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*Brothers Karamazov*. "Why has this got to be a long book," he asks, "in which the characters speak at length, collide with each other, and contradict themselves? Because this, too, has to be a 'saying and unsaying' in order to fashion the meaning adequately." Such a method inevitably produces "anxiety" and "ambiguity" along the way (*Religion and Imagination* 61, 64-5). Such anxiety, I propose, would not have been received as a comfortable accompaniment to conversion to Roman Catholicism for the late nineteenth-century hierarchy.

a venture before a man is a Catholic; it is a gift after it" (LG 317); or, in other words, that his experience of inner peace after his reception into the Catholic Church will finally confirm his decision and will enable him to rest in certainty. However, the two began speaking because each recognized outward signs that identified them to one another, and almost their first exchange is about how "every class has its external indications to those who can read them." They go on to mention handwriting and gait as other external signs of "calling and character," each sign forming "a language . . . , as really as hieroglyphics on an obelisk," until finally the priest concludes that "A man's moral self . . . is concentrated in each moment of his life; it lives in the tips of his fingers, and the spring of his insteps" (312). A person can be read, therefore, from within and from without, and the question of which method offers the better interpretive guide is undecided even at the end of the novel.<sup>31</sup> Ultimately, the portrait of Charles Reding the reader gains at the end of the novel is based on the accumulation of many imperfect interpretations—akin to the accumulation of probabilities that informs the illative sense in the *Grammar of Assent*—from

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<sup>31</sup> In an insightful analysis of the interplay of revelation and concealment in *Loss and Gain*, David Bradshaw shows that silence—both of the characters and of the narrator—functions as a literary device central to the spiritual themes of the novel. Newman's "concern with secrecy and discretion," he argues, "would seem not some subliminal urge to repress or mystify what is disturbing but rather a conspicuous decision to acknowledge silence and secrecy as means through which a spiritual force can actualize itself" ("Secrecy and Reticence" 49). The same device becomes yet another form of restraint that prevents the novel from becoming argumentative. By surrounding the full details of Reding's conversion with a certain veil of mystery, Newman leaves the reader space to share or reject his protagonist's spiritual decision. In this way, he makes room for a reader's doubt and disbelief—he abdicates control over the reader's spiritual experience of the novel—without undermining his protagonist's final state of religious certainty and peace.

Bradshaw's reading augments that of David De Laura, who provides a detailed investigation of Newman's characteristically reserved prose technique and identifies it as anticipating, and to some degree influencing the stylistic innovations of Arnold and Pater. Thus Newman's avoidance of "the exuberance and extravagance of Macaulay, Carlyle, De Quincey, and Ruskin" contributes to the delicate touch with which his prose works on his readers and at the same time becomes a further point of connection between Newman and these theologically problematic writers ("Some Victorian Experiments" 19).

Charles's own introspections to the thoughts of his father, sisters, friends, teachers, tutors, and even the views of the public and the newspapers. One is reminded of Newman's preface to the "Legend of St. Gundleus," in which he represents the creation of a fictional character—in that case, a figure of hagiographical legend—as a communal and historical process, a product of "the sympathy of many minds, and the concert of many voices, and the lapse of many years" by which "a certain whole figure is developed with words and actions, a history and a character,—which is indeed but the *portrait* of the original, yet is as much as a portrait, an imitation rather than a copy, a likeness on the whole, but in its particulars more or less the work of imagination" which is "but collateral and parallel to the truth" ("Legend of St. Gundleus" 7-10).

The same caution about the adequacy of any one person's interpretation applies to Reding's religious conclusions. Some readers take Charles's friend Sheffield's repeated analyses of the difference between realities and "shams" to be a central theme of the novel resolved for Reding in sacramental Catholicism, in which external signs effect spiritual realities.<sup>32</sup> Sheffield's protest focuses on the ignorance or separation of outer form from inner meaning, which he views as a kind of hypocrisy. In Part I, Sheffield hungers after consistency between inner meaning and outer appearance. However, a narrative comment from the same part undermines the confident Sheffield's habit of making sweeping

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<sup>32</sup> On their first walk through Oxford, Sheffield protests against college dress as being "mere outside, and nothing else", while he confidently proclaims that "outside without inside" is "fudge" (LG 17, see also 28-33 for Sheffield's further reflections on "shams"). The ridiculous Bateman falls under this censure with his praise of "improvements" to church decoration of which he does not know the meaning or ignores the tradition, and the reader finds him later accused of the same ludicrous disregard for the inner meaning of objects and rituals in his bizarre composite vestment (20-3, 46-8, 224-5). Vincent, the tutor with no views, is another character described as "ever mistaking shams for truths, and converting pompous nothings into oracles" (69).

condemnations of people and practices as “shams.” “[I]n all collections of men,” the narrator remarks, “the straw and rubbish (as Lord Bacon says) float on the top, while gold and jewels sink and are hidden. Or, what is more apposite still, many men, or most men, are a compound of precious and worthless together, and their worthless swims, and their precious lies at the bottom” (LG 27). This view of humanity as being largely composed of “composite creatures” provides a gentler counterpoint to Sheffield’s view. On one hand, the reader has the hasty and undergraduate desire that all surfaces express their inner meaning consistently, while on the other hand the more mature narrator’s voice presents human nature, from the Oxford party leaders (“the most exemplary men of that day”) to the boring and comical Bateman (who yet has “much good and much cleverness in him”), as confused and complex mixtures of outer dross and inner wealth (27-8). This makes all such people “shams” by Sheffield’s definition, yet the narrator treats them with dignity and sympathy, recognizing their inconsistency to be a common human trait. This narrative comment problematizes any adaptation of Sheffield’s opinions about “shams” as an interpretative key to Reding’s spiritual drama. The tension between these two views persists as a recurring theme throughout the novel.<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, though Reding comes to a state of “moral certainty” regarding the divine origin of Roman Catholicism, there are within the narrative several open-ended discussions that refuse to allow Reding’s or Newman’s to be the only legitimate religious conclusions a thoughtful, sensitive, devout, and

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<sup>33</sup> Indeed, as Hill concludes in his analysis of Newman’s diction and style throughout the novel, “No one [character] has the monopoly of wisdom, and the truth emerges through different speakers who press the argument forward in an ideal tutorial (or Platonic) situation. Each has his own idiom and tone of voice” (“Originality and Realism” 29).

inquiring soul might reach (LG 316). Reding's father, for example, offers a constant reminder of the possibility of faithful Christian life within the Anglican establishment. The staunchly Protestant Mrs. Bolton,<sup>34</sup> a minor character, rebukes her daughters Louisa and Charlotte by reminding them of the devotional value of the Prayer Book as a consolation: "I value the Prayer Book as you cannot do, my love . . . for I have known what it is to one deep in affliction" (61). The shallow university preacher Dr. Brownside is mocked for preaching that all religious differences are due to bad reasoning, so that if everyone but understood, all would believe in the same way; Reding instinctively rejects this theory and is never seriously tempted by it (63-4). Among converts to Catholicism, motives and timetables also vary. Speaking during a conversation at Bateman's after his conversion, Willis admits that some Protestants are converted merely by the sight of Catholic worship, whereas others are perplexed and alienated (259). In the novel's final chapter, Reding and Willis (now Father Aloysius) both protest that the other took the better way; Reding accuses himself of waiting too long, and Willis replies, "If you speak of delay, must not I of rashness? A good God rules over all things" (354). Father Aloysius's wisdom recognizes that both journeys have been imperfect, neither representing an ideal or exemplary spiritual journey which others ought to follow. This justifies Ian Ker's comment that "The issue for the hero Charles

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<sup>34</sup> In the face of her daughters' Catholic opinions, Mrs. Bolton exclaims, "[G]ive me good old George the Third and the Protestant religion. Those were the times!" (LG 61).

