

*“The solitary figure of Newman
in the background”:
Conservative Ideology in
John Henry Newman and
T.S. Eliot*

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And a spirit of excessive tolerance is to be deprecated.

Eliot, *After Strange Gods*, 20

For students of twentieth-century literary criticism, T.S. Eliot poses problems. The significance of his verse lent purchase to his critical essays, which exerted a formative influence on the history of critical thought and on the curricula and programs of Anglo-American departments of English. According to Michael Beehler, “Eliot’s early criticism helped to create modern literary studies as an autonomous field of enquiry and invented for that discipline a certain authority, tradition, and rigor” (120).¹ But over the last fifty years critics have expressed serious reservations about Eliot’s critical thought: his seeming approval of fascism, his apparently racist and anti-Semitic remarks, his conservative, largely Eurocentric view of the canon, and other disquieting issues have given recent critics cause to distance themselves from his authority.² In order to come to terms with these complicated circumstances, scholars have tried to identify the writers who guided Eliot’s intellectual vision; but the job remains incomplete, as the voice of John Henry Newman has escaped the notice of all but a few critics. Some links have been well established between Eliot and certain

“Catholic” thinkers, such as Joseph De Maistre, Charles Maurras, Jacques Maritain, and Christopher Dawson,³ but Newman remains a missing piece in studies where one might expect to see his name.⁴

Lee Oser has published two recent articles convincingly linking the thought of Newman to “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (“Century” 48), but aside from Oser’s articles and brief remarks from other critics, the link remains unpursued. As Oser observes, the facts of Eliot’s family history, his education, and his Anglo-Catholic beliefs support the premise that Newman would be important to him. The lack of interest in linking the two men is surprising when one considers the documented influence on Eliot of other writers, themselves influenced by Newman, such as Matthew Arnold, Christopher Dawson, and Irving Babbitt. Focusing on *The Idea of a University*, Oser shows that traces of Newman’s notions regarding “tradition” turn up in Eliot’s essays. Part of Oser’s evidence comes from the fact that we know that Eliot studied and taught Newman.⁵ He contends that the failure to note the connection stems from Eliot’s own silence about Newman in correspondence. He attributes some of this reticence to the Eliot family’s Unitarianism, a religion that Newman had criticized (“Century” 49).⁶ In setting out his argument, Oser briefly mentions the link between Eliot and Charles Maurras (“T.S Eliot” 132), a connection that Kenneth Asher vigorously pursues. Examining Eliot in light of both Oser and Asher, as I do here, will elucidate Newman’s contribution to the conservative Catholic, Anglo-Catholic, and neo-Catholic influences on Eliot’s thought.

Demonstrating claims of influence presents challenges, especially if the person allegedly influenced does not confess to the effect. Diana Bellonby describes difficulties with the practice of tracking influences: “For twenty-first century critics, the term ‘influence’ seems tarnished and outdated [...] influence analysis connotes patriarchal traditionalism and the dusty obsolescence of a topic in vogue over thirty years ago” (204). For Bellonby, the many issues surface in the way traditional influence studies, like other formalist methods associated with New Criticism, have often ignored complicated political matters of identity, especially post-

colonial and gender perplexities, and clung to outdated notions of heroic individuality.⁷ Bellonby points out that even a putatively post-modern work like Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence*, in defining influence in terms of "daunting fathers and rebel sons in a Freudian psychodrama," reinforces a "skewed fixation on originality and male genius, and thus a solidified association with Western patriarchal hegemony" (205).

When effective, however, influence study can chart intertextual connections, mapping the way writers build on their knowledge of what preceded them. Here I want to examine intertextual circulation to show how some of Newman's central ideas find expression in Eliot's thought and then to show how Eliot's positions, including those inflected by Newman, re-appear in the attitudes and formularies of New Criticism. And while many of the practices of New Criticism had positive effects, especially in professionalizing literary study and advocating formal analysis as a replacement for vague essays of appreciation and literary hagiography, the arguments and programs of New Criticism also had troubling impact. Some of the disposition in mid-twentieth-century literary studies to avoid ideological issues derives from Eliot's filiation to reactionary expressions of Christian beliefs. New Criticism tended to identify issues of identity (race, gender etc.) as "extrinsic" to the proper exercise of critical thought, which demands a strict focus on the formal features of the text. This New Critical program often included an undertow suggestion of its ideological platform of Christian convictions, but when scholars discuss influences informing this feature of Eliot's theory, they leave Newman out of the conversation. I will show here that awareness of Newman's Anglo-Catholic voice in Eliot's thought will aid our understanding of why so many twentieth-century formalist critics and teachers tended to refrain from direct discussion of ideological issues, identifying engagement with such issues as a degraded form of literary discourse, a tarnished expression of the liberal humanism they disdained.

As a first step in sorting out the intersections between these writers, I will analyze two ideas that most clearly activate the continuities: Newman's notion of "development," a concept central to his thought and

thoroughly elaborated in his *Essay on Development* (1845), and Eliot's theory of tradition, also found throughout his critical work, but unfolded fully in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919). I will note a general similarity between Eliot's idea of tradition and Newman's notions regarding doctrinal developments.⁸ These correspondences start with Eliot's employment of theological terms, some borrowed from Newman, in his discussion of the literary tradition. In observing that much of what Eliot takes from Newman can be traced to Newman's ideas on development, we must call attention to Newman's *Essay on Development*, a work drafted while he was still an Anglican. I maintain that the Anglo-Catholic Eliot feels most connected to the thinking of the pre-conversion Newman, the leader of the Anglo-Catholic Tractarian Movement at Oxford, the central Victorian effort to preserve the *via media*.⁹

Having established parallels between Newman's ideas regarding doctrinal development and Eliot's "Tradition," I will draw on a number of works by both men to show that major strains of Eliot's thought derive from Newman's orthodox understanding of doctrinal truth. I will affirm that Eliot's Anglo-Catholic disdain for Protestantism proceeds in part from Newman's mistrust of reformation theology—especially private judgment—and that this mistrust of Reformation thought informs both his theory of the "dissociation of sensibility" and his insistence on the need for the poet to be "impersonal." Then I will observe that Eliot's attraction to the Anglo-Catholic theology of Lancelot Andrewes and John Bramhall echoes Newman's admiration for the same clerics and that Eliot's misgivings about "inner voice" and artistic individualism lead back to Newman's disesteem for "private Judgment." I will next mark linkages between Eliot's anti-Protestantism and his anti-Romanticism (fostered by his contempt for Hobbes and Rousseau) and parallel attitudes in Newman. I will show that these anti-Protestant dispositions tie directly to Eliot's recognition of the vacuum of authority in the Romantic and post-Romantic humanist traditions. Accurate perception of Eliot's concerns about authority will reveal parallels between his notions of poetic attainment as rooted in "orthodox" canonical texts (tradition) and Newman's understanding of authority and infallibility.

In *Literary Criticism: A Concise Political History*, Joseph North identifies most of the crucial Eliot principles I have named here, especially "tradition," the "dissociation of sensibility," and "impersonality" as "central element[s] of some of the most important critical positions taken in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s." He adds that it would "prove significantly easier to use [these elements] for conservative purposes than for liberal or radical ones" (216). These same "conservative purposes," I will argue, often led to expressions of anti-Romanticism and anti-democracy, expressions that echo Newman's anti-Liberal views. Perceiving Eliot's links to Newman sharpens North's point about the way conservative energies—including the focus on a predominately male Eurocentric canon and the debilitating New Critical conviction that literary analysis should eschew ideology—guided approaches to literary studies through much of the twentieth century.

Part 1. Fundamentally Hinged Ideas

Newman's theory of doctrinal development plays a central role in the links I will establish here. As a leader of the Oxford Tractarians, Newman argued that the Church of England needed to acknowledge instances of doctrinal communion with the Catholic tradition. For example, he disputes the imputation—leveled by Protestant-leaning Anglicans—that numerous Catholic beliefs lacked scriptural foundation. Newman counters that these "expansions" of Catholic ideas represent authentic, tested instances of doctrinal development (Ker, *John Henry Newman* 307). Eliot takes the spirit of Newman's Anglo-Catholic ideas regarding development as part of his understanding of tradition. He would have absorbed this theory and a sense of the unimpeachable truth of the doctrinal tradition from his close study of the *Apologia*, where Newman has much to say about development and where he recounts the development of his own theological position as a dialogue with dogmatic tradition.¹⁰

Newman fully explains his notions of doctrinal growth in *Essay on Development*, where he argues that genuine doctrinal developments exhibit seven "notes" (proofs) of dogmatic fidelity and infallible authority.

