Concentrating too exclusively on the common preoccupation with trade unionism in both Barnaby Rudge and Sybil risks obscuring the novels’ other shared topos of English Catholicism. As Dickens reminds the reader in his Preface to Barnaby Rudge, he chose for the novel’s historical background “the ‘No Popery’ riots of Seventeen Hundred and Eighty,” a subject that he believed could “teach a good lesson” by showing how “what we falsely call a religious cry is easily raised by men who have no religion” (40). Such a lesson would have had a two-fold historical resonance in 1841, since, as Dyson perceptively notes, the Catholic Relief Act and the Oxford Movement were “exciting new and widespread anti-clericism” (67).

This common background of Catholic emancipation and Tractarianism also informs Disraeli’s use of religious motifs, a subject that O’Kell calls “the least-satisfactorily discussed aspect of Sybil” (216). In fact, the novel is virtually overflowing with religious references: the central conflict is introduced among the ruined remains of Marney abbey, with Sybil herself providing Egremont with a kind of monastic epiphany when she appears, clad “in the habit of a Religious,” singing “the evening hymn to the Virgin” in “tones of almost supernatural sweetness” (II.5.66); this first epiphanic encounter leads Egremont into recurrent musings on the “Holy Church,” itself embodied by Aubrey St. Lys, the vicar of Mowbray, whose name is homophonetically “sin-less”; the Hatton brothers are ironically called “Baptist” and “Bishop” respectively; and the benevolent Catholic factory owner, Mr. Trafford, has endowed a church with a full-time curate to minister to his almost-monastic laborers (III.8.182).

Moreover, English Catholicism appears intermittently in both novels represented
by the same language of conspiracy applied to trade unions. We have already seen Dickens attribute the popularity of the Protestant Association to its mantle of secrecy and its “whispers of a confederacy among the Popish powers to degrade and enslave England, establish an inquisition in London, and turn the pens of Smithfield market into stakes and cauldrons” (37.347–48). Fears of similar Popish plots also appear in *Sybil*. Responding to a speech by St. Lys on “the efficacy of forms and ceremonies,” Egremont cautions him, “The people of this country associate them with an enthralling superstition and a foreign dominion” (II.12.111). Both of these applications of a rhetoric of conspiracy to English Catholicism are carefully undermined by Dickens and Disraeli: the Protestant Association’s no-Popery cry is shown to be founded on personal animosity and greed; and any lingering fears of foreign dominion are immediately countered by St. Lys’s genealogical account of forms and ceremonies. However, the fact that both authors felt the need to raise and refute this characterization of Catholicism indicates both a widespread popular prejudice and a potential point of connection between trade unionism and the “Romish Church.”

Protestant England’s fears of the “Romish Church” were particularly topical at the time both novels were written. Dyson’s observation on the general public’s reaction to Catholic emancipation in 1829 and to Tractarianism several years later can actually be applied more specifically. It is no accident that the less-than-sympathetic representation of Lord Gordon’s Protestant Association in *Barnaby Rudge* appears only six years after that same organization was revived in response to the Catholic Relief Act. In addition, the novel’s cries of “No Popery!” echo those directed not only at English Catholics but also at the Oxford Movement, which had excited popular anti-Catholic feelings in 1838 by the publication of Isaac Williams’s *Tract 80* and *Tract 87*, “On Reserve in Communicating Religious Knowledge.” *Sybil* similarly arrives in a year charged by John Henry Newman’s public conversion to Roman Catholicism and by Parliamentary debate over increasing the government endowment of Maynooth College, the principle location for the training of Catholic priests in Britain. To many Victorians, even those sympathetic to the Roman Catholic cause, the government’s final decision to continue funding Maynooth would look particularly ill-considered in light of the public outcry caused by the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in England in 1850. The effect of these events is well summarized by Walter Arnstein, who writes,

In the later eighteenth century, and even in the early nineteenth, it had come to seem a waste of time for Anglican clergymen to preach on the evils of popery or to enter into theological debate with Catholic prelates. The Oxford movement and the Catholic revival quickly altered the situation. The mid-Victorian “ultra-Protestant” was far more likely to be fearful than confident, far more likely to suspect than to exalt the religious integrity of his clerical and political leaders.
The apparent complicity of Protestant MPs in the resurgence of “popery” brought about by Catholic emancipation and the Maynooth Grant made their religious convictions suspect, and the growth of English Catholicism at Oxford also rendered traditional religious leaders untrustworthy. For Arnstein’s “ultra-Protestant,” England had always been under “popish” attack from without, but events in the nineteenth century began to suggest collusion from within as well. Such imputations of a lack of integrity among Protestant leaders and English Roman Catholics were often articulated by means of accusations of conspiracy and the invocation of the figure of the secret society.