Reding becomes not so much which is the *true* religion, but which is the *real* religion" ("Newman the Satirist" 15).<sup>35</sup>

The personal quality of Reding's spiritual and intellectual journey—particular as it is to his subjective experience without being subjective in the Modernist sense, that is, purely an experience of religious emotion without requiring assent to doctrinal content—is mirrored in a series of comments he and the narrator make about the natural world. In these passages readers may discern still more clearly the novel's interpretative openness, its refusal to act upon its readers with a strong hand and force them to certain conclusions, theological or aesthetic. Near the beginning of the novel, the narrator identifies Reding as being "in the season of poetry":

Without being himself a poet, he was in the season of poetry, in the sweet spring-time, when the year is most beautiful, because it is new. Novelty was beauty to a heart so open and cheerful as his; not only because it was novelty, and had its proper charm as such, but because when we first see things, we see them in a 'gay confusion,' which is the principal element of the poetical. As time goes on, and we number and sort and measure things—as we gain views—we advance towards philosophy and truth, but we recede from poetry. (LG 25-6)

In Reding, this "season of poetry" manifests itself as "a great notion of loving everyone—of looking kindly on every one," whether "labourer or horseman, gentleman or beggar" (25). The narrator digresses by introducing a rare personal anecdote that associates him sympathetically with his protagonist, recounting how a particular walk at first struck him as beautiful "because every object which met us was unknown and full of mystery," while later with familiarity "the scene ceased to enchant, stern reality alone remained; and we thought it one

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<sup>35</sup> Indeed, for Newman, arrival at religious certitude includes making "the objects of assent subjectively our own" (Coulson, *Religion and Imagination* 59).

of the most tiresome, odious roads we ever had occasion to traverse" (26). The narrator's use of the word "reality" here is significantly inappropriate: neither the former emotion of wonder nor the latter emotion of jaded disgust can truly be called "reality," as both are emotionally subjective. Given the novel's engagement with the theme of reality versus sham, the word stands out to the reader in its misapplication here. The effect is to introduce a fleeting lapse in confidence in the objective status of "reality" as any character, including the narrator, perceives it.

This momentary doubt about the objective status of "reality" is reinforced by instances of what Ruskin would identify as the "pathetic fallacy," though his explication of the term in *Modern Painters* III would not appear until 1856. Moments in which nature loses its idyllic charm coincide for Reding with autumn, the season in which his father died (*LG* 133).<sup>36</sup> Later, Reding finds the appearance of his summer home changed as "[t]he hopes of spring, the peace and calm of summer, had given place to the sad realities of autumn" (194). Here is the word "reality" again, again apparently misapplied to describe Reding's subjective experience of autumn as inseparable from grief at his father's death. In another autumn, Reding debates with his sisters about whether the season is beautiful or sad. His sister Mary argues on behalf of painters that autumn is best

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<sup>36</sup> The news of Charles's father's death shocks him out of his preoccupation with religious controversy, and in its wake he reflects, "He felt now *where* his heart and his life lay. His birth, his parentage, his education, his home, were great realities; to these his being was united; out of these he grew" (*LG* 134-5). Reality is here connected with Reding's heart and life, *not* with his mind and its notions; the distinction between real and notional apprehension from the *Grammar of Assent* and the relative power of real apprehension to impress the imagination and affect behavior is here dramatized. Again, reality for Reding belongs in the realm of his experience, with all its subjective limitations, its susceptibility to variations of emotion and mood, and its inseparability from a particular time and phase of life. In this novel, the real is neither stable nor directly translatable from one person's experience to another.

for landscape painting because of the rich variety of colors, which may give pleasure for their own sake (208); Charles “can’t separate the look of things from what it portends; that rich variety is but the token of disease and death,” and autumn is “the sick season and the deathbed of Nature” (209). His sisters accuse him of introducing his melancholy into other aesthetic experiences, remembering that he has dubbed one of Beethoven’s compositions “The Voice of the Dead,” a certain walk “Ghost of the Past,” and the sound of an Aeolian harp “remorseful.” Charles retorts that they would appreciate such sentiments if they found them represented in a book of poems, and his fourteen-year-old sister Caroline replies that this is because “poets never mean what they say, and would not be poetical unless they were melancholy” (210). This family debate on the relationship of art to reality occupies a central place in the narrative, and though its connection with the progress of Charles’s religious inquiry is subtle, it is not merely accidental. Charles’s memories, studies, and reflections all color his experience of nature inescapably, yet his sisters, who shared his grief and his loss, experience the same phenomena with radically different emotional responses and interpretations.<sup>37</sup> When, therefore, the reader finally encounters the phrase Newman adapted to be inscribed on his tombstone, its context makes its meaning far less straightforward than an interpretation in parallel to the Platonic allegory of the cave would have it seem. Charles tells his sister that his growing disillusionment with Anglicanism is a “coming out of shadows into realities”

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<sup>37</sup> Another instance of Reding’s susceptibility to the pathetic fallacy arises in his final departure from Oxford. Reding takes comfort in the fact that on such a frosty, misty morning, “all was in unison with the state of his feelings” (374-5).

(215); at this point the reader can hardly assume the word “reality” to mean something, as it were, objectively true.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, Reding’s mounting attraction to Roman Catholicism increasingly assumes the characteristics of a response to aesthetic experience. Returning from an evening at Bateman’s, he crosses a landscape imported from the conventions of Romantic poetry, a scene of bright moonlight and a tall cross reflected in a pool of water venerated for its “miraculous virtue.” The inhabitant of this dreamlike scene, an unnamed and silent man who uses a medieval discipline and disappears at Charles’s approach, might be a guardian-spirit or figment of the imagination (*LG* 241-2); his status as being “real” is not only suspect by his appearance in this setting but is in the end irrelevant to his role in the novel. The paper arguments Charles finds waiting for him at home inspire nothing like the vividly emotional response in Charles that this vision does. During his next visit to Bateman’s, he is again moved not by arguments but by Willis’s monologue on the beauties of the Mass. Part of this passage bears quoting not only because it anticipates images from the Benediction that Reding witnesses in London when his “season of poetry” returns but also because Willis’s (or rather Newman’s) prosody is remarkably poetic:<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> This is not to imply that, either in this novel or in Newman’s mature aesthetics in general, there is no concept of a reality that transcends subjective experience. Newman would not have gone along with the Modernists in their definition of religion as subjective, and his confidence in a reality that exceeds the individual perceiving self is fundamental to his aesthetics. However, as these examples in *Loss and Gain* illustrate, he uses the same term, “reality,” indiscriminately to describe both an objective realm that transcends the individual and that which is perceived by each human character (including the narrator). In doing so, he creates ambiguity and refuses to grant the reader a final confidence in the objective “reality” of any of the characters’ experiences or conclusions.

<sup>39</sup> Hill describes this speech as “the most elevated passage of rhetoric in the novel” (“Originality and Realism” 29).

[L]ike a concert of musical instruments, each different, but concurring in a sweet harmony, we take our part with God's priest, supporting him, yet guided by him. There are little children there, and old men, and simple labourers, and students in seminaries, priests preparing for Mass, priests making their thanksgiving; there are innocent maidens, and there are penitent sinners; but out of these many minds rises one eucharistic hymn, and the great Action is the measure and scope of it. (270)

This passage, rhythmic without being strictly metrical, creates repetition and contrast through parallelism in a way not unlike the pattern of Hebrew poetry.<sup>40</sup>

Willis's poetry, succeeded by his kiss, moves Charles to the response which Newman describes in "The Mission of St. Benedict" as being the purpose of aesthetic experience: he "felt himself possessed, he knew not how, by a high superhuman power, which seemed able to push through mountains, and to walk the sea. . . . He perceived that he had found, what indeed he had never sought, because he had never known what it was, but what he had ever wanted—a soul sympathetic to his own" (272). Both of these passages stand out vividly in the reader's mind; they seem especially dramatic in contrast to the novel's many long debates over theological subtleties, and they become therefore climactic moments in Reding's journey toward religious conversion. Thus, Newman constructs his novel in such a way that religious and aesthetic experiences merge at Reding's most significant moments of surrender.