Two examples will illustrate Newman's position and suggest comparison to Eliot's thinking. Newman's first note, "preservation of type," employs the analogy of physical growth. As he puts it, in the natural world, "parts and proportions of the developed form, however altered, correspond to those which belong to its rudiments" (177). In other words, true developments preserve the structure of their origins. This notion would be important to Eliot, for example, in relation to genre. In Eliot's understanding of tradition, a work like Joyce's *Ulysses* has "great importance" because it displays an historical connection to several generic forms while also "developing" the capacities of each form ("*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth" 177). Newman terms the seventh and final note "chronic vigour," or durability. True developments endure, stand the test of time. Ideas lacking adequate correspondence to existing doctrine will lose influence over time. The test of time also plays a role in Eliot's ideas regarding the literary tradition. A successful work of literature, Eliot contends, must connect with the tradition and offer original developments that remain untarnished by time. Like Newman, Eliot also stresses that tradition continuously expands, reminding us of Newman's favored aphorism, "Growth the only evidence of life" (*Apologia* 19).

Though Eliot's observations about tradition occur throughout his prose works, his influential early essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," defines tradition as "the historical sense [...] a perception of the pastness of the past" [...] and "its presence" (38).¹¹ Awareness of tradition compels a writer to work with "a feeling that the whole of literature [...] has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order" (38). Only after writers have obtained this historical sense, "by great labor" (38), can they meaningfully assert their own individual talent. Writers who wish to create authentic literary works must "conform" to the tradition. A new work of literature must take part in the "conformity between the old and the new" (39). But conformity alone does not suffice: "To conform merely would be for the new work not really to conform at all: it would not be new, and therefore would not be a work of art" (39). A successful work of literature must both conform to tradition and also participate in "development," a

contribution of something individual (39). Critics "test" the work by comparing it to preceding works: "We say: It appears to conform and is perhaps individual, or it appears individual and may conform" (39). Thus, Newman and Eliot hold that "developments" must adhere to the tradition. For Eliot, only when poets show deep awareness of the tradition may they contribute "changes," but any such change is really a "development [which] abandons nothing *en route* [and] does not superannuate either Shakespeare or Homer" (39). Eliot thinks like a theologian, and his use of the word "development" seems inflected with Newman's thought. When a "really new" work of art appears, the "existing order" (the canon) is "altered [...] ever so slightly" (38). Such slight alteration qualifies as "development" (39).

In addition to Eliot's use of Newman's word "development" to characterize the growth of literary tradition, two instances of semantic concordance suggest further correspondences. First, the word they choose to represent the checks or proofs of conformity: in later editions of *Essay*, Newman employs "test" and "note" for these proofs, but he uses "test" almost exclusively in the early (1845) Anglo-Catholic edition of the work. Eliot uses the word "test" himself: a new work's "fitting in" or "conformity" with the tradition requires "a test of its value" (39). Eliot's use of "test" rather than "note" may signal that he consulted the 1845 edition of Newman's *Essay* rather than a later, Catholic edition.¹² The second semantic resemblance involves Eliot's use of words borrowed from the theological register like "heresy" and "orthodoxy" (words crucial to Newman's arguments in the *Apologia*), for his discussion of literary works. As I will show in more detail below, Eliot and Newman endorse tradition as a guardian of "orthodoxy" and a safeguard against "heresy." This understanding had consequences for later criticism, such as reducing literary works to academic exercises by requiring a high level of literary sophistication as a criterion for inclusion in the canon.

Part 2. Anti-Protestantism

Correspondences in the thought of these two writers range well beyond semantic parallels. Much has been observed about the way Eliot's

literary ideas draw on his religious beliefs, but Newman seldom enters this discussion.¹³ A cardinal similarity appears in their shared opposition to reformation theology. Newman's conversion to Rome marks his refusal to tolerate the Protestant element within the Anglican Church, part of which, as I will explain in more detail, had fallen under the sway of broad-church Liberalism, a position he describes in the *Apologia* as a "halfway house" on the "way to atheism" (184-85). Christopher Dawson, whom Eliot read and admired, observes that Newman's friend and colleague Hurrell Froude reinforced this contempt for the Reformation. In Froude's vision, "If men like Luther and Jewel were not heretics [...] no such thing as an heretical ethos existed" (qtd Dawson 49).¹⁴ And Newman's own words in the *Apologia* confirm the effects of Froude's anti-reform thinking on him (35).

Likewise, Eliot's Anglo-Catholic convictions emphasized the dangers of Liberal Protestantism. In an essay highlighting the "Catholic" element of Eliot's Anglo-Catholicism, William Blissett urges that "Eliot's emphatic rejection of Protestantism needs no documentation" ("T.S. Eliot" 49, n. 6). In a separate document, Blissett provides a "precis" of a 1947 report regarding the "Catholicity of the Anglican Church," a statement signed by many Anglican clerics and by Eliot himself ("Precis" 53). Blissett identifies a link between Eliot's signature on this document and his sympathy with Newman's *via media* convictions, especially *Tract Ninety*.¹⁵ He suggests that Eliot accorded with his Anglo-Catholic co-signees who, as clergy, were required to subscribe to the Articles; the signees subscribed, he states, "in the sense of [Newman's] *Tract Ninety*" (38). For the pre-conversion Newman and the Anglo-Catholic Eliot, the *via media* provides middle religious ground (rejecting the Protestant mistrust of Rome) whereby the Anglican Church might survive in a living relationship with the Catholic Church.

We see further evidence of this shared anti-Protestant fidelity to the *via media* in the theological sources Newman and Eliot favor. To preserve the doctrinal viability of the Anglican church, Newman turns to seventeenth-century divines Lancelot Andrewes (d. 1626) and John Bramhall (d. 1663).¹⁶ Since maintaining a connection between

Anglicanism and Rome provides a basis of the Oxford Movement, understanding Newman's commitment to the *via media* explains his admiration for these early Anglican theologians. If Andrewes and Bramhall stand as the heroes of Newman's ideal, Thomas Hobbes (d. 1679) plays the villain. In *Idea*, a work Eliot taught, Newman calls Hobbes "evil," "simply a disgrace" (238), and an "opponent of Revealed Truth" (359). Hobbes asserts the mechanistic, deterministic positions that evolve into broad-church liberalism and liberal humanism, the enemy of Christian spiritual life. For Newman, Andrewes and Bramhall sought to protect the church from early expressions of such influences.

Eliot also esteems these Anglo-Catholic luminaries, extending to Andrewes and Bramhall the admiration he had previously expressed in "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921) for Donne and Herbert (247-48). In Eliot's view, these two early Anglican clerics, like the metaphysical poets, remained undefiled by the "dissociation of sensibility" and retained the attachment to Catholic thinking that shielded their understanding. Oser has noticed this link between Newman and Eliot: "Before there was Eliot championing Hooker, Andrewes, and Bramhall as examples of the Anglican *via media* [...] there was Newman championing the same men for the same reason" ("Eliot" 137). Eliot calls Andrewes "the first great preacher of the English Catholic Church" ("Lancelot Andrewes" 292). In Andrewes' ideas, Eliot writes, "intellect and sensibility were in harmony" (293). Eliot sees Andrewes' Catholic rigor as protection against the chaos of modern liberal thought, the jargon-disfigured "tergiversation" in which "all dogma is in doubt except for the dogmas of science" (295). He writes that Andrewes leads us to "the ecstasy of assent" (295), using a phrase arguably derived from Newman's *Grammar of Assent*.¹⁷ Eliot even notes that Andrewes' sermons are inferior to none in English, "unless it be some of Newman's" (300). In using the word "some" here, Eliot surely had in mind Newman's most Anglican, *via media*-driven homilies, such as the *Oxford University Sermons (Fifteen)*. Similarly, Eliot's admiration for Bramhall reinforces links to Newman and the *via media*.¹⁸ Like Newman, Eliot sees Bramhall as the "stoutest inheritor of the tradition of Andrewes

and Laud” (“John Bramhall” 301) and esteems him for disputing with Hobbes, whose mechanistic thinking and moral relativism Eliot abhorred as much as Newman did (302, 307). And Eliot’s admiration is not merely historical, as he sees the *via media* as a continuing value: in Bramhall’s arguments, Eliot identifies “a perfect example of the pursuit of the *via media*” (305) and asserts that it takes “discipline and self-control” to continue to follow it (306).