The period between Catholic emancipation and the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy provides particularly fertile ground for numerous political invocations of the figure of the secret society designed to prevent English Catholics from achieving social and political equality. Its three most productive sites of analysis, Catholic emancipation, the two Tracts on reserve, and the restoration of the hierarchy, indicate not only the increasing civil authority enjoyed by Roman and Anglo-Catholics, but also the extent to which that authority met with public hostility framed by accusations of “Popish” plots supposedly at work in Protestant England. The strategies employed to promulgate these accusations and the unusual alliances they fostered among normally divergent segments of British society bear a close resemblance to the rhetoric of conspiracy directed at the Glasgow spinners and the unity such rhetoric fostered among Tories and Whigs. In fact, one need look no further than the Report of the Select Committee on Combinations, with its account of the “religious character” of trade union initiations—including “white surplices,” “prayers and hymns,” and “certain mystic rhymes,” all decidedly Catholic references—to see exactly how easy it could be to collapse anti-unionism and anti-Catholicism. In addition, fears of divided loyalties generated by the practice of oath-taking and the evocation of past atrocities figure prominently in both cases. Also, British Catholics, who were mostly working-class Irish laborers, did not fit the conventional definition of Englishness as middle-class and Protestant and thereby challenged the right of these groups to serve as society’s political guardians. In order to reestablish this hegemonic right, Tory and Whig periodicals joined Establishment clergy and Dissenting ministers, Parliamentary aristocrats and working-class placardists to strategically deploy the figure of the secret society against English Catholics. Specifically, both Roman and Anglo-Catholics were linked with the Jesuits by their public critics in an effort to demonstrate their natural unfitness for “open” English democracy.

However, as with the charges of Thuggism made against trade unions, accusations of Jesuitism remained vulnerable to factual scrutiny and susceptible to ideological reversal by specific agents from all sides of the Catholic question. Vehement anti-Catholics tended to accuse Roman and Anglo-Catholics alike of Jesuitism even as...
they relied on methods of argument that strongly pro-Catholic figures were quick to label Jesuitical. Those more ambivalent towards Roman Catholicism but still committed to an ideal of catholicity were likewise susceptible to both sides’ charges of Jesuitical equivocation. In addition, Catholic apologists often sought to undermine the political authority of the figure of Jesuitism by shifting the debate to more aesthetic and spiritual grounds. Once Roman and Anglo-Catholicism took on extra-political qualities, it not only ceased to threaten the state, but also took on a much more attractive character. In other words, even though any invocation of the figure of Jesuitism was supposed to uphold a definition of national citizenship grounded in binary opposition between English Protestants and Roman Catholics, the multitude of competing invocations and their extra-political dimensions made the two sides practically indistinguishable. In this way, the ongoing conflict over Catholicism echoes the debate over trade unionism that surrounds the spinners’ trial; in both cases, it is the uncomfortable familiarity of the supposed conspirators that both prompts and undercuts their denunciation.