Reding's experience at the end of the novel finally undermines the narrator's early suggestion that his maturation will represent an "advance toward philosophy and truth" and corresponding recession away "from poetry." After Charles's long search for clarity and intellectual certainty, he puts aside

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<sup>40</sup> These characteristics of Hebrew poetry were first described by Robert Lowth in his 1753 *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*.

argument—literally, in putting aside the paper “Questions for one whom it concerns,” which attempts to address and systematize in catechetical form the questions troubling him (*LG* 242-3)—and accepts the words of the priest he meets on the train to London: ““You must make a venture; faith is a venture before a man is a Catholic”” (317). Upon entering the Passionist church, he walks through the front door into a scene of “gay confusion,” a crowd of worshippers engaged in several various devotional activities he does not understand (348-50). The narrator’s description of this congregation emphasizes its variety in words that echo Charles’s earlier desire to love “labourer or horseman, gentleman or beggar” as a fellow Christian: “rich and poor were mixed together—artisans, well-dressed youths, Irish labourers, mothers with two or three children. . . . There was no mistaking it; Reding said to himself, ‘This is a popular religion’” (350). Finally, after his reception into the Catholic Church, the narrator recounts that his subsequent feeling of peace “was such as to throw him back in memory on his earliest years, as if he were really beginning life again. But there was more than the happiness of childhood in his heart; he seemed to feel a rock under his feet” (353). Thus it becomes clear that Charles has returned to the original “season of poetry” from which he receded through his period of long and sober inquiry.<sup>41</sup> This return is not simply a “regaining” of the same state he lost, but is rather a return with the addition of a sense of solid foundation to the joy and sense of shared Christian unity. Yet it is nonetheless a return to poetry—or to music; he likens the congregation to “one vast instrument or Panharmonicon” (350); while he once told his sister he was “coming out of shadows into realities,”

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<sup>41</sup> Reding’s return to a childlike state of “poetry” is similar to that of Gerontius in the embrace of his guardian angel (see n. 20 above).

he now feels a “thrill of delight” at the realization “that he was beneath the shadow of a Catholic community” (351). This shadow is not different from the reality he has just encountered; his movement from shadow to reality does not displace the shadow, even as his growth from childhood to adulthood does not withdraw him from the “season of poetry.”

To a church moving into an increasingly defensive stance against the Modernists, who emphasized the subjective and emotional experience of religion as being the source of its authenticity, close examination of these features of Newman’s art in *Loss and Gain* would have aligned him uncomfortably with the heterodox side. The novel’s ambiguity about “reality,” applying the term equally to religious truth and to personal and aesthetic experience goes directly against the grain of a church movement that considered the assertion of ecclesiastical authority and of the doctrine of *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* to be of great pastoral urgency. This is not to say that anything in *Loss and Gain* undermines or rejects either the legitimate role of the Church’s Magisterial authorities or the necessity of the Church for salvation; Reding, indeed, comes to believe as Newman did that his eternal salvation depends on his conversion. However, the novel does not insist, does not compel, refuses to control, and leaves its protagonist’s spiritual journey open to many interpretations. This is entirely in keeping with Newman’s growing conviction that the imagination’s purpose is to recognize and allow itself to be moved by something beyond it, but it is entirely out of keeping with what neo-ultramontane and anti-Modernist Church authorities allowed to be the proper purpose of art.

While *Loss and Gain* occupies an important place in Newman’s transition from the earlier to the later view of the role of imagination in religious and

aesthetic experience, his second novel, *Callista: A Tale of the Third Century* (1855), is an artistic realization of his mature view. Overtly a meditation on religious conversion, its narrative also traces another kind of conversion in the title character's experience of artistic creation and of the imagination. Callista begins the novel as a maker of images intended for idolatrous worship, and she ends it a Christian martyr: in the course of the novel, she goes from being the proud master of the images she creates to becoming herself a work of art who is, by her physical death, incorporated into the work of another, absorbed into a symbolic tradition larger than her own life, and joined with the rest of the human race and with all of created nature in its progress toward sanctification. Her transformation from pagan image-maker to Christian martyr does not involve a rejection of art or earthly beauty but rather a realization that when, as in "The Dream of Gerontius," "heaven grows out of earth," then earthly beauty becomes more beautiful (VV 703).

Newman could have chosen from many types of atheist or idolater to convert in his tale; he chose an artist, a sensitive and intelligent devotee of beauty. Descriptions of Callista before her conversion associate her pride with her role as artist. She begins the novel working in the image-shop of Jucundus, "one of the most showy shops in Sicca," "bright with the many colours adopted in the embellishment of images" and made to suit all tastes (*Call.* 39). She herself worships nothing (118). At the beginning of the novel Jucundus calls her "the divine Callista" because of her personal beauty as well as her artistic talents (64). This title likens her to the images she has created, and Jucundus and others hope she will serve their purpose both as artist and as work of art, becoming an idol to rival the Christian God in Agellius's affections and at the same time shaping

Agellius the way she sculpts her images.<sup>42</sup> And as the narrator makes clear through Agellius's focalizing point of view, Callista's artistic accomplishments are in large part the basis of his attraction to her. Rationalizing his desire to propose to her, he recalls the beauty of her singing, her playing on the lyre, and her liveliness as an actress (96). She is also one of the only two characters in the novel who composes poetry; the other is Juba, an even clearer image of the Satanic pride that sets oneself up as a rival to God.<sup>43</sup> As Hill has pointed out, both characters are Byronic, though in different ways—Callista's poems, the expressions of "an unsatisfied soul pining for a deeper philosophy of life and indifferent to the reality of death," "are Byronic in flavour," while as "a picture of natural, unregenerate man, who rejects all restraint," Juba resembles and is explicitly compared to a Satan figure of the Byronic or Miltonic type ("Three 'Visions'" 341). For Newman, Byron was "the embodiment of the modern spirit of revolt and self-will" (341-2).<sup>44</sup> Callista herself upbraids Agellius for his own spirit of "revolt and self-will," accusing him of being the type of artist she herself

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<sup>42</sup> For example, Jucundus asks Juba, "why shouldn't he [Agellius] worship a handsome Greek girl as well as any of those mummies and death's heads and bogies of his" (*Call.* 66). Jucundus jokes about her "plastic hand" shaping Agellius and insists that she "must take in her hand this piece of wax, sing a charm, and mould him into a Vertumnus" (65, 67). He concludes that a persecution of Christians will work "only as a background to bring out the painting; the Muse singing, all in light, relieved by sardix or sepia" (68). Agellius comes to propose to her with an offering of the best flowers from his garden, and though he protests when Aristo suggests he offer them to Athena as patroness of artists, the reader perceives the irony in his bringing an offering to one patroness of the arts but refusing it to another (125). Later, she condemns Agellius for worshipping her rather than for showing her the true charity of introducing her to his faith (131).

<sup>43</sup> In the "document" the narrator quotes as an authentic account of her trial, Callista is identified as "a maker of images," recalling to the reader's mind that the word "poet" comes from the Greek word meaning "maker" (*Call.* 360).

<sup>44</sup> Further evidence that Newman intended to establish a similarity between Callista and Juba lies in the fact that both, at different points in the novel, play the role of Pentheus from the Greek tragedy *The Bacchae*. Callista entertains Agellius by performing in this role, and Juba quotes from the play in Greek during his possession (*Call.* 96-7, 271). In his essay on Aristotle's *Poetics*, Newman describes this play as a drama "of extreme poetical power" (*Ess.* 1:7).

has been: she argues that he has treated her as if she is his own creation (*Call.* 129-30).