Part 3. Problems with Private Judgment

Guided by these Anglo-Catholic divines, Newman expresses an abiding mistrust of unaided Protestant “private judgement.” His concerns proceed from his analysis of the Reformation defection from Roman Catholicism. Reform-minded sixteenth-century theologians held that Rome had catastrophically deviated from scripture. As a corrective, these reformers proposed that Christians rely for their beliefs, not on theological doctrine as taught by religious authorities—who had proved themselves unreliable—but on their own consciences, aided by their private understanding of scripture, newly and controversially available to lay Christians through translation. To the Catholic church, reliance on private reading of scripture without catechistic guidance encouraged heterodox thought. And counseled by such orthodox thinking, Newman and the other Oxford reformers held that human beings cannot rationally sustain religious judgment without some degree of submission to authority. The Church provides that authority, acting as a divinely appointed teacher. For Newman, the observant Christian acts not as a thrall to authority, but as a reasonable person, assisted by reliable teachers. As he closely examined the Anglican schism from Rome, he began to see the Church of England as an heretical community, dangerously divorced from the authority of the Catholic tradition (*Apologia* 122, 130). As Suzy Anger puts it, “Believing the principle of private judgment to be false and dangerous, [Newman] supports the infallible judgment of the Catholic Church,” which alone can authorize “correct interpretations” (34).

Newman and the Anglo-Catholic tradition insist that although individuals have freedom in scriptural interpretation, such freedom

extends only as far as doctrine allows.¹⁹ Radical proponents of private judgment, on the other hand, committed to the supremacy of the individual conscience, emphasize that believers have complete freedom to follow conscience even when conscience encourages beliefs at odds with established doctrine. Newman's worries on this score, as we will see, correspond to Eliot's mistrust of subjective impulse in literary judgment. Asher suggests that Maurras nurses this disquiet in Eliot: for Maurras, "the spirit of chaos broke loose in Wittenberg when Luther placed the Bible in the hands of individuals and, in substituting conscience for authority, waged religious revolution" (*Eliot* 24).

Eliot's misgivings about private judgment find expression in the scorn he voices for notions of heroic individualism and originality and in his turn to formalist discipline as an alternative to subjective promptings. We can see this mistrust, for example, in Eliot's "Reflections on *Vers Libre*" (1917). Individuality means little to Eliot in his thinking about tradition, just as it possesses marginal consequence for Newman in doctrinal questions. For Eliot it takes "great labor" for an artist or critic to become conversant with the tradition, but once that internalizing effort has progressed far enough, tradition itself dictates much of the work ("Tradition" 38). Eliot overstates this paradox when he says, "there is no freedom in art" ("Reflections" 32), arguing that authentic verse always adheres to form even when that form remains imperceptible to the untrained eye. He points to two modern poems in which he identifies the "constant suggestion and the skillful evasion of iambic pentameter" (33). This "suggestion" and "evasion" do not signify formlessness but acute formal awareness. An adept modern poet whose lines appear "free" always works with previous verbal structures in mind, structures that control and restrain the possibilities of expression. In the same way, theologians are not really "free" for Newman but bound to remain within the confines of the tradition. The pressure exerted by this "constant evasion and recognition of regularity" (34) produces the conditions under which authentic development can take place.

A related continuity occurs in Eliot's idea of the traditional grounding of art. Eliot's model of artistic creation—detached meditation on the works

of preceding artists—resembles Newman’s representation of the objective theological tradition. For Eliot, individuality of expression must always subordinate itself to the tradition: “what any one writer can contribute by way of ‘originality’ is very small indeed” (*After* 25). Likewise, for Newman, in doctrinal developments, the individual writer barely registers. Once the ideas have reached the world, the author of those ideas practically disappears. Personal beliefs do not play a significant role in the orthodoxy of theological doctrines. The same is true for poetic developments. As Eliot puts it, “It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting” (SP 43). Of course, Eliot himself, like any poet, draws on personal experience in his poems, but here he insists that the personal element does not account for the poetic value.

For Eliot, a clear alliance adheres between “tradition” and “depersonalization.” This “extinction of personality” (40) may sound destructive to those predisposed to an ethos of Romantic individual freedom, but for Eliot the study and composition of literature require an awareness that the value of a literary work arises not primarily from its individuality but from the unique slant of its self-sacrificing conformity, from its beautifully cognate indebtedness to what came before. Thus, for both Newman and Eliot, the large body of precedent radically restricts the possibilities and even degrades the significance of “personal” contribution. Authentic development proceeds not from an individual voice but from a complex network of thoughtful language over time. As Newman writes in *Essay on Development*,

The development then of an idea [...] is carried on through and by means of communities of men and their leaders and guides; and it employs their minds as its instruments, and depends upon them while it uses them [...]. It grows when it incorporates, and its identity is found not in isolation, but in continuity. (62-63)

Thus, development depends for Newman not on heroic individual performances, but on moments of expansion too varied to be fully

characterized, the result of countless untold influences and impulses, much as the creative work of an individual artist develops for Eliot less from that artist's individual brilliance than from the unique way a specific work incorporates and subtly modifies the multifarious voices and influences that molded it.

And as I will show more fully later, this perception of literary history helps to account for our present-day ambivalence regarding the teachings of the New Critics. Their vision of the literary work as deeply rooted in tradition exemplifies the beneficial conservatism of literary study, the productive sense of the literary work as imbedded in an historical structure of similar works. This precept requires the critic to attend carefully to the creative forms of literary craft and to explicate texts closely; even the most radical expressions of literary critique continue to rely heavily on the methods of close reading the New Critics insisted upon. But that undeniably valuable conservatism has produced some less salutary consequences. As North's work insists, the assumptions guiding the New Critical theories of tradition and aesthetic form tended to enforce a reactionary effect, including an elitist impulse, a sense of restricted access to the exclusive canonic realms of academic work (216).

Part 4. Anti-Romantic Sensibility

Newman and Eliot's shared abhorrence for the Protestant commitment to "Private Judgment," a theological issue for both but also for Eliot an aesthetic one, engenders disdain for Romantic subjectivity. Continuities between Protestantism and Romanticism may seem counterintuitive to some readers, but the links have been well established (Asher, *Eliot* 22-25, Taylor 314). For many "Catholic" thinkers, Romanticism exacerbated the effects of Reformation error. Once we identify Eliot and Newman's anti-Romantic propensities as stemming from their rejection of Protestantism and private judgement, their connection to each other resonates in a linked mistrust of Romantic imaginative flights divorced from authoritative sanction. Newman associated Romanticism with the excesses of "Rousseauism" (Harrold

249, 253); he identified Rousseau's belief in man's native goodness as a modern form of the Pelagian heresy (Harrold 252-54). Eliot's mistrust of Romantic individualism follows a similar pattern of disdain for Rousseau (see Asher, *Eliot* 37-39). Eliot also singles out Shelley's "repellent" ideas as examples of Romanticism's "schoolboy" thought (*Use* 81). Shelley's verse effectuates an "abuse of poetry," reducing it to "confused" fancy (82). Blake's work also shows a deforming subjective disposition: what Blake's genius "sadly lacked" was "a framework of accepted ideas which would have prevented him from indulging in a philosophy of his own" ("William Blake" 279). By "accepted ideas" Eliot clearly means some form of orthodox (even "Catholic") belief. If Protestant thought (fortified by Hobbes' mechanistic thinking) initiates the dissociation of sensibility, Romanticism reinforces it.²⁰

Eliot's misgivings about Romanticism come into tighter focus in his analysis of Matthew Arnold, whose critique of Romanticism falls short in Eliot's view. Eliot's derision of Arnold glosses his eventual rejection of Babbitt's humanism. He may have internalized his mistrust of Arnold through Newman, who maintained a conviction that Arnold's thought was infected with Liberal bias.²¹ Arnold's idea of religion as "morality touched with emotion," was anathema to Newman, whose indictments of Oxford Liberalism identify Arnold (and Arnold's father, author of an attack on Tractarian thought called "The Oxford Malignants"), as two of its prime suspects (Harrold 55 and Faber 373-74); according to Harrold, Newman felt that the "secular and naturalistic" atmosphere of Oxford "had begun to undermine effectual belief in Orthodox Christianity" (93). Eliot's critique of Arnold extends from a like suspicion of secularism. In "Arnold and Pater" he writes that Arnold's failure to see the necessity of religious authority empties his theory of benefit. Arnold wanted to "usurp the place of Religion" and replace it with "culture" (348). But since "culture" secularizes the "will of God" (350), the solution is empty. He sought to "divorce religion from thought" and to preserve the "emotional kick" of Christianity "without the bother of believing it" (349). Eliot concludes that the "total effect of Arnold's philosophy is to set up Culture in the place of

Religion, and to leave Religion to be laid waste by the anarchy of feeling" (351). Thus, Arnold's views do not provide resistance to Pater's relativism, an inevitable extension of Romantic subjectivism. As Eliot puts it, "the gospel of Pater [complete subjectivity] follows naturally upon the prophecy of Arnold," whose solution proved only an inadequate compromise (351). For Eliot, we choose not between culture and anarchy but between Christian belief and subjective chaos. However, a figure of wisdom always attends nearby for Eliot in these discussions—Newman himself: "The purpose of the present paper is to indicate a direction from Arnold, through Pater, to the 'nineties, with, of course, the solitary figure of Newman in the background" (346). For Eliot, Newman endorses an egress from the subjective death spiral of Romantic/humanist thought.