I. Catholic Emancipation

For those of us no longer within the structure of feeling of the early nineteenth century, it may be somewhat surprising that English Roman Catholics could have excited such a widespread reaction among British Protestants. Never accounting for even ten percent of the total population of England and disunited under the inefficient spiritual authority of four Vicars Apostolic, Roman Catholics nevertheless aroused widespread hostility and anxiety over the constitutional stability of Britain. Wendy Hinde explains that for many Protestants the “problem with the Roman Catholics was that their religion was believed to imply a degree of intolerance, disloyalty—or at least divided loyalty—and dissimulation that in the eyes of many honest Britons made them quite unfit to enjoy the privileges of full citizenship” (3). However, Protestant distrust of their Catholic fellow-citizens was also inadvertently generated by the latter’s attempt to withdraw from public controversy in the aftermath of the Gordon Riots. This withdrawal made Catholics the target of Protestant charges of deliberate secrecy and encouraged the already-popular suspicion that Catholics had superstitious practices that they wanted to hide. History also furnished numerous, if distant, examples that Roman Catholics could not be trusted, among them the rule of “Bloody” Mary, the Jesuit mission under Elizabeth I, the Jacobite rebellion, and the gunpowder plot, all of which were treated as highly relevant to the present day. As with the Glasgow spinners, then, contemporary Roman Catholics were effectively tried and convicted in the public mind on the basis of past conspiracies.”
However, probably the most decisive factor in the escalation of anti-Catholicism in the nineteenth century was the Act of Union with Ireland in 1800. In the words of Walter Arnstein, “Roman Catholicism, as threat or promise, loomed larger in the minds of Victorian Englishmen than the actual number of Roman Catholics might have warranted because Englishmen were likely to view the phenomenon not in the context of England but in that of the entire United Kingdom” (52). In fact, once Roman Catholicism was examined in light of all of Britain, matters looked considerably more distressing. The 6,000,000 Irish Roman Catholics increased the percentage of Roman Catholics in the kingdom to thirty percent, and the Irish Catholics were far better organized than their English co-religionists. Not only did they enjoy a comprehensive parish structure, complete with priests and bishops who answered directly to Rome, but from 1823 onwards they also had O’Connell’s Catholic Association. Working in concert, the priests and the Catholic Association wielded considerable power in Ireland: enough to suppress violent crime, to call up public demonstrations of 5,000 men seemingly in an instant, to influence the local election of Members of Parliament, and to convince Robert Peel and others that a real possibility of revolution existed on the other side of the Irish Sea.10

Together, historical precedent, revolutionary potential, divided allegiance, and suspicious secretiveness formed the basis of the debate over Catholic emancipation in 1828 and 1829.11 More vocal in its evocation of history than most, Blackwood’s unashamedly reminded its readers “that Elizabeth . . . after a long and patient endurance of Popish plots for her assassination, for insurrection, and invasion, was at length compelled to make root and branch-work with the Papists, after a fashion consistent with the vigour of her character,” implying that Elizabeth’s situation and her solution were still analogous enough to the present to be practicable (“Brief Remarks,” 88–89). Elizabeth’s relevance to the 1820s was mainly determined by the presence of Ireland in the debate, a presence that the same article describes as “rather hard on the English Roman Catholics . . . because the English Roman Catholics are a much more respectable, better-behaved class of subjects . . . and therefore more deserving of being favourably regarded” (87). The “mass” in Ireland, on the other hand, is described as “turbulent,” largely because “a few men are allowed to exercise, without control or punishment, their foolish and wicked plans, for the disturbance of the people” (90). Such transparent references to the Catholic Association could perform meaningful political work in at least three ways at once. As here, the Catholic Association could serve as an easy means of representing those elements of the Irish people seeking to undermine the British government and thereby proving the Catholics unworthy of full citizenship. A future Blackwood’s article, however, would also use the Catholic Association as a sign that the dangers of revolution in Ireland were slight, since only a small percentage of Irish subjects were active mem-
bers, thereby arguing that emancipation was not a necessary step ("Ireland, and the Catholic Question"). Finally, supporters of emancipation like Mr. Goulburn, the chancellor of the Exchequer, evoked the “combination” and “organization” of the Catholic Association as signs that emancipation was the only way to preserve the authority of the Established Church. This last mode of reasoning was in the minority, however, and evocations of the Catholic Association led most often to spirited and ominous advocacy for all “measures necessary for rendering the Catholics peaceable and obedient subjects” ("Ireland, and the Catholic Question," 440).

That Catholics threatened to behave other than peaceably and obediently was thought by some to be due to their divided allegiance between the Crown and the Pope. According to the Anglican Archbishop of Armagh, “The Roman Catholic priesthood must ever stand alone. It had set the indelible mark of separation on its forehead, by its unnatural, though politic restrictions,—by its claim to exclusive pre-eminence,—and by its dangerous and unconstitutional connection with a foreign state” (The Annual Register, 1829, 73). Likewise, three other MPs maintained that no “rational man could expect, that the Catholics, and Catholic priesthood, would remain satisfied even with what was now given. The re-establishment of their church was not only their interest; if they were Catholics, it was their sacred duty, an obligation far more holy than that of battling for a civil franchise, which, in truth, would be chiefly valuable only as an instrument by which to regain religious preponderance” (The Annual Register, 1829, 29).