Callista feels an Augustinian restlessness and testifies to it in her first conversation with Caecilius (Bishop Cyprianus of Carthage in hiding). However, her testimony and her experience of conversion reveal a critical difference between the kind of conversion presented in Newman's novel and that described in Augustine's *Confessions*. Broadly speaking, Augustine describes his gradual turn from a sensual to a spiritual life in the course of which he leaves behind a woman with whom he has had a child. Callista, on the other hand, leaves behind an ideal that has existed only in her imagination for a reality that engages her whole being, physical, emotional, rational, and spiritual. In making this turn, she does not leave behind earthly beauty but discovers its relationship to spiritual beauty—discovers that it is part of something greater than itself—and comes to behold a beauty that is more complete and more expansive than earthly beauty alone. She laments to Caecilius, "Here I am a living, breathing woman, with an overflowing heart, with keen affections, with a yearning after some object which may possess me" (*Call.* 132). Therefore, though others perceive her as having the calm "of Greek sculpture" that "image[s] a soul nourished upon the visions of genius, and subdued and attuned by the power of a strong will," she longs to be recognized as alive, human, feminine, and individual, and in that recognition she yearns to be possessed by something greater than herself. Tired of being worshipped, she wants to worship, to find something that will both exceed and possess her. At the same time, according to the definition of the poetic Newman has offered in the "Mission of St. Benedict" essay, Callista longs for an experience of the poetic (*HS* 2:387). Rather than leaving behind a loving embrace, she finds

one: she and other characters reiterate that her conversion is an espousal, her martyrdom a marriage, and this consummation of her life is a physical as well as spiritual realization of her commitment to Christianity.<sup>45</sup>

Throughout the novel, the experiences that inspire worship are not only religious but also aesthetic. Newman's tendency to unite spiritually and aesthetically rich experiences, previously noted in the climactic scenes of *Loss and Gain*, becomes even more pronounced in *Callista*. First, as has been mentioned, Agellius's fascination with Callista centers on her beauty and artistic accomplishments and verges on worship. After Callista's conversation with Caecilius, the narrator specifically mentions that it is his image rather than his words that stands out in Callista's mind, and "she really felt drawn to worship him, as if he were the shrine and the home of that Presence to which he bore such solemn witness" (*Call.* 294-5). She experiences the Gospel, too, as an image: "That image sank deep into her; she felt it to be a reality" and "no poet's dream" (326). Though the narrator contrasts this reality with a "poet's dream," it is nonetheless an aesthetic experience; the crucial point is that it exceeds any of her poetic dreams and forms a vital step in her transformation from artist to work of art. In the Gospel, she encounters something that exceeds her reason and her imagination:

It opened a view of a new state and community of beings, which only seemed too beautiful to be possible. But not into a new state of things alone, but into the presence of One who was simply distinct and removed from anything that she had, in her most imaginative moments, ever depicted to her mind as ideal

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<sup>45</sup> Caecilius tells Callista, "the nearer we draw to Him, the more triumphantly does He enter into us; the more the longer He dwells in us, the more intimately have we possession of Him. It is an espousal for eternity" (*Call.* 222). On her way to her death, Callista tells her jailer's wife, "[N]ow I have espoused Him, and am going to be married to-day" (357).

perfection. Here was that to which her intellect tended, though that intellect could not frame it. It could approve and acknowledge, when set before it, what it could not originate. (326)

At the same time, in the same passage, she imagines herself as part of the narrative she reads; she finds comfort in the description of “His tenderness and love for the poor girl at the feast, who would anoint His feet; and the full tears stood in her eyes, and she fancied she was that sinful child, and that He did not repel her” (326). Thus, in the Gospel Callista experiences an image of something that is greater than herself, that exceeds the scope of her imagination and intellect, and that comprehends her, while this experiences moves her to “admiration, enthusiasm, devotion, love” (*HS* 2.387). Her encounter with the Gospels precisely parallels Newman’s description of an experience of the poetic.<sup>46</sup> When the people of Sicca look on her tortured form, even these resolute anti-Christians respond to the image with worship:

When at length she came close upon the rabble, who had been screaming and yelling so fiercely, men, women, and boys suddenly held their peace. It was first from curiosity, then from amazement, then from awe. At length a fear smote through them, and a strange pity and reverence. They almost seemed inclined to worship what stirred them so much, they knew not how . . . . (369)

When the same people behold her incorrupt body after her execution, the image likewise exerts a “strange influence” on them, they are “seized with a sacred fear” when they attempt to talk about it, and those who hear of it attribute it to spiritual sources: “some say it is magical, others that it is from the great gods” (372). Indeed, the response of the people to Callista’s body evokes the last stanza

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<sup>46</sup> Newman’s narrator explicitly compares her transformed ability to interpret her history and future after her conversion to an imaginative reader’s engagement with a book of poems: “As the skies speak differently to the philosopher and the peasant, as a book of poems to the imaginative and to the cold and narrow intellect, so now she saw her being, her history, her present condition, her future, in a new light, which no one else could share with her” (*Call.* 328).

of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan": "Weave a circle round him thrice, / And close your eyes with holy dread: / For he on honey-dew hath fed, / And drank the milk of Paradise" (51-4). These are the words of one who has encountered a beauty beyond one's own measure or ability to comprehend.

And Newman locates this beauty in a corpse. This rather shocking conclusion to what began as a tale of marriage brings inescapably before the reader a point which has been emphasized throughout the narrative: that heavenly beauty emerges in and through the things of earth. This is most clearly revealed in Callista's dream-vision just before her trial and execution, a dream which anticipates in several ways "The Dream of Gerontius." This passage, the most concentrated exploration of the novel's aesthetic and religious themes, describes the transformation of a scene of earthly beauty into one of heavenly beauty. Callista begins the dream in her native Greece, which throughout the narrative has been shown to represent to her the pinnacle of earthly beauty in contrast to the sun-scorched Africa (see, for example, *Call.* 118-21). It is, like Callista's experience of Christ, both ideal and individual, a signifier of ideal perfection and at the same time a specific location. In her vision, this landscape is transformed in a way that does not diminish but heightens its sensual appeal: "suddenly its face changed, and its colours were illuminated tenfold by a heavenly glory, and each hue upon the scene was of a beauty she had never known, and seemed strangely to affect all her senses at once, being fragrance and music, as well as light" (354). The landscape becomes populated with "bright images" that "became a sort of scene or landscape, which she could not have described in words, as if it were a world of spirits, not of matter" (354)—in this puzzling description Callista seems to experience something similar to what

Gerontius witnesses in the Hall of Judgment, which is made of living spirits but which his soul encounters as a structure. In both instances, the line between religious and aesthetic object vanishes.

In this living landscape Callista meets a figure who first appears as the glorified body of her Christian slave, Chione, then takes on the appearance of one “both Maid and Mother” whom the reader recognizes to be the Virgin Mary (*Call.* 355). Callista’s vision of this lady moves her first to “advance towards her, out of love and reverence,” then to engage in an artistic performance: “she began a solemn measure, unlike all dances of earth, with hands and feet, serenely moving on towards what she heard some of them [i.e. the surrounding spirits] call a great action and a glorious consummation, though she did not know what they meant. At length she was fain to sing as well as dance” (355).<sup>47</sup> Like the soul of Gerontius, which responds to its vision of the divine with song, Callista responds to her vision with song and dance. Though within her vision Callista does not know how to interpret the spirits’ description of her dance as “a great action and glorious consummation,” the reader perceives that the dance anticipates in a stylized form the martyrdom that awaits her when she awakens from her dream. In both cases, she enacts with her body her loving response to the beauty of her vision. Callista has changed from a believer in nothing to a

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<sup>47</sup> As in “The Dream of Gerontius,” so also here Newman revises Dante’s vision of the soul’s experience in the afterlife (see above, n. 20). When Dante meets Matelda in the Earthly Paradise, he watches her as she seems to dance; he is ordered to “watch and listen” to the pageant; and when Beatrice appears, he reacts first by turning away and trembling before she upbraids him and moves him to penitential tears for his infidelity to her true beauty and his devotion to “false images” (28:52-4, 29:15, 30:43-7, 98-9, 131). Chione neither rebukes Callista for her long devotion to false images nor demands signs of repentance. Callista is not kept separate from the artistic vision she beholds but is allowed to participate in it through her dance.

Christian, but she has remained an artist.<sup>48</sup> Her art has been elevated and incorporated into a larger Christo-mythological framework through her espousal to Christ—her becoming embraced or comprehended by the divine Object she apprehends—so that, far from ceasing to practice her artistic vocation, she now does so with an authentic emotional response of awe, worship, and love. And by foreshadowing her martyrdom and linking it with her dance, the dream-vision suggests that her future passion and death are also an artistic act.