Kenneth Asher elucidates Eliot's connections to the reactionary thinker Charles Maurras in a way that should have led him to consider Newman. For Asher, Maurras provides a crucial source for Eliot's conviction of the invidious link between Protestantism and Romanticism. Asher argues that Eliot came to admire Maurras through Babbitt and T.E. Hulme, another notorious hater of Romanticism (*Eliot* 30-33, 36-37). Under the sway of Maurras' thought, Eliot views Rousseau and the Romantic revolutionary spirit as a threat to "tradition," the old Catholic order (*Eliot* 21-24). At the time Eliot taught the course that included Newman, he taught another course on Modern French literature that focused on Maurras' critique of Rousseau.²² This yoking in Eliot's lectures locates Newman with Maurras as paired influences in his mistrust of Romanticism.²³

According to Asher, Maurras carries the reactionary ideas of Joseph de Maistre into the twentieth century (*Eliot* 15). Eliot's French literature course sought to critique nominalist Protestantism and Romanticism partly on the authority of Maurras' belittlement of Rousseau (Asher, *Eliot* 37-39). Maurras sees Rousseau's Romanticism as "the culmination of Protestant logic" (qtd Asher, *Eliot* 25. See also 18-19, 22-26). As Asher puts it, Eliot uses Maurras to denounce the "emotive individualism" and the "subversive force" of Rousseau's influence and thereby to discredit the

Georgian poets, “the sloppy dregs of Romanticism” (“T.S. Eliot and the New Criticism” 298). Thus, for Maurras and Eliot, Protestantism initiated—and Romanticism extended—the subjective egalitarianism and antimonarchism responsible for the break in sensibility leading to the French Revolution. To Maurras, this development disrupted the necessary order of civilization and threatened to eradicate tradition entirely. This same constellation of anti-revolutionary, anti-democratic attitudes characterizes Newman’s thought.²⁴ I will suggest below that this set of inclinations recurs in features of New Critical ideology.

Part 5. The Imperative of Authority

Once readers perceive that Newman and Eliot share a mistrust of Protestantism, Private Judgment, extreme individualism, and Romanticism, they will see more clearly how both men turn to the ideas of tradition and doctrine to provide the authority lacking in these ideologies. For both men, although all human discernment is to some degree “private,” valid judgment requires the buttress of dogmatic authority. And for both, a vacuum of such authority denudes Protestantism, Romanticism, and humanism of their value. Recognition of this vacuity reinforces Eliot’s reliance on his Anglo-Catholic faith, a stance nearly identical with Newman’s pre-conversion thinking. Eliot and Newman identify the historical Christian tradition as the only source of reliable (even infallible) authority, utterly lacking in the secular intellectual tradition, especially as that tradition finds expression in Victorian Liberalism, the precursor of Eliot’s *bête noir*, humanism. This insistence on authority brings into focus what adversaries of New Criticism perceive as the deeply conservative function of tradition/doctrine, the use of orthodox authority to fend off heresy and safeguard tradition in the canon and in interpretations of canonical texts.²⁵ While I have tried to suggest that the impulses of New Critical formalism had many benefits for the development of literary studies, the force of this conservative turn also had the following troubling effect: with rare exceptions, for much of the twentieth century, Anglo-American literary

scholars focused on form at the expense of ideological concerns and, in fixing their attention on the largely white male canon, paid scant attention to the writings of women and people of color.

This is not the place to evaluate the merits of Newman's theories of infallibility, but they clearly derive from his beliefs about authority.²⁶ For our purposes, Newman holds that reliable authority insulates doctrinal truth from the threat of hopelessly subjective private judgement, a peril brought about by the Reformation and its collateral effects (*Apologia* 225-26). The Roman church relies on infallibility to substantiate developing doctrine in the perpetual dialogue between individual rational judgments and authority. But authority acts "not to enfeeble the freedom and vigour of human thought in religious speculation, but to resist and control its extravagance" (226). The church possesses a "prophetic office" which acts "to safeguard the purity of the apostolic faith against the errors inevitable in the exercise of private judgment" (Sullivan 156). In this model, church authority provides "the support of truth" (156). Suzy Anger observes how Newman's *Essay* relies on authority to ward off the variances of heretical interpretations, and in making this case she comes close to identifying the connection I make here with Eliot. As she puts it, Newman "worries, as will some twentieth-century critics, that without some standard of authoritative interpretation, readings will proliferate endlessly, making agreement impossible" (36). I suggest that of such critics, the most influential was Eliot himself. Anger's analysis provides clear understanding of Newman's reliance on authority, but she understates the (essentially circular) way that for Newman doctrinal authority obviates the threat of subjectivity.²⁷ In Newman's thought, infallibility should be construed as inhering in the tradition, in the language of doctrine itself.²⁸

Thus, the authority of the tradition provides crucial value for both Newman and Eliot, and as I will clarify, this demand for religious doctrine (as an authoritative sanction of any belief) impacted New Criticism. Sean Lucy describes how New Criticism saw its own crisis of authority in theological terms (9): "heresy is the result of traditionless authors

searching for the background and imagery which only a tradition can give them” (9). Examining *After Strange Gods*, Lucy compares Eliot’s notion of tradition to Christian doctrine, calling it a kind of “literary orthodoxy” (9), the disregard of which produces heresy. History and tradition create our “common artistic background” (10). “Without the discipline and basis of a common tradition this struggle for meaning becomes something like an impossibility, and the literary world is inclined to break up into isolated individuals or into small groups with artistic methods which are almost like private codes” (10). It should come as no surprise that this authoritative New Critical “discipline” effectively guaranteed a highly restrictive view of literary subject matter and canonical qualification.

Eliot locates this authority in Anglo-Catholic thought, essentially Newman’s *via media*. In divine authority as expressed in Anglo-Catholic doctrine, Eliot identifies an indisputable sanction of truth, suggesting that without this foundation for hermeneutic support, literature loses much of its value. In the “The Function of Criticism” (1923), Eliot cites the following “unimpeachable definition” from John Middleton Murry and allows for the connection between religious authority and literary interpretive viability: “Catholicism stands for the principle of unquestioned spiritual authority outside the individual; that is also the principle of Classicism in literature” (70). “Classicism” here functions as a near synonym for “tradition.” Eliot goes on to dispute with Middleton Murry regarding Romanticism, but his point about authority—as we saw with his rejection of Romantic subjectivity and his ridicule of Arnold’s empty compromise with secular “culture”—reveals much about the connection Eliot sees between doctrinal truth and literary value.

In the same essay, Eliot discusses the relation of “Outside Authority” to the Romantic ideal of the “Inner Voice” (72). Critic James Matthew Wilson highlights Eliot’s mistrust of “inner voice,” arguing that the dependence on doctrine as the sanction for religious truth transfers in literary study to a reliance on traditional form rather than subjective observation. For Eliot, “form” provides a refuge from endless personal critical observation. Critics should “evaluate an artwork’s value and

meaning in terms of its formal properties, rather than in terms of our subjective dispositions" (16). Just as Newman employs the idea of infallible authority to secure doctrine from the extravagant dispositions of unguided individual consciences, Eliot aims to protect the artwork from the subjectivity of Romantically charged private judgment, the unreliable "inner voice." In a sense, for Eliot, doctrinal truth and formalist focus provide two layers of protection from radical subjectivity. New Critical Formalism generally adhered to this focus on form. And while it may not have done so for purely ideological motives, the focus on form and the exclusion of issues of human identity, especially those of race, gender, and sexuality, have been features of much critical writing and teaching in twentieth-century Departments of English.