At the heart of this portion of the debate lay an inability to distinguish between spiritual and civil allegiance. Once one recognized that Roman Catholicism might have more than just a political valence, opposition to emancipation on constitutional grounds became difficult to maintain: “The Catholics of Great Britain recognize an ecclesiastical jurisdiction vested in a foreigner, because their Pope happens to be the Pope of Rome, and not the Pope of Canterbury. But there is no proof that they will ever obey their Pope in opposition to their civil interests” (“Catholic Question,” 4). Furthermore, the same article maintained, “Unless it can be shown, first, that there is any danger of the Catholics . . . being put upon designs incompatible with the safety of the community, by the ecclesiastical superiors they chuse to make for themselves,—and, secondly, that their numbers give them any chance of accomplishing such designs if they possessed them,—the depriving them of the enjoyment of equal rights on pretence of these peculiarities, is a cruel non sequitur” (“Catholic Question,” 13). Such a violation of the basic premises of logic was precisely the ground on which one reviewer remarked, “The mere mention of the word Popery, it was known, had been sufficient, any time these hundred years, to deprive a considerable portion of Englishmen of the perfect use of their understanding” (“The Last of the Catholic Question,” 225).
A considerable portion of Englishmen might have rejoined that their understanding was so sorely taxed because of the habitual secrecy and under-handedness of the Catholics and their supporters. As one reviewer put it, “The Roman Catholic superstition hangs, at its clearest, like a day of dense fog—at its darkest, like a night of black clouds—over the reason and the conscience” (“Substance of Sir Robert Inglis’s Two Speeches,” 812). Even Sir Robert Peel seemed to admit that at one time, at least, such charges of secrecy were well-founded: “[T]he Catholics were never excluded, at any time, because of their religious creed; they were excluded for a supposed deficiency of civil worth; and the religious test was applied to them, not to detect the worship of saints, or any other tenet of their religion, but as a test to discover whether they were Roman Catholics. It was a test to discover the bad, intriguing subject, not the religionist.” However, he also believed that such tests of exclusion to ferret out the “bad intriguing subject” were no longer necessary and that, therefore, “when the exclusion was deemed unnecessary, the test of exclusion might be dispensed with” (The Annual Register, 1829, 57). Unfortunately for Peel and his fellow-Minister, the Duke of Wellington, their support of emancipation brought similar charges of improper secrecy; both were accused of disingenuousness and of improperly asserting their ministerial influence. All of this illicit secrecy promulgated a persistent belief that Catholic emancipation meant a fatal “breaking up” of the Constitution of 1688. Once again, Blackwood’s provides the clearest articulation of this final argument against emancipation:

If, therefore, the “detested measure” be successful, our government of checks and balances will be in essence totally destroyed. The Catholics, with their Anti-Church, Anti-English allies, will hold the House of Commons and the Cabinet; the Crown and the House of Lords will be their passive instruments, and their power will be absolute. They will in their own favour abolish law after law in utter defiance of the country, precisely as the present Ministers are now doing. Religious apostacy will be as prevalent among public men, as political apostacy is at present. One robbery upon another will be heaped on the Church—one wrong upon another will be heaped on the Protestants—one destruction upon another will be heaped on Protestant rights,—until at last the day of long-suffering will end in CIVIL WAR. (“The ‘Breaking in Upon the Constitution of 1688;’” 523)

By the time this apocalyptic prophesy made it to print in April, 1829, the Catholic Emancipation Act was all but law.

However, the Act did offer three “securities” to those who felt less than enthusiastic about its passage. Section XII barred Roman Catholics from serving as “Guardians and Justices of the United Kingdom” and from holding the offices of “Lord
High Chancellor, Lord Keeper or Lord Commissioner of the Great Seal of Great Britain or Ireland; or the office of Lord Lieutenant, or Lord Deputy, or other Chief Governor or Governors of Ireland; or His Majesty’s High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.” These offices were specifically excluded in order to prevent a Roman Catholic from gaining direct control over the Established Church. However, it is important to note that a Roman Catholic could now serve as a Member of Parliament, and even theoretically as Prime Minister, though this last possibility remained highly unlikely given the obvious reluctance with which many Members had voted in favor of the bill.

The Act’s main security came in the form of a denominationally specific oath to be taken by Roman Catholics upon entering either House of Parliament. Prior to the Act, all MPs were required to subscribe to an oath of allegiance, an oath of abjuration that denied the rights of any Stuart to the throne, a declaration against the doctrine of transubstantiation, and the following oath of supremacy:

I, A. B., do swear that I do from my heart detest and abjure as impious and heretical that damnable doctrine and position, that Princes excommunicated or deprived by the Pope or any authority of the See of Rome, may be deposed or murdered by their subjects or any other whatsoever; and I do declare that no foreign prince, prelate, state or potentate hath or ought to have any jurisdiction, power, superiority, pre-eminence or authority, Ecclesiastical or Spiritual, within this realm.  