This foreshadowing of her martyrdom is repeated in the stigmata her dream-self receives at the end of the vision. As she dances, the face of the one standing before her changes a third time, but the narrator emphasizes that the identity remains the same: “The face, the features were the same; but the light of Divinity now seemed to beam through them, and the hair parted, and hung down long on each side of the forehead; and there was a crown of another fashion than the Lady’s round about it, made of what looked like thorns,” while the Lady’s hands and side show the wounds of Christ (*Call.* 355-6). This marvelous overlay of Christ’s features on top of the Virgin’s, accompanied immediately after the quoted passage by a shift from the feminine to the masculine pronoun to refer to this double being, concludes in Callista’s realization that she herself, and everyone else around her, bears the stigmata as well (356).<sup>49</sup> Newman makes dramatic use of this traditional Catholic image to

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<sup>48</sup> My thanks to Stephen Prickett for pointing out a resemblance between Newman’s representation here of martyrdom as an artistic act and William Blake’s “The Laocoon” (1826). The oracular Blake proclaims, “Prayer is the Study of / Art Praise is the Practise of Art / Fasting &c. all relate to Art” (352).

<sup>49</sup> There is another, subtler character overlay operating here: early in the novel, Callista recounts to Agellius that her slave, Chione, had a dream just before her death in which she “saw a company of bright shades . . . crowned with flowers,” met “a most beautiful lady,” and found herself crowned with flowers and surrounded by gems (*Call.* 126). This dream, so closely parallel

emphasize that, without loss of individual human identity, each believer has written onto his or her own body the image of Christ and becomes incorporated into his passion and death, not in some ethereal or ideal sense, but in a very literal, physical way.<sup>50</sup> After her awakening, Callista's espousal of Christ takes physical form in her martyrdom. The miracles surrounding her corpse "may be said to have been the resurrection of the Church at Sicca" (381). As the singers sing in their hymn at the end of the novel, "Her spirit there, her body here, / Make one the earth and sky" (380).

And indeed, the martyrdom of Callista typifies and participates in a unifying force at work in the novel's narrative that goes beyond the joining of an individual soul with its savior. Recall that, in *The Idea of a University*, Newman moves away from his earlier criterion that a poet must have "a right moral state of the heart" to represent a great author as one by whom "the many are drawn up into a unity, national character is fixed, a people speaks, the past and the future, the East and the West are brought into communication with each other" (*Idea* 220-1). A great work of art, he proposes, makes the many one. The revival of Christianity at Sicca inspired by Callista's martyrdom is one overt way in which her death brings people into unity, but there is also a subtler and more

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to Callista's, establishes another likeness between Callista and the figure standing before her in her own dream, who began as Chione before transforming into the Lady. Thus in addition to being an image of Christ by bearing the stigmata, Callista becomes an image of Chione.

<sup>50</sup> As part of her torture, Callista is even thrown into a pit of excrement (365). This forces the reader to confront the apparently base material—the body and its refuse—by which her conversion is consummated and her death is made an act of love. Newman refuses to allow even the most base of matter to be rejected; it is absorbed into the hagiographical narrative and dignified as an instrument of salvation.

universal unifying force at work in the narrative.<sup>51</sup> At first, a number of descriptions establish a firm contrast between countryside and town: the countryside is the sphere of uncorrupted nature, the farm the location where Agellius can practice his Christianity without interference, the natural cave system the hidden refuge of the region's Christians during persecution; the town on the other hand is the place of temptation, moral corruption, and idolatry (see, for example, *Call.* 11). Many of these descriptions appear through Agellius's focalizing consciousness and share his conviction of stark difference between the few and the many, the elect and the reprobate, the faithful church and the heathen multitude. However, Callista's point of view—underscored by the narrator—works to disestablish this strictly black-and-white separation of peoples and instead highlight points of similarity, kinship, and unity.

First, Callista surprises Agellius by preaching to him while yet a pagan—or, more accurately, an atheist, for in her own words she is a believer in nothing (*Call.* 118).<sup>52</sup> When the mob approaches Agellius's house and threatens to overtake her and Caecilius, she tells the priest to "Fear nothing for me, father, . . . I am one of them" (226). Newman takes pains to emphasize that her conversion does not represent a fundamental change in her identity but rather an expansion and development of it; this idea emerges not only in her dream-vision, in which

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<sup>51</sup> Litvack suggests that Newman even uses his novel to draw readers into the drama he portrays and, by representing the example of a Christian martyr, attempts to inspire his readers to right moral action (162). By this analysis, the novel even works to unite Newman's readers with his characters in the process of sanctification.

<sup>52</sup> The chapter entitled "Callista's Preaching" would also have been problematic to church officials of the 1890's and after, who were threatened with a laity that aspired to usurp their Magisterial authority. Newman's representation, not merely of a lay person, but of a non-Christian woman preaching Christian moral doctrine would likely not have been popular among conservatives of Wilfrid Ward's generation.

she sees the features of Christ appear in and through the identities first of her slave and then of the Virgin Mary, but also in the striking analysis of her psychological experience of conversion: “it was not a change which involved contrariety, but one which expanded itself in (as it were) concentric circles, and only fulfilled, as time went on, the promise of its beginning. Every day, as it came, was, so to say, the child of the preceding, the parent of that which followed” (291).<sup>53</sup> Moreover, describing the Christians’ hideout, the narrator recounts that the same cave has been the site of religious observances since long before the rise of Christianity, used first by practitioners of the native local religion, then by the Phoenician conquerors, so that behind and beneath the Christian art the cave contains a Punic altar and a pile of the bones of animals sacrificed to the Phoenician gods (333). In this cave, Newman blurs the line between Christian and pagan peoples in their worship, bringing them quite literally onto common ground. The importance of art for the Christian as well as pagan people of Newman’s tale is also emphasized in the description of the Christians’ hideout. Adorned with paintings, silks, and statuary, the hideout is itself a work of art, leading the narrator to comment, “So instinctive in the Christian mind is the principle of decoration, as it may be called, that even in times of suffering, and places of banishment, we see it brought into exercise” (337). He remarks in passing that the silk decorations are “the work of a pious lady of Carthage,” an unnamed artist whose work functions as a Christian reflection of Callista’s former occupation. At the end of the novel, it is not only

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<sup>53</sup> Newman’s echo here of Wordsworth’s “My Heart Leaps Up,” meanwhile, adds yet another poetic overtone to Callista’s conversion. Wordsworth’s poem is concerned with the experience of natural beauty, Newman’s passage with Callista’s experience of divine beauty and love.

the Christians who are affected by the body of Callista and moved by it to worship; the same idolatrous mob that called for her execution is stirred by the sight of her corpse, and even the natural world responds to it with reverence (371). By the end of the novel, the Christians, pagans, and natural world all draw together in a similarly reverent response to the vision of her corpse.

Agellius himself, whose initial perspective emphasizes his own separation from the people around him, undergoes a trial of repentance and conversion that includes recognition of the need for community, and not only for the community of his fellow-believers but of the citizens of Sicca as well. The narrator attributes the weakness and decline of his faith to the absence of sympathetic souls (*Call.* 19-20, 22, 27, 94-5, 139). However, it is his brother Juba, whom he tries to throw out of his house for uttering blasphemy and who is one of the most unsympathetic souls to Agellius, who first pricks his conscience and makes him uncomfortable about his plan to propose marriage to Callista (34-5). Juba becomes for Agellius an instrument of the return of grace, foreshadowing here his later act of freeing Agellius from imprisonment. Likewise, when Agellius's uncle Jucundus, a firm practitioner (if not believer) of the Roman state religion, reminds him that he is part of a society and must be governed by its practices and limited by its rules, Agellius then confronts the reality of what marriage to Callista would entail and first admits to himself the moral gravity of the act he contemplates (101-5). This reminder that Agellius is a part of his society despite his religious isolation and decision to live in the countryside becomes another prod in the direction of repentance and conversion. The illness that follows Callista's rejection of his proposal and that forms the bodily manifestation of the trial of repentance he undergoes strikes him as he stands at the foot, not of the

painted cross adorning the wall of his home, but of a statue of the Roman emperor on which is posted the edict that will revive anti-Christian persecution in the region (141-2). This image and act of a repressive, anti-Christian government forms the setting for his full admission of guilt and restoration to grace. After Agellius's bodily recovery and sacramental confession to Caecilius, the priest echoes Jucundus's reminder that Agellius is part of a larger society. When Agellius protests that he is too spiritually weak even to save his own soul, much less those of others, Caecilius instructs him, "You will save your own soul by saving the souls of others" (162).<sup>54</sup> He refuses to allow Agellius to separate himself from the society of Sicca Veneria.<sup>55</sup>

Other images in the novel work to unite the Christian and non-Christian people and even the world of nonhuman nature into a comprehensive whole. One of these is the plague of locusts. This is a complex image, and in several ways it serves to break down any barrier the reader might perceive between the forces of good and evil at work in the novel. For example, though it causes widespread destruction, it is called "an instrument of divine power" (*Call.* 170).