Eliot saw liberal humanism as disabled by lack of authority, and in his turn to a focus on form, we see an influence that feeds formalist approaches, especially those of the American New Critics. One sign of the influence of Eliot's authority-based religious thinking (and thus of Newman's thought) on the New Critics appears in the inclination of these critics to employ, in crucial statements, language borrowed from the theological lexicon, especially as a way of identifying error. For example, the notions of the "the heresy of paraphrase" and didactic "error" suggest an awareness (at influential levels of New Critical thought) of an analogy between literary judgments and theological judgments concerning validity (recall the full title of *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy*).²⁹ This language also suggests an acceptance of doctrinal tradition as an essential element of historical understanding. Doctrine, for Eliot and Newman, does not mean ideas grandfathered into authority. Doctrine acquires its authority from critical investigation, and the process of continuing thought in relation to doctrine means persistent refinement or "development" of divinely protected principles of scripture. By the same token, for Eliot, as it undergoes perpetual development at the hands of artists, tradition functions not as a static mass but as a perpetually developing—but never changing—body of works providing a truth-preserving sanction for valid interpretation.³⁰

Part 6. Formalism as Refuge from Liberal Subjectivity

So far, I have shown that Eliot's anti-Protestant convictions (including his attraction to the *via media*, his disesteem for Romantic notions of originality, individuality, and private judgment, and his need for an "infallible" authoritative warrant) all derive in part from Newman. As readers come to accept this set of conjoined sympathies, they will also begin to see how these beliefs unite to create Newman and Eliot's bridged distaste for what Newman called Liberalism (the basis of liberal humanism). We have already noted how Eliot's turn to form, which evolves into expressions of New Critical formalism, extends from his rejection of the "inner-voice" heresies of liberal humanism. Asher's work again proves crucial to understanding this linkage, as he seeks to reconcile the two sides of Eliot's career, the "poet of chaos" and the "champion" of cultural orthodoxy (*Eliot* 160). Asher writes that critics have not adequately placed Eliot within the "framework of ideas" that gave form to his thought (160), but he has nothing to say about Newman in this framework, even though his recognition of the influence of Christopher Dawson, Maurras, and the "French reactionary tradition" might have led him to Newman (161).

As Asher puts it, "at stake" for Eliot "was nothing less than Order, a social organization in consonance with natural law" (161). In the effort to preserve this order, Eliot needed to counter the linked threats of "democracy, capitalism, Protestantism, and especially the Romantic spirit of untrammelled individualism" (161). This attitude of resistance comes to him through the influence of Babbitt and T.E. Hulme but also eventually leads to his rejection of much of Babbitt's thought (161) and to an anti-humanist position that impacted the New Critics. And in this linkage, we see the valuable contributions of Eliot and New Criticism regarding form.³¹ But Asher also develops the accord, as found in some of Eliot's writing, between his Anglo-Catholic beliefs and some of the more unattractive qualities of New Criticism, especially its Agrarian expression (see Asher *Eliot* 133-59). Among these qualities stand the insular protection of the largely Eurocentric male canon and the exclusion of most ideological issues.

Few would dispute that Eliot's thought has influenced the mid-twentieth-century English Department or that his ideas derive from conservative principles that in turn frame some of the most pernicious aspects of New Criticism (Asher *Eliot* 135-40). Eliot's authority contributed to much of what went wrong in twentieth-century Anglo-American criticism, especially its reluctance to concern itself with "extrinsic" issues of identity, race, ethnicity, and gender.³² The following declaration by Eliot provides a pillar in the foundation of formalist criticism: "Honest criticism and sensitive appreciation are directed not upon the poet but upon the poetry" ("Tradition" 40). Passive voice fails to muffle the prescriptive (even imperative) resolve here. In this avowal, Eliot defies the fashions of contemporary academic criticism that spawned generalist essays of sentimental appreciation and literary hagiography (Graff 81-97). His charge had the positive effect of fostering professional criticism by critics rigorously schooled in formal awareness, close-reading, and careful explication. But professional formalism came with a price: in its purest expressions, it largely restricted the canon to Eurocentric male authors, and it tended to isolate works from their human contexts, reducing them to formal mechanisms devoid not only of the concerns of ideology and identity but of blood and passion. Knowledge of Eliot's shadowy adherence to Newman's thought allows us to view the Neo-Catholic element in the theological turn of Eliot's thought and to examine the effects of this theological propensity on our sense of the origins and consequences of New Critical thought.

Eliot's turn to form (as rooted in tradition) extends from his need to secure a position free from what he saw as the subjective aporia of humanism, the legacy of Protestantism and Romanticism. What Eliot objected to in liberal humanism descends from elements Newman found objectionable in Anglican Liberalism, especially what he called the "anti-dogmatic principle." Since Newman had always believed that dogma formed "the fundamental principle" of religion (*Apologia* 54), it followed that Liberal mistrust of dogma threatened the basis of religious faith and the viability of the Anglican Church.³³ Early in the *Apologia* (40) Newman

alludes to the closet scene in *Hamlet* and slightly misquotes the Prince's words as, "Look on this picture and on that" (3.4.63 ff). In this mostly overlooked moment, Newman associates Liberal Protestantism, including the "spoliations" of Henry VIII (*Apologia* 261), with the regicidal acts of Claudius; in turn he links the "Primeval Mystery" of the Anglo-Catholic tradition with the legitimate authority of Hamlet's beloved father. This passage reinforces Newman's eventual association of the violent Protestant (and heretical) genesis of the Anglican church with the Liberal rationalism that threatened to extend the anti-dogmatic perfidy of those origins.

For Newman, the Liberal Protestant element within the Church of England posed a direct threat to the continuance of dogmatically illuminated faith. In the *Apologia*, he lists eighteen "positions" associated with "Liberalism in Oxford" that he "earnestly denounced and abjured" (260). For example,

9. There is a right of Private Judgment: that is, there is no existing authority on earth competent to interfere with the liberty of individuals in reasoning and judging for themselves about the Bible and its contents.

10. [E]very one may lawfully advance a claim to profess and teach what is false and wrong in matters, religious, social and moral, provided that to his private conscience it seems absolutely true and right. (260, 261)

These statements identify Liberal positions to which Eliot would also object (both theologically—as an Anglo-Catholic—and in literary matters). Tradition possesses dogmatic authority for Eliot, and liberal humanism, like the Liberalism Newman reproaches here, flounders without it. Proceeding in literary matters without reference to that authority leads to literary heresy. The liberal view, especially the willing acceptance of subjectivity, poses a direct rejection of doctrinal authority, the only bulwark between certitude and destabilizing doubt, between order and chaos, for both Newman and Eliot, and for some influential New Critics.³⁴

Asher observes that the American New Critics adapted Eliot's critique of liberal humanism to their own aesthetic/formalist purposes: "The French reactionary position as it is Anglicized by Eliot finds correspondence in southern agrarianism and from there infuses New Critical theory, though alembicated to almost purely aesthetic considerations" (*Eliot* 162). This distillation produces the formalist "cul de sac" (162-63). Asher characterizes the rudiments of American New Criticism as the aesthetic embodiment of dogmatic "incarnational" Catholic thought, from Wellek's Catholic thinking on the "icon," through the conservative ideas of Ransom and Cleanth Brooks' tenets of formalist faith set out in his "Credo" (Brooks "Formalist" 1366), to the theories of Alan Tate, an eventual Catholic convert (155). Ransom has less connection to Catholicity than some of his fellow critics, but he shares their hostility to humanist concerns. In this connection, one only need take note of his manifesto, *The New Criticism*, as highlighted by Joseph North's reading of a crucial passage. In North's view, Ransom feared that New Critics had "not gone far enough" in their "effort to sever the text from its various contexts" (40). As a consequence of these partial measures, in Ransom's words, "the New Criticism is damaged by two specific errors of theory, which are widespread." These errors involve, first, "using the psychological affective vocabulary" and thereby confusing literary judgment with "feelings," and second, "plain moralism," which Ransom associates with the failures of "old criticism," criticism focused on extra-literary interests. In these passages Ransom seeks to emancipate New Critical approaches from the "dregs" (his word) of these extrinsic considerations and in so doing to cleanse criticism of its ties to the ethical, moral, and psychological concerns of humanism (Ransom qtd North 40-41).

This mistrust of feelings and moral reflection leads to a focus on form as a way of excluding humanistic bias. This exclusion works by reducing history (and the reader) to the status of extrinsic concerns. Especially in the writings of Brooks and in two famous essays by W.K. Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy" and "The Affective Fallacy," we can observe marked continuities between Eliot and the New Critical focus on

form. Brooks shares Eliot's sentiment—as expressed in the sentence cited above from “Tradition”—that critics should shift focus from the author (and the author's historical context) to the text itself. For example, Brooks writes the following in relation to the aims of critical thought: “Speculation on the mental processes of the author takes the critic away from the work into biography and psychology [...]. Such explorations are very much worth making. But they should not be confused with an account of the work” (“Formalist” 1367). For Brooks, as for Eliot in “Tradition,” the work itself and not its context should keep the literary critic's attention. And in the essays of Wimsatt and Beardsley, we see more reinforcement of the inducement to reduce ideological humanist concerns such as identity to extrinsic status. As Julie Rivken and Michael Ryan put it, these two famous titles became critical watchwords of the New Critical effort aimed at “delimiting the object of literary study and separating it from biography or sociology” (6), as such non-literary disciplines provide pathways to the kinds of ideological interests the New Critics deemed irrelevant. The intentional fallacy essay, Rivken and Ryan continue, had the effect of focusing critical attention on the work rather than on any “statements regarding [...] intention” an author might make (6). Not surprisingly, in the intentional fallacy essay, Wimsatt and Beardsley address Eliot directly as an example of the inadequacy of relying on the author's explicitly stated intentions as a guide to literary meaning. And the affective fallacy essay advises readers and critics to regard their emotional reactions to literature as irrelevant and instructs them to focus instead on “the study of the verbal object itself” (6). This formal attentiveness acts on one hand as a positive recommendation for reliable interpretation and on the other as a rejection of “affect” as irrelevant to worthwhile literary study. Thus, the formal focus provides a brand of critical prophylaxis, fending off the polluting ideological effects of biographical, sociological, affective, and humanist concerns.