Realizing that both the doctrine against transubstantiation and the latter part of the oath of supremacy denying the ecclesiastical authority of the Pope would be inappropriate for Roman Catholics, the writers of the Act abolished the declaration against transubstantiation altogether and introduced in section II the following alternative oath:

I, A. B., do sincerely promise and swear, that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to his majesty king George the fourth, and will defend him to the utmost of my power against all conspiracies and attempts whatever . . . and I will do my utmost endeavour to disclose and make known to his majesty, his heirs and successors, all treasons and traitorous conspiracies which may be formed against him or them . . . and I do further declare, that it is not an article of my faith, and that I do renounce, reject, and abjure the opinion, that princes excommunicated or deprived by the Pope, or any other authority of the see of Rome, may be deposed or murdered by their subjects, or by any person whatsoever: and I do declare, that I do not believe that the Pope of Rome, or any other foreign prince, prelate, person, state, or potentate, hath or ought to have any temporal or civil jurisdiction,
power, superiority, or pre-eminence, directly or indirectly, within this realm . . .

and I do hereby disclaim, disavow and solemnly abjure any intention to subvert the

present church establishment . . . and I do solemnly swear, that I will never exer-
cise any privilege to which I am or may become entitled, to disturb or weaken the

Protestant religion or Protestant government in the united kingdom: and I do
solemnly, in the presence of God, profess, testify, and declare, that I do make this
declaration, and every part thereof, in the plain ordinary sense of the words of this
oath, without any evasion, equivocation, or mental reservation whatsoever. So help
me God. 19

When juxtaposed with its Protestant counterpart, the oath for Roman Catholics
contains a number of elements that strikingly illustrate the degree to which the fig-
ure of the secret society enters into the Catholic Question. First while by virtue of
their three separate oaths some Protestants might be assumed capable of holding
conflicting opinions regarding royal supremacy, papal authority and the Stuart Pretender,
Roman Catholics were made to effectively admit that their religion made them polit-
ically suspect on all three grounds unless they swore otherwise. In other words, Protestants
were more than just their religion, but Roman Catholics were not. Second, while
the Protestant oath is, for a legal document, fairly simple and straightforward, the
Roman Catholic oath is overrun by clauses, near-repetitions and excessive verbiage,
implying a certain amount of anxiety over the supposed tendency of Catholics to
evade, equivocate, or reserve some part of the truth by twisting words outside of
their “plain ordinary sense.” Third, this anxiety reaches extreme levels in the almost
paranoid requirement that Roman Catholics abjure five times any desire to partici-
pate in, by action or by silence, a conspiracy against the sovereignty of Britain. Such
obvious safeguarding suggests that fears of a Catholic conspiracy like those voiced
in the April 1829 issue of Blackwood’s exerted a powerful influence even over sup-
porters of Catholic emancipation.

Nowhere is the influence of conspiracy fears more readily translated into a direct
evocation of the figure of the secret society than in the final security offered in the
Act. Sections XXVI, XXVIII, XXIX, XXXIII, and XXXIV place severe limitations
on “Religious Orders, Communities, or Societies of the Church of Rome,” all of which
were barred from exercising “any of the Rites or Ceremonies of the Roman
Catholic Religion” or wearing religious habits in public, bringing in foreign mem-
ers, and inducting new members by means of “any Oath, Vow, or Engagement,”
and all of which were required to register all present members with the govern-
ment within six months of the passage of the Act. 20 As the language of the Act makes
clear, these restrictions were meant primarily to effect “the gradual Suppression and
final Prohibition” of the Society of Jesus in England. Indeed, the Jesuits were per-
ceived as the Catholic secret society par excellence, the authors of all past, present and future Popish plots against the crown.

Such a view of the Jesuits prevailed among those on both sides of the Catholic Question. Even though he rejected many of the proposed securities offered by previous bills, Peel gave unqualified assent to the anti-religious orders clause, which he explained “was meant to provide against the entrance into this country of a class of men, against whom other countries had set their faces, and who hitherto, therefore, had resorted to this; he meant the order of Jesuits” (The Annual Register, 1829, 26). As on the subjects of revolution in Ireland and secretive Catholic practices, Blackwood’s was most vituperative towards the Jesuits:

If the Jesuits think good to advance the money, they may, by purchase, soon introduce a large number of Catholic freemen into every borough... constantly themselves elect both the members for sundry small boroughs... and return half the members in the shape of “Third Men,” of many large boroughs.