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<sup>54</sup> This passage offers another point of contrast between this later work and Newman's verses in the *Lyra Apostolica*. In the 1833 poem "Strength of Grace" ("The Power of Prayer" in the *Verses on Various Occasions*), weak souls pray to gain freedom from sin and work out their own salvation; it is only the heroic souls, "minds that heavenward tower," who obtain spiritual gifts for the rest of the world through their prayer (8-10).

<sup>55</sup> Thus one must qualify Litvack's argument that *Callista*, like its contemporary Early Christians novels, Charles Kingsley's *Hyppatia* (1852-1853) and Nicholas Wiseman's *Fabiola* (1854), assumes "a propagandist, moral role, in what amounted to polemical warfare" (164). Though Newman represents primitive Christianity in ways his own society recognized as being distinctively Roman Catholic, his emphasis on a fundamental unity between redeemed Christian and sinner, believer and nonbeliever prevents an interpretation of the novel as being straightforwardly polemical. Of the three works he considers, Litvack acknowledges Kingsley's to be the novel most pointedly directed toward Victorian Anglican controversy: "it was a tract for the times: a reaction against agnostic radicalism, Tractarianism and Roman Catholic claims for purity for the Patristic age" (164).

Earlier in the novel, Jucundus has likened Christians to locusts as a force beyond the control of the Roman government:

[Y]es, they'll spread. Yes, grow, like scorpions, twenty at a birth. The country already swarms with them; they are as many as frogs or grasshoppers; they start up everywhere under one's nose, when one least expects them. The air breeds them like plague-flies; the wind drifts them like locusts. No one's safe; any one may be a Christian; it's an epidemic.' (57)

The actual swarm of locusts covers the whole world, both wild and cultivated, uniting countryside and town in ruin (171-3); likening it to a "vast living hostile armament," the narrator hints at an analogy between the locusts and the armies of Rome that parallels Jucundus's analogy between the insects and the Christians (171). The locusts spread their carcasses over the landscape and create a horrible stench, while the bodies of the human and insect dead lie side by side (176-7); the visitation provokes a riot and a mob looking for a scapegoat, which leads to the enforcement of the government edict against Christians, and thus begins a new Christian persecution, which, at least metaphorically, spreads bodies over the landscape which give rise, like the body of Callista, to a "divine odor" and the revival of Christianity in the region (372). Meanwhile, the mob itself suffers its share of violence, as Roman soldiers suppress its chaotic force by massacre. The narrator's language in describing the attack on the mob of anti-Christians turns them suddenly Christ-like, echoing Isaiah 53.7: "they commenced the massacre of that large concourse of human beings, who did not offer one blow in return. They slaughtered them like sheep" (233). Thus the violent response to the plague also suffers violence, and through its suffering the mob comes to resemble its own victims. Finally, Caecilius's lengthy prayer, which like the locusts covers the whole region and touches all ranks of its human population,

gathers Christian and pagan together into one intercessory appeal to God (207-11).<sup>56</sup> This is more than a fictional example of the Doctrine of Analogy—which G. B. Tennyson rightly finds to underlie the *Lyra Apostolica* poems—at work. These images cannot be fully described as types and signs of spiritual realities; they participate in a dynamic process by which the earthly grows, as it were, into the supernatural order. Participating in and embraced by the system they help reveal, they have more in common with Coleridgean symbolism.<sup>57</sup>

As *Callista* is in fiction, so “The Dream of Gerontius” is the fullest poetic realization of Newman’s mature understanding of the role and purpose of the imagination. In its dramatic form, he leaves behind both the authoritative tone of the lyric speaker and the impression of omniscience conveyed by his fictional narrators. God never speaks, so the reader hears only the voices of those with partial knowledge. By following the conventional pattern of a soul’s passage

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<sup>56</sup> The complex interplay between unity and difference implied by Caecilius’s intercessory prayer anticipates the conclusion of the *Apologia pro vita sua* in which Newman himself prays in the place of Caecilius for all his former coreligionists and former friends. De Laura writes of this passage in words that echo Newman’s own description of the work of a great author from *The Idea of a University*: “[Newman] is now a strong, almost giant-like, figure, gathering and bearing in memory, as if in a vast embrace, the past and the present, former friends and present associates—and, implicitly, it follows logically, former friends who are present foes” (“Some Victorian Experiments” 24).

<sup>57</sup> It should be noted that, in the case of both *Callista* and “The Dream of Gerontius,” Newman’s characters become absorbed into a literary and symbolic tradition centuries old. In the drama of *Callista*, a network of characters are absorbed into symbolic participation in the story of Christ’s passion: Caecilius processes toward the city on the back of a donkey and surrounded by a mob (228); after his escape, Callista takes his place, carried in on the shoulders of a brutish soldier referred to as a “beast of burden” (276); Agellius becomes a Christ-figure when his uncle, acting the role of Pontius Pilate, asks him, “What is truth?” (249); he spends the night in prison, only to be replaced by Juba (235); Callista endures the trial before a Roman court and violent execution (360-70). “The Dream of Gerontius” includes the form and words of the Catholic prayers for the dying accompanying the sacramental Anointing of the Sick, and its framework of a soul’s passage through death toward purgatory with the promise of paradise follows a familiar and traditionally Catholic Christian pattern. The pattern is so traditional, in fact, that Sheridan Gilley calls the poem’s enduring popularity “a paradox” and its theme “a central attack upon our contemporary sensibility in matters of religion” (“The Dream of Gerontius” 327). It allows Newman’s poem to engage with other poetic meditations on the same subject, most notably with Dante’s *Purgatorio*.

from life to afterlife, and even more overtly by incorporating verse-adaptations of Catholic liturgy and prayers, it recognizes dependence on a living tradition that is communal and historical. Like *Loss and Gain* and *Callista*, "The Dream of Gerontius" is not a deliberately controversial or argumentative poem. Hark writes of it that "[t]he intense private sincerity which animates the poem lifts it above the arena of controversy where Newman so often battled" (16). At the same time, its central figure is a kind of "Everyman," giving the poem a universal relevance and appeal that allows it to speak to generation after generation regardless of each audience's religious belief. Gerontius speaks as if for the human race, and thus within the poem he represents and unites humanity in his spiritual journey. Indeed, the drama of "The Dream of Gerontius" unites not only the human race but all of creation in its trajectory toward full union with God.

The poem accomplishes this effect by blurring rather than sharpening distinctions between the present and the afterlife, so that the visible world blends into the invisible, supernatural world the Soul of Gerontius enters after death. This is most palpable with regard to the poem's treatment of the phenomena of physical and sensory experience.<sup>58</sup> The sounds surrounding Gerontius echo into his afterlife: after what seems to be his death, the final words of the First Phase belong to the Priest, while at the beginning of the Second Phase the Soul of Gerontius seems to hear the Priest speaking: "And then I surely heard a priestly voice / Cry "Subvenite;" and they knelt in prayer. / I seem to hear him still; but

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<sup>58</sup> Ina Hark has pointed out that "Newman illustrates the transition from mortality to immortality" in that Gerontius's perception of time and space remain analogous after his death to his experience in life (16-7). Hark does not go so far as to argue that the poem undermines the reader's assumption that life and death are fundamentally different.

thin and low, / And fainter and more faint the accents come" (VV 181-4).