And Eliot's developing Anglo-Catholic beliefs, as deriving from Newman in the ways I have been suggesting, tie directly to his influential early aims—and those of the New Critics—to maintain the hedgerows dividing literary study from other disciplines. In “Notes Toward a Critical

Method: Language as Order" (1955), New Critic Denis Donoghue observes links between Orthodox Christian thought and the practices of New Critical formalism. Donoghue aligns Eliot's thought with that of Jacques Maritain, the Catholic philosopher who had once defended Maurras and whom Eliot admired greatly (183-87). In the same essay, he quotes Brooks on the connection between formalism and Christianity: "I think it no accident that so many of the formalist critics either hold, or are sympathetic to, an orthodox Christian faith" (qtd Donoghue 191-92). As a demonstration of the connections between Christian belief and New Critical formal awareness (including the New Critical mistrust of secular political ideologies, including humanism), Donoghue declares the New Critical conviction that literary study should be sheltered from non-formalist "historical" approaches sympathetic to secular ideological influences: "historical studies of literature have too often been undertaken in a spirit of almost complete detachment from literature as literature" (187). In this connection, he indicts Granville Hicks' *The Great Tradition* (1933) as a work that "ignored literary values altogether in its concern for Marxist dogma" (187). Elsewhere, Donoghue also disdains the way ideology derails literary study in the work of Terry Eagleton ("Guide"). In his more recent book on Eliot, *Words Alone: The Poet T.S. Eliot* (2000), the title of which discloses his continuing perception of the sympathies between Eliot and New Critical formalism, he defends Eliot against the charge that his Christian beliefs might have compromised his literary judgment (*Words* 271). The book extends the linkages between orthodox Christian thought and the ideology of New Criticism. Thus, as I have been suggesting, Newman's ideas should always be part of this narrative; Newman's Anglo-Catholic theological position plays a role in some of the very elements of Eliot's thought that led to the Christian influence on New Critical thought.

More explicitly, Eliot's Christian faith securely framed his opposition to humanist ideology, which he linked to Victorian liberalism. In Eliot's words, humanism "seems to descend" from the "liberal Protestantism" Newman so detested ("Second" 396). His reliance on form and Christian

faith as critical foundations proceeds to some degree from his need to distance his position from humanism's secular (subjectivist) consequences. His critique of Norman Foerster emerges from his conviction that without religious authority to support its claims, humanism has little value: Foerster's "humanism is insufficient without religion" (394); it is "untenable and meaningless without a religious foundation" (397). Eliot's certainty here derives in part from Newman's assertion that all epistemological authority finally requires church doctrine (*Apologia* 179-80, Harrold 191) and from Newman's insistence that university education without theological instruction is incomplete (*Idea* Discourse IX, 220-41). Moreover, for Eliot and Newman, the authority of Christian faith occurs naturally when the mind functions properly: "Man is man because he can recognize supernatural realities, not because he can invent them" (397).

For Eliot, then, secular humanism retains the problems caused by Arnold's separation of literature from religion ("Second" 398-99). As a form of heresy, humanism "seizes upon a truth and pushes it to the point at which it becomes a falsehood" (400). Following the logic of Hobbes' materialist thought ("Bramhall" 303), it reveals itself as mortally undermined by Rousseau's Romantic optimism (401-2). Eliot aims his critique primarily at Foerster, whom he aligns with humanist zealotry and heresy (399), but he argues that both Babbitt and Foerster are "nearer to the view of Rousseau than they are to the religious view" (401). Eliot sides with Hulme in seeing that the humanist tradition lacks the authoritative sanctions to deal with the problem of "original sin" (401). This feature of Eliot's objections to humanism follows Newman's designation of Original Sin as a central doctrine of Christianity (*Apologia* 71) and from Newman's identification of Liberalism/Romanticism with the Pelagian heresy (Harrold 253), which denies original sin and advocates the natural goodness of human nature (*Apologia* 34 and 568 n. 226).

As we have already begun to see, Eliot's conservatively motivated mistrust of humanism sets him in good stead with the Agrarians. As Asher observes, many of the New Critics tended to side with Eliot in blaming the Dissociation of Sensibility on the influence of Hobbes (*Eliot* 158).³⁵ Of

course, the positions of the New Critics and the evolving positions of Eliot diverge in crucial ways, as Asher himself observes. Eliot employs at times a comparative historical method which the "hermeticism" of the New Critics tended to disavow. This avoidance of history often had the effect of limiting the "harvest" of New Criticism to "the individual poem" (157), an effect Eliot did not endorse. Despite these differences, the influential authoritarian conservatism of the movement owes its momentum to its origins, and thus to Eliot and Newman.

Gerald Graff's arguments support the claim that New Criticism's politically charged "recoil from politics" receives impetus from Eliot's conservative influence (148-49). But like Asher, Graff reminds us that formalism evolved over time to distinguish itself from many of Eliot's ideas. And the feeling was mutual, as Eliot eventually expresses disrelish for the "lemon-squeezer school of criticism" (*Eliot* 133). It remains though an historically valid understanding that much New Critical interpretation bears the stamp of Eliot's (and by extension, Newman's) opposition to "liberal" thought. The Agrarian expression of New Criticism exerted a powerful influence on the organization of Departments of English and on twentieth-century literary criticism. This influence authorized a formalist method that exerted a positive effect on professionalizing and defining the activity of literary study as focused on matters of literary form, but it also had the consequence of encouraging the neglect of a range of ideological issues—including those of race, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity—and of countenancing a largely Eurocentric male expression of the literary canon. I have contended here that these restrictions stem from Eliot's turn to religious doctrine and form as asylums from the subjective abyss of humanism, a direct extension of the Liberalism Newman so feared.³⁶

Conclusion

Young students often express confusion about why twentieth-century formalist criticism tended to ignore ideological issues and undervalue works not written by white men. And when, as part of my explanation, I

turn to Eliot's influence, I try always to do so without pointing a finger of censure. But that I may appear to blame Eliot and Newman for the problem seems inevitable. However, in my understanding, this question should not lead to blame. Newman and Eliot created significant, beautiful works that continue to inspire careful analysis. It should not surprise us if some of their thinking conflicts with the way many of us look at things now. What matters is that we try to clarify the record, even if that effort makes it appear to some that we are reducing them to whipping boys. Such reduction is not my intention. In this essay, I claim that Newman's thought played a crucial role in Eliot's critical writings. Clarifying this role identifies a previously under-reported source of Eliot's formalist leanings and more fully discloses an explanation for his conservative effect on New Criticism, a movement whose undeniably constructive impact on the history of literary studies carried with it some troubling reactionary features. For many readers, this reactionary inclination contributes to the conviction that some of Eliot's influential early critical positions and much twentieth-century formalist criticism remain decidedly out of step with our developing understanding of the value and aims of literature and criticism.

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Notes

I wish to thank Barry Tharuad and the readers at *NCP* for helping me to complete this essay. I also want to express my gratitude to Randy Malamud for reading the manuscript and offering encouragement, to Joe Kelly for suggesting some helpful sources in church history, and to Melissa McLeod and Harrison Schmidt for their thoughts and encouragement.

¹ See also Asher *Eliot* 51 and Graff 148-149.

² Araujo argues that Eliot really did not sympathize with Fascism (2). The 1971 books by Kirk and Kojecky defend Eliot from such charges. Lockerd (esp. 217-18) also addresses these issues. See Julius for a careful examination of Eliot's anti-Semitism and Malamud for a thorough analysis of the effects of works like that of Julius on the way we think about Eliot. Ricks (25-125) provides the most thorough and balanced consideration of

this issue. He is especially careful yet unflinching in his analysis of Eliot's "excessive tolerance is to be deprecated" remark (40-54).

³ Kirk makes much of Dawson's influence on Eliot (Lockerd 218). Lockerd's essay argues for a deeper understanding of Dawson's influence on Eliot, but he does not mention Newman, despite Dawson's book on the Oxford Movement.

