



Hebrew and Hellene in Victorian England: Newman, Arnold, and Pater

David DeLaura

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Hebrew and Hellene explores the intellectual and personal relations among John Henry Newman, Matthew Arnold, and Walter Pater, three figures important in the development of nineteenth-century English thought and culture. Fundamentally concerned with the humanistic vision of Arnold and Pater, especially as they adapted the traditional religious culture to the needs of their generation, David DeLaura also recognizes Newman's central role. To a far greater degree than has been realized, Newman assumed a commanding position in the thought of the two younger men.

DeLaura seeks to define the mechanics of the process by which the conservative religious humanism of Newman could be exploited in the fluid, relativistic, and "aesthetic" humanism of Pater. The careers of Arnold and Pater are viewed as a continuing effort to reconcile the opposing forces of one of the central modern myths, the great cultural struggle between religious and secular values—Arnold's Hebraism and Hellenism.

DeLaura traces this important movement in nineteenth-century culture by studying the development of key phrases and ideas in the writings of the three men: the secularization of Newman's ideal of "inwardness" in Arnold's "criticism" and "culture" and in Pater's "impassioned contemplation"; the shared emphasis on an elite culture; the growing tendency to identify culture with the functions of traditional religion.

Newman, as the supreme apologist of both religious orthodoxy and the older Oxonian tradition, offered a rich arsenal to the defenders of a literary culture increasingly threatened by the utilitarian spirit (and by a rising scientific naturalism. Moreover, with the appearance of his *Apologia* in 1864, the "mystery" and the "miracle" of Newman's personality intrigued a new literary generation.

In *Hebrew and Hellene* DeLaura looks beyond the debates of the Late Victorians, the immediate inheritors of this legacy, to the continuing twentieth-century discussion of the nature of literature, its place in the humanizing process, and its role in a science-dominated civilization. He finds the problems faced by Pater, Arnold, and Newman—and some of their solutions—surprisingly relevant to unfinished contemporary debate.

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