Moreover, his sense of retaining a body and his physical senses after death is so strong that he asks, "Am I alive or dead? I am not dead, / But in the body still" (195-6). Not only is Gerontius momentarily unsure of whether he is alive or dead, but, without an authoritative narrator's voice to settle the question, the reader becomes so as well. This uncertainty about whether or not Gerontius retains his living body remains for many lines, until first he and then the Angel affirm that his soul has truly separated from his body (304, 533).

The passage of time, too, becomes ambiguous in the conversation between Gerontius and the Angel. Gerontius is confused about the interval between his death and judgment (VV 337). Since his death and his Soul's first exclamation of "How still it is!" the reader has encountered nothing to contradict the Soul's conviction that he is in a state of "deep rest" (175, 189). The Angel's explanation that he is actually traveling "with extremest speed" toward judgment, that almost no earthly time has passed since the moment of his death, and that intervals of time in "the immaterial world" are "measured by the living thought alone, / And grow and wane with its intensity" comes as a surprise that reverses the previous imagery (338-58). So far, this still admits of a strict separation between earthly time and time in the afterlife. However, even as the Angel claims that only a fraction of a moment has passed since the priest "Cried 'Subvenite,' and they fell to prayer," he contradicts himself in the next line: "Nay, scarcely yet have they begun to pray" (345, 346). But the Assistants began to pray—prayed three litanies, in fact—before Gerontius died in the First Phase and before the Priest spoke his first lines. If the Soul takes the Angel at his word, then their whole dialogue is occurring before Gerontius has died in earthly

time.<sup>59</sup> And, lest the reader miss it here, near the end of the poem the point is reiterated: as the Soul comes to judgment, he remarks, "I hear the voices that I left on earth," and the Angel responds, "It is the voice of friends around thy bed, / Who say the 'Subvenite' with the priest" (827-9). Hark points out that there is a structural similarity between Gerontius's deathbed struggle in the First Phase and his journey in the rest of the poem, while "[t]he striking verbal echoes from the deathbed scene which recur at the soul's particular judgment reinforce the conclusion that these two trials serve analogous functions" (24).<sup>60</sup> If we accept that these two events are also taking place at the same time rather than separating them into "before" and "after" death, we allow the poem's ambiguities to do their work and efface the separation between life and death.<sup>61</sup>

The poem's radical denial of a strict separation between life and death complements the ambiguity inherent in the poem's chief image and chief mystery: the metaphor of the dream. In one sense, the Gerontius's dream is the

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<sup>59</sup> Although Hark explores the ways in which, with Gerontius's death, "He knows that all spatial and temporal boundaries are melting," she focuses on Gerontius's experience of this melting rather than on the destabilization of time and space the poem itself enacts. Thus she calls the Soul's feeling that it retains a body a "delusion" rather than recognizing that this ambiguity is an active undermining of the separation between life and death (21).

<sup>60</sup> Hark cites numerous examples from the poem and concludes, "The 'bed of sorrow' is both the deathbed and the purgatorial fire. The same Angel who greets Gerontius after the 'night of trial' that is death will also welcome his fully-redeemed soul on the 'morrow' of Resurrection" (24).

<sup>61</sup> In offering this reading, I depart from the classic interpretation of Geoffrey Wamsley, who suggests that Newman might have subtitled the poem with his own epitaph, "*Ex Umbris et Imaginibus in Veritatem*" according to the Platonic interpretation of the phrase as "the passage from this world of shadows to the unseen world of eternity." "The epitaph," Wamsley argues, "reveals how he understood his whole life *sub specie aeternitatis*, and in its own way the poem does the same" (167). Wamsley's interpretation smooths over the complicated associations which the epitaph receives in its original context in *Loss and Gain* and ascribes to "The Dream of Gerontius" the spirit of *contemptus mundi* which pervades the *Lyra Apostolica* poems.

poem itself and becomes a metaphor for poetry.<sup>62</sup> But its meaning goes much further than this. In a tone of both frustration and admiration, David Goslee writes, “Nothing in Newman’s poem . . . explains or prepares us for the title” (275). What exactly is the dream, and who is the dreamer? Goslee speculates:

That the dream of the title should be Purgatory itself seems a far more heterodox implication than Newman would want to risk at this point in his career. Then are we meant to assume that at some point Gerontius will awaken to discover that he is not dead after all? If he did so, would he take his dream as a revelation or an illusion—and a cruel one at that since his salvation, apparently assured, would be once more in question? . . . The riddles within Newman’s title don’t end here—in fact its very syntax is ambiguous. We have been assuming that this is Gerontius’s dream, but it could just well be someone’s dream about Gerontius. And if so, who would that dreamer be? (275-6)

I suggest that the nature of the dream becomes less of a riddle when one recognizes what might be called the poem’s deconstruction of a strict opposition between life and death. Including the title, there are six references to a “dream” in the poem. In Gerontius’s last speech of Part 1, which the reader initially assumes is the moment of death, he says, “Novissima hora est; and I fain would sleep” (VV 147); thus at the beginning we assume him to be awake and death to be a falling asleep. The first words of the Second Phase, spoken by the Soul of Gerontius, are these: “I went to sleep; and now I am refresh’d” (171); the reader now wonders whether the Soul means that it has just awoken from the sleep of death, or whether it awakes instead from the dream that was mortal life. A few lines later the Soul says, “I had a dream; yes:—some one softly said / ‘He’s gone;’

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<sup>62</sup> In the poem’s meditation on death and dreams, Newman is working in the same imaginative sphere as and perhaps making deliberate reference to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* (Goslee 275). There are Shakespearean echoes in a number of lines, evoking not only the language of *Hamlet* but also of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. These Shakespearean echoes help associate the dream with a work of art, a figment of imagination, making the poem itself one referent of the dream metaphor.

and then a sigh went round the room" (179-80). Here, it would seem that the dream is life, and death the awakening.<sup>63</sup> Yet, a few lines later, the Soul questions whether he is alive or dead, leaving the reader unable to conclude with certainty which state represents life and which, death. When the Angel later explains why the Soul seems to hear and taste and feel, the Angel adds to the complication: "And thou art wrapp'd and swathed around in dreams, / Dreams that are true, yet enigmatical" (544-5). Finally, the last words of the poem, spoken by the Angel, affirm that Gerontius's afterlife is still part of his dream: "Swiftly shall pass thy night of trial here, / And I will come and wake thee on the morrow" (911-2). The reader has no choice but to conclude that both life and afterlife are part of the dream, while in fact there can be no strict separation between dream and waking; the poem refuses an uncomplicated association of the dream with life, death, reality, or unreality.<sup>64</sup>

This is a far more complicated treatment of dreams and of the difference between this life and the hereafter than appears in, for example, Newman's 1839 sermon "The Greatness and Littleness of Human Life." In the sermon, Newman writes,

We should consider ourselves to be in this world in no fuller sense than players in any game are in the game; and life to be a sort of dream, as detached and as different from our real eternal existence, as a dream differs from waking; a serious dream, indeed, as

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<sup>63</sup> Hark notes that Newman is following Shelley in presenting death as awakening from sleep (23).

<sup>64</sup> Edgecombe points out a similar ambiguity in Newman's use of the dream-vision in an earlier poem, "Home": "Romantic poets had used 'vision' to suggest an earthly reality touched by the numinous (as in the 'Ode to a Nightingale'—'Was it a vision, or a waking dream?'); but in conventional religious usage, a vision is wholly divine. In Newman's poem, both senses are present and compete against each other" (170-1). This blending of dream and waking, life and afterlife anticipates the conclusion of MacDonald's *Lilith*, another work supremely concerned with the unity of creation (my thanks to Stephen Prickett for pointing out this connection).

affording a means of judging us, in which we seem to be, and in which it is our duty to act just as if all we saw had a truth and reality, because all that meets us influences us and our destiny. The regenerate soul is taken into communion with Saints and Angels, . . . and is not of this world[.] (PPS 865-6)

This passage unequivocally associates earthly life with dreaming and the afterlife with waking. According to the sermon, one should treat life as a “serious dream” and therefore act “*as if* all we saw had a truth and reality” (emphasis added); in “The Dream of Gerontius,” the Angel tells the Soul in the afterlife that it is surrounded by “Dreams that are true.” The same attitude towards earthly life voiced in this sermon is expressed in the poem “Sovereignty of Spirit” (1832) (“Substance and Shadow” in the *Verses on Various Occasions*), in which the reader is cautioned against bestowing “An idol substance” on “the fantasies of sense,” “As if such shapes and moods, which come and go, / Had aught of Truth or Life in their poor show” (LA 2-3, 6-7). This poem, one of the few reflections in the *Lyra Apostolica* on the creative imagination, calls it a “dread gift” and confers on the human mind the power to control its perceptions of reality: “Each mind [is] its own centre, and it draws / Home to itself, and moulds in its thought’s span / All outward things, the vassals of its will” (11-13). The attitude toward the creative imagination expressed in this early poem is one in which the mind is in control, mastering the phenomena it interprets or creates; this is the opposite of an understanding of imagination wherein the mind perceives itself to be grasped by what exceeds it and to surrender to that grasp with devotion and love.