⁴ For example, the link between Eliot and Hans Georg Gadamer (Shusterman 108-19, 128-32) has been well laid out, and the intellectual affinities between Newman and Gadamer have also been established (Carr, Schmidt). But the possible tie from Newman to Eliot that tracks through Gadamer remains unexamined. I suggest below that another such link tracks from Newman to Eliot through G.K. Chesterton.

⁵ In a London University extension class Eliot taught in three successive years, Newman's *Idea of a University* and *Apologia pro vita sua* were required reading (Oser "Century" 47). For the specifics of Eliot's extension teaching see Asher (*Eliot* 37 ff) and Schuchard. The fact that this teaching took place between 1916 and 1919 suggests that Eliot's reading and teaching of Newman's works (and as we will see, his reading and teaching of the ideas of neo-Catholicism) inform his thinking in "Tradition," published in 1919. It also allows that the thinking that led to his conversion to the Anglican Church in 1927 had begun by 1916, possibly earlier. This time sequence shows clearly that Eliot's religious thought, like the ideas that led to Newman's conversion, developed over time. Of course, readers need to avoid conflating Eliot's Anglo-Catholicism with Roman Catholicism. Eliot never became Catholic, never took Newman's step of converting to Rome. I suggest here though, that in following the *via media*, Eliot holds to Newman's pre-conversion Anglo-Catholic beliefs, a single step away from Catholicism, leaving his religious beliefs a hybrid structure. In this hybrid, "catholicity" forms part of Eliot's belief system. Spurr convincingly suggests that although Eliot never converted to Rome, "he found himself entirely attuned to the mind of Catholic Europe" (130). Spurr even argues that Eliot regretted the Anglican "divorce from Rome" and fully expected that Rome would one day succeed Canterbury, and that "the Church of England was the Catholic Church in

England” (108). See my discussion (later in this essay) of Blissett, who emphasizes the “catholicity” of Eliot’s Anglo-Catholicism. For a careful study of the complexity of Eliot’s theological beliefs, see Domestico’s chapter in *Poetry and Theology in the Modernist Period*, which argues that Eliot’s poetry was deeply influenced by the beliefs of Barth, a Swiss Calvinist. Nickerson also pursues the Barth connection to Eliot’s thought.

⁶ Oser also suggests that Eliot’s relative silence may have stemmed from Newman’s reputation as an Anglican “turncoat” (“T.S. Eliot” 137) and from Eliot’s unwillingness to offend his superior at Oxford University Press, Geoffrey Faber, who was notoriously critical of Newman’s role in the Oxford movement (138-39).

⁷ See Clayton and Rothstein (20-30) for a theoretically nuanced discussion of the history of the problem distinguishing “influence” from “intertextuality.”

⁸ Eliot’s thought evolved, and he himself admitted that he was “not a systematic thinker” (ctd Shusterman 7), but the influence of his ideas does not necessarily follow this evolution. Sometimes ideas that Eliot eventually revised or even rejected wielded influence simply because he voiced them. Especially when I discuss his influence on New Critical Formalism, I do not claim that the position I describe is Eliot’s complete or final stance, only that his words, when published, exerted influence.

⁹ Newman converted to Catholicism in 1845 but wrote influential books while still a member of the Anglican Church. The *via media* is the attempt in Anglican theology to preserve a middle-position between radical Protestant antipathy toward Rome on one hand and actual commitment to Roman Catholicism on the other, hence the term “Anglo-Catholic.” Eliot was nominally Unitarian until his conversion to the Church of England in 1927, but as I have suggested and will develop more fully below, the thinking that led him to convert (much of it influenced by the ideas of the *via media*) was well under way by 1916, when he was reading and teaching Newman and neo-Catholic theology.

¹⁰ All page references to the *Apologia* refer to the Oxford University Press edition edited by Martin Svaglic. The valuable Norton edition, edited

by David DeLaura, contains several important essays cited below. We know that since Eliot taught the *Apologia*, he would have studied Newman's analysis of the idea of development in that work (see esp. 178-80). Eliot's consistent interest in theological issues, and (as I argue below) the terminology he uses, especially the words "development" and "test," also point to his familiarity with Newman's writings about development of doctrine. Eliot uses the term "development" without directly mentioning Newman's book on that subject, but the centrality of "development" to Newman's thought makes it difficult to imagine that a man who taught classes on the *Apologia* and the *Idea of a University* would not have been familiar with the concept. His not mentioning Newman in "Tradition" may be part of the pattern revealing his unwillingness to discuss the influence of Newman that Oser examines. But I contend here that from reading the *Apologia* and the *Idea* (and other works by Newman) Eliot would have obtained a full understanding of doctrinal development without having read Newman's *Essay*. That said, it appears highly likely that Eliot would have been familiar with the book, since the idea of doctrinal development forms such a central element of Newman's thought. For example, Newman's biographer Ker argues that the idea of development provides a fundamental understanding of Newman's theological thought, that "probability" lends credence to the idea of development in all human ideas (304). In addition, Prickett contends that development is the paramount idea in Newman's work (passim., esp. 269). Since Eliot's own religious thought developed over time, it is probable that an idea so pivotal to Newman would have also been important to his sense of his own theological growth. For other essays demonstrating the centrality of the idea of development to the *Apologia* and to Newman's thought in general, see Deen (esp. 486) and Colby. I should also mention that Eliot would have met with the idea of development in Newman's *Grammar of Assent* and the last of the *Oxford University Sermons*, "The Theory of Developments in Religious Doctrine." It is hard to imagine that Eliot, a person of highly developed scholarly habits, would not have been familiar with these readily available works, standard reading for any student of Newman.

¹¹ See Lucy (1-37), Asher (book 62), Shusterman (160-70), Oser, “Century” (47-49), Lockerd (19-24), and Habib (162-72) for discussion of tradition in Eliot.

¹² See Ker (“Dignitatis” 150), where he discusses this wording issue.

¹³ See Spurr (136-37) and Lockerd (Introduction 20-21), who mention but do not develop connections.

¹⁴ For more on Froude’s distaste for Reformation thought and for Froude’s influence on Newman’s anti-Reformation views, see Faber (192-96, 253).

¹⁵ Suzy Anger explains *Tract Ninety* as an attempt to re-interpret the Thirty-nine Articles (a sixteenth-century document designed to stress the separation of Anglicanism from Rome) in order “to reconcile Catholicism with Anglicanism and halt the Church of England’s increasing Protestantism” (32).

¹⁶ See Harrold 30. See also *Apologia* for Newman’s admiration of Bramhall: 55, 77, 91, 109, 520n. 530n., 533. For Andrewes, see 71, 527-28n. Svaglic briefly mentions Eliot in two of these editorial notes.

¹⁷ See Domestico (128 n. 22), who observes this Newman/Eliot linkage without pursuing it. See also Eliot (“Second” 402) for his use of the phrase “rational assent,” which may also derive from the *Grammar* and from Newman’s *Oxford University Sermons*, which contains such sermons as “The Nature of Faith in Relation to Reason.”

¹⁸ See Shusterman 200-201.

¹⁹ See *Apologia* 225-26.

²⁰ Lucy identifies this pattern in Eliot, an abhorrence of the dissociation of sensibility resulting from the Reformation and intensified by Romanticism, a secularized spirituality devoid of value without divine sanction (90 ff): “it is impossible to separate the decline of Christianity in European life and thought (and the growth of atheistic humanism), from the dissociation of western artistic sensibility” (94). For links between Protestantism and the rise of secularism and secular humanism, a scourge for both Newman and Eliot, see Taylor’s *A Secular Age* (esp. 77-89). The mistrust (in Newman and in Eliot) of liberal (secular) humanism as an extension of Romantic revolutionary

subjectivity arises in part from their reading of Aristotle and from their having internalized Aristotle's love of reasoning and hierarchy, and this Aristotelianism provides another unstudied link between these two thinkers. In *Idea* Newman writes: "in many subject matters, to think correctly is to think like Aristotle" (136). Hochschild observes that Aristotelianism "saturates *The Idea of a University*" (334) and that *The Grammar of Assent* carries out a "'translation' of Aristotelian intellectual virtue" (336). More specifically, Newman's notion of tradition and doctrine proceeds in part from his reading of the *Nichomachean Ethics*. Hochschild cites Aristotle's claim (in the *Ethics*) that it is wise to "give heed to the undemonstrated sayings and opinions of the experienced and the aged not less than to demonstrations; because from their having the eye for experience, they behold the principles of things" (qtd Hochschild 339) and observes that Newman approvingly cites the same passage in the *Grammar of Assent*, linking authoritative learning to traditional knowledge (*Grammar* 268-69). Newman glosses the passage as follows: "instead of trusting logical science, we must trust persons, namely, those who by long acquaintance with their subject have a right to judge." He adds, "we must follow their history, and learn as they have learned" (*Grammar* 269). In making this claim, Newman reiterates his belief in traditional ideas, the ideas of trusted authorities and teachers as sources of reliable precedent, a conviction he elaborated decades earlier in his *Essay on Development*, a conviction, in other words, that doctrinal statements provide authoritative warrants for reasonable developments. And the connection of Eliot to Aristotle also follows from this view of the way tradition provides authoritative protection against the problems of subjectivity. In "The Perfect Critic" he describes Aristotle as having "universal intelligence" (56-57). Asher observes that the anti-Romantic thought that influenced Eliot, especially that of Pierre Lasserre, proceeds from Aristotle (*Eliot* 30-31). Habib also notes a link between Eliot and the Stagirite, without mentioning Newman: "Aristotle, like Eliot after him, calls for a balance between individual creativity and traditional precedent, suggesting the idea of tradition as a gradual organic growth" (183); this gradual growth amounts to what both Eliot and Newman called "development." And the concept of "phronesis" furthers the Aristotelian link between Newman and

Eliot. That Newman's "illative sense," the process of implicit reasoning so important to his understanding of assent, traces to Aristotle's view of *phronesis* (variously defined as prudence, practical wisdom, sound judgment), Newman himself has firmly established (*Grammar* 277 ff.). And Shusterman links *phronesis* to Eliot, stating, "a proper mean between two undesirable extremes is surely the best known feature of Aristotle's theory of practical wisdom [*phronesis*], and the one most emphasized and employed by Eliot" (199). Shusterman does not mention Newman, but in his analysis of *phronesis* he suggests that the idea of the *via media* itself—so crucial to Eliot's Anglo-Catholic faith and to the pre-conversion positioning of Newman—derives from Aristotle's doctrine of the "golden mean" (199-200). As Shusterman puts it, "The ideal and strategy of the mean is ubiquitous in Eliot's thought," especially in his Anglo-Catholic beliefs (200).

²¹ See Arnold's critique of Romanticism in "Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (133-37) and DeLaura, who details Newman's mistrust of Arnold's thought.

²² See Asher's *Eliot* (37 ff) and Schuchard for these course details.

²³ Scholars have noted that Eliot eventually discards Maurras' more extreme positions. Lockerd distances Eliot from Maurras' atheism (Introduction 14-15). Takayanagi identifies areas where Eliot and Maurras part company (91-93).

²⁴ Both Newman and Eliot supported the monarchy and disdained democratic movements. See Harrold (25) and Asher (*Eliot* 8, 15, 21, 24). See also the following among Newman's listing of abhorrent Liberal principles: "It is lawful to rise against legitimate princes"; and "The people are the legitimate source of power. Therefore, e.g., Universal Suffrage is among the natural rights of man" (*Apologia* 261).

²⁵ See Plourde (1080) on the belief in the "doctrine of reserve" as a feature of a gatekeeping tendency in Tractarian thought. See also Anger, who suggests a similar idea when she asserts that for Newman, "correct interpretations are those legitimated by the Catholic Church" (34).

²⁶ See Dulles for the way Newman situates authority in a complex balance among ecclesiastical opinion, theological traditions, papal dispensation,

and individual conscience. And for an excellent brief discussion of the history of Newman's idea of development and its link to Church authority and infallibility, see Chadwick (esp. xiii-xiv).

²⁷ Newman begs the question in this way: if the doctrine of authority is true, and it "is true," it "is true because she [the church] teaches it" (qtd Sullivan 157). Plourde overstates the case when she claims that Anger "identifies Newman as the progenitor of the secular humanist tradition" (1080).

²⁸ Dawson calls for a kind of totalitarian religious authority, which Eliot rejected (see Spurr 178 and Asher 85). Lockerd emphasizes the Dawson-Eliot linkage, using Dawson to distance Eliot from Maurras ("Beyond"). Eliot's admiration of Dawson (who wrote a book called *The Spirit of the Oxford Movement*) provides another link between Newman and Eliot that critics have not explored.

²⁹ See Brooks' *Well Wrought Urn* 176-96 and the "Critical Relativism" appendix of the same work, esp. 203-4.

³⁰ See Blackstock "Chesterton" for the influence of Catholic writer G.K. Chesterton on Eliot's use of the words "heresy," "orthodoxy," and "blasphemy," and for links between Eliot's ideas of orthodoxy and the Christian tradition. For links between Newman and Chesterton, see Blackstock "Redeeming" and Hanssen.

³¹ Shusterman defends Eliot against the charge of "narrow-minded insularity" (4 ff) and accuses Christopher Norris and Terry Eagleton of confusing Eliot with "some of his New Critical epigoni" (5). My intent is not to blame but to chart the intertextual connections. The writings (and classroom teaching) of one's "epigoni" are instances of influence, even if they are not always entirely faithful to their source. The value of much of what New Critical formalism created has been so well documented that I see no real need to concentrate on it in detail here; my focus has been on some of its negative effects. But, briefly, the virtues of much of twentieth-century formalist practice remain unimpeachable: the basic skills of close reading, study of genre, use of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, emphasis on figurative language and prosody. These indisputably important features

of the New Critical heritage remain a staple of literary training in most departments of literary study. One significant strain of early New Critical formalism, that founded by I.A. Richards and forwarded by William Empson, did not foster the Christian conservative impulse, and instead turned to the left, but when the American New Critics read Richards and Empson, they ignored that left-tending and steered back to the right. As North suggests in his *Literary Criticism*, this liberal expression of formalist concern might have led more directly to the kind of scholarly turn we now associate with new historicism. In North's view, Richards' "secularist" views placed the value of literature in part in relation to its effect on the reader (25), but the American New Critics (following Eliot I would suggest), re-directed that concern away from the reader and back to the text and in so doing relegated psychology (along with history, sociology, and by extension, identity, race, and gender) to the realm of the extrinsic (15). As North puts it, "Richards' and Empson's characteristically left-liberal innovations in this field were soon to become conflated with the rather different politics of those who followed them" (26). North traces a line of influence from Richards through F.R. Leavis to Raymond Williams, who for many historians anticipated the cultural turn of the later twentieth century (14-17), but for complex reasons involving Leavis' fall from grace, few scholars have tracked this continuity. In North's view, the New Critics accepted Kant's idealist aesthetic, while Richards rejected Kant's conclusions and based his thought on a more materialist approach. Had the discipline chosen to follow Richards, it might have maintained a focus on form without relegating ideological concerns to irrelevancy (29-32). North boasts about confining his discussion of Eliot to an admittedly "hostile" brief appendix (213); in those pages, he acknowledges the impact of Eliot's thought but insists that the ideas of Richards provide the real launch point and lasting influence for the New Critical paradigm. I find much of this argument compelling, but it will require more than a five-page converted footnote to unseat Eliot from a central position in twentieth-century critical ideology (213-17).

³² Shusterman 1-2 briefly summarizes these effects.

³³ See also Harrold 163 ff.

³⁴ The idea of "humanism" has many variations: liberal humanism, secular humanism, Christian humanism, and more. The humanism at odds with Newman and with Eliot here evolves from Arnold. It is most clearly associated with what we might call secular (or liberal) humanism, which assumes human autonomy, social progress, the sovereignty of science, the value of human existence without reference to divinity, and the primacy of the humanities as an expression of human concerns. Although some New Critical practitioners called themselves humanists, the approach most influenced by Eliot (the Agrarian strain) tended to resist the assumptions of secular humanism.

³⁵ Asher outlines how influential New Critics, Wimsatt and Brooks included, identified some sort of dissociation of sensibility that changed human life for the worse (*Eliot* 144-45). In Brooks' *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, he sees Hobbes and Romanticism as threats to sensibility and poetic integrity: the "Romantic revolt," supports the "Hobbesian conception" (35) of poetry as the product of imagination, but Hobbes reduces imagination to "file clerk of the memory" (11).

³⁶ As Asher writes, Eliot is "one of the progenitors of the New Criticism" ("T.S. Eliot and the New Criticism" 292). But New Criticism eventually parts company with Eliot on the issue of history, to which Eliot's focus on tradition ties him irrevocably. And while clearly the study of literature can never be severed from history entirely, New Critics often sought to marginalize it. Asher writes that both Brooks and Ransom try to "keep Eliot's literary history minus the history" (*Eliot* 152). And Brooks himself acknowledges the historical shortcomings of his method when he observes that his own interpretations "may very well seem to take history too little into account" (*Well Wrought Urn* 197).

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