One must then examine what the Angel says about the nature of the “Dreams that are true” with which the Soul of Gerontius is “wrapp’d and swathed around” (VV 544-5). When the Soul queries why he seems to retain bodily sense, the Angel explains:

Nor touch, nor taste, nor hearing hast thou now;  
Thou livest in a world of signs and types,  
The presentations of most holy truths,  
Living and strong, which now encompass thee.

.....  
And thou art wrapp'd and swath'd around in dreams,  
Dreams that are true, yet enigmatical;  
For the belongings of thy present state,  
Save through such symbols, come not home to thee. (533-6, 544-7)

The Soul apprehends these dreams as if by sensory experience, while they are in fact “signs and types” of “holy truths.” The Angel explains that he is permitted this experience “in mercy” “lest so stern a solitude should load / And break [his] being” (539-40). The Soul’s dreams, which seem to it to be perceived through the senses, “wrap” and “swathe” and “encompass” him and bring him into contact with “Living” truths that relieve his solitude. Is this not, by the definition arrived at in the previous chapter, an aesthetic as well as a religious experience? Newman here describes the Soul’s experience of the afterlife—which will last in this way until the reunion of soul and body after the final judgment (562-4)—as a poetic one.

Given the ambiguity created by the collapsing distinctions within the poem between before and after, life and afterlife, the Angel’s words here take on additional significance. For if the body of Gerontius is still present in the deathbed moment, his friends’ prayers and the priest’s “Subvenite” still echoing around him, then there is a sense in which the “most holy truths, / Living and strong, which now encompass” him are his praying friends (VV 535-6). The world that surrounded Gerontius in life along with its people cannot be perfectly separated in this poem from the “world of signs and types” his soul perceives in its afterlife. The suggestion is there that Gerontius has lived his whole earthly life surrounded by signs, types, and symbols meant to bring truth “home” to

him. The Choirs of Angelicals whose living beings make up the “House of Judgment” through which the Soul and Angel pass reinforce support this interpretation. Gerontius describes their song as being like the voice of the natural world: “The sound is like the rushing of the wind— / The summer wind—among the lofty pines” (674-5).<sup>65</sup> The Angelicals sing of the creation, fall, and redemption of humankind, and they describe earthly life as the pathway to salvation: “. . . the quickening ray, / Lit from his second birth, / Makes him at length what once he was, / And heaven grows out of earth” (700-4). Almost immediately after the fifth and final chorus of Angelicals sings, the Soul of Gerontius says, “I hear the voices that I left on earth” (827); his comment would be out of context unless it is meant to establish an analogy between the two sets of voices he hears, the living Choirs of Angelicals who make up the House of Judgment and the human voices of the Attendants and Priest who pray around his deathbed. Both are part of the “world of signs and types” surrounding him, and both become part of the great movement by which “heaven grows out of earth” (827).

The response of a soul that encounters this powerful unification of heaven and earth is poetic. At the end of the poem, the Soul’s experience of being “Consumed, yet quicken’d, by the glance of God”—combining death and obliteration with life and regeneration in a single line—moves him to speak in poetry (VV 859). He shifts for the first time from the blank verse in which he has spoken since the beginning of the Second Phase into rhyme, and he proposes to spend Purgatory in song: “There [in Purgatory] will I sing, and soothe my

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<sup>65</sup> For an analysis of Newman’s play with the concepts of wind, breath, and life, which share a common etymological heritage, see Sharrock 59.

stricken breast, / . . . / There will I sing my absent Lord and Love" (866, 872). And Purgatory echoes back the song: the Angel says, "Now let the golden prison ope its gates, / Making sweet music" (876-7). Thus, finding himself drawn up into a grand unity of life and afterlife, earth and heaven, that both exceeds him and embraces him, Gerontius responds with submission, devotion, love, and poetry, joining his own song with the music of Purgatory and the musical poetry of "The Dream of Gerontius." As Newman proposed in *The Idea of a University*, this poem serves to draw humanity into sympathetic unity with cosmic nature, an experience that according to his own definitions is as much aesthetic as it is religious.

Clearly, then, the shift in Newman's understanding of the purpose of the imagination and of aesthetic experience can be discerned not only in theory in his prose but also in his poetry and fiction. One might say that, while the phrase *Ex Umbris et Imaginibus in Veritatem* lies at the heart of his imaginative work in all stages of his literary career, the meaning of the phrase changes significantly for him between the composition of the *Lyra Apostolica* poems and that of his final poetic work, "The Dream of Gerontius."

## CHAPTER SIX

### Conclusion

At a time when the Catholic Church was dominated by a spirit of faction, when its authorities were busily distinguishing between Modernist, liberal, and conservative parties and proclaiming the preeminence of Thomistic philosophy, Wilfrid Ward undertook to write the biography of one whose art increasingly emphasized the deep and unfolding unity of created nature. As the Church hierarchy asserted its control over unruly intellectualism and overly creative theology, Ward was offering the world his portrait of a thinker who went from urging ascetic control over the imagination to proposing that the imagination should surrender to its experiences, whether they be morally “safe” or not. And while the Church’s official message was to remain “in the world but not of the world,” Ward worked to create an accurate, but still publishable, representation of one who came to see holiness more and more as a sympathetic engagement with the world, a personal and emotional response to an encounter in the imagination.

Though Ward’s motives for paying so little attention to Newman’s novels and poetry were undoubtedly complex and, to some degree, unconscious, his decision to set these works aside was a prudent one. It prevented him from having to address Newman’s understanding of symbolism, as well as his emphasis on the subjective and artistic dimensions of religious experience. It kept him away from areas in which Newman’s writings strayed in the direction of those who would aestheticize religion, like Arnold and Pater. And it allowed

him to produce the biography his censors demanded, one that raised Newman above suspicion of any taint of Modernism.

Newman himself, meanwhile, goes from advocating a spirit of *contemptus mundi* and ascetical caution over the world's influence on the imagination to acknowledging the value of aesthetic experience for its tendency to connect the imaginer to the world, moving him to feel and surrender to his participation in it. This surrender carries a great risk: the natural man of *The Idea of a University* is not to be trusted as a sure guide to moral conduct or to any kind of objective "truth." However, he is one to be met in a personal encounter in which *cor ad cor loquitur*, an engagement of the self and the other which would be impossible except through the mediation of the imagination. Though such an encounter will always be "partial" and "defective," this does not prevent Newman from treating it as truly worthwhile ("Legend of St. Gundleus" 9).

At his death, Newman requested that he be buried with his friend, Ambrose St. John, and that their grave be "filled with a rich mulch to hasten decomposition" (Cornwell 1, 220). This direction curiously echoes the fate of condemned criminals who were buried in quicklime to disintegrate their flesh, as Wilde describes in "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" (449-68). In death, then, Newman left his earthly remains to the embrace of human friendship and of the most base matter, hastening his own transformation into dust beneath the inscription, *Ex Umbris et Imaginibus in Veritatem*. It is hard to imagine a more profound illustration of the idea that "heaven grows out of earth." Therefore, although one scholar has called Newman's burial his "final sermon," I suggest that it was instead his final work of art (Cornwell 1).

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