... We do not know what the Society of Jesuits will do, but we know what it will be in its power to do... it may effectively govern the majority in the House of Commons. (“The ‘Breaking in Upon the Constitution of 1688,” 521)

Although this level of rhetoric was extreme, the feelings it expressed about the Society of Jesus—often, as here, slightingly referred to as the Society of Jesuits—were extraordinarily prevalent while the act was under deliberation. In the “Chronicle” section of The Annual Register, 1829, an incident of public disturbance provides a glimpse of just how public anti-Jesuit sentiment was at this time. On 4 February constables arrested two men for pasting “seditious placards” that referred to a “Jesuit’s powder... which produced dizziness in the head and such lethargic affections as rendered them [Parliament] incapable of judging” and that warned, “People of England! Protestants of England! Your churches, your Bible, your laws, and your liberties, free-born Englishmen, will become the willing slaves of a corrupt religion and a foreign prince” as a result of the action of this Jesuit powder on Parliament (29–30).

Both Blackwood’s and the authors of the “seditious placard,” and to a lesser extent Peel, drew from and participated in a long-standing cultural tradition of anti-Jesuitism in England. This tradition is voluminously recorded in The Oxford English Dictionary, which gives as its second definition of Jesuit, “A dissembling person; a prevaricator” and offers examples of this usage dating back to 1640 in England. Similarly, adjectives derived from Jesuit, like Jesuitical and Jesuitic had, since 1613, meant “Having the character ascribed to the Jesuits; deceitful, dissembling; practising equivocation, prevarication, or mental reservation of truth. Often used in sense ‘hair-splitting,’ keenly analytical.” This rich linguistic heritage of the Jesuits was accompanied by an
equally prolific literary tradition that, after the Jesuits were restored by papal bull
*Sollicitudo omnium Ecclesiarum* on 7 August 1814, produced such titles as *A Brief Account of the Jesuits: With Historical Proofs in Support of It, Tending to Establish the Danger of the Revival of that Order to the World at Large, and to the United Kingdom in Particular* (1815), *The Abominations of the Jesuits Exposed* (1820), *The Jesuits Exposed* (1839), *Secret Instructions of the Jesuits* (1840), *Hidden Works of Darkness: or, The Doings of the Jesuits* (1846), *The Jesuit Conspiracy: the Secret Plan of the Order* (1848), and many others. 22

According to this remarkably consistent literary tradition, which excelled at both taking the comments of a small number of Jesuit casuists out of context and anachronistically judging all Jesuits by these comments, “it would be difficult to fix upon any modification of crime which has not been palliated, if not justified, by members of the society of Jesus” (Evans, Modern Popery, 185). In England, especially, this tradition credited the Jesuits with treason, assassination, dissimulation, subversion of the faithful, and the attempted overthrow of the Protestant constitution of 1688.23 As the extraordinarily conservative MP, Charles Newdegate, wrote in his *Glimpse of the Great Secret Society*, “The intrigues of the Jesuits and their attacks upon the form of government, which has existed in Great Britain since the Revolution of 1688, have been continuous” (lxxiv).24 Their persistence was thought to be derived from a number of sources, including a fanatical and total devotion to the Pope, their penchant for secrecy,25 and their methods of training. These training methods involved what Andrew Steinmetz, a former Jesuit novice, describes in *The Novitiate* as a self-conscious breakdown of familial ties (48, 229), the instillation of absolute obedience to one’s superiors, and a constant process of surveillance of and among the novices. Concerning this “spy system” and how it differs from seemingly similar practices by English informers, Steinmetz writes, “It was a bitter thing this to comply with—I mean this spy system—but it was ‘for the greater glory of God’: what should not that motive induce us not to do? And yet Englishmen must find it a sticking pill. True, we have informers, but they are as much detested here as they were at Athens” (234). Steinmetz seems unaware that the main grounds for this differentiation are tautological. Jesuit surveillance is objectionable because it is performed in the name of the supposed “greater glory of God,” the falseness of which is apparent in their fervently embraced need to watch one another all the time. On the other hand, the English employ informants in order to insure the security of the state, a motive whose worth can be judged by their reluctant acceptance of the practice. In other words, Steinmetz protests against the surveillance of novices because it is founded on false intents and undesirable results even as he uses this surveillance to prove that the intents and end results are false. What is most ironic about this distinction between the English use of informants and the Jesuit spy system is that it is based on a subtle difference of intention and an implicit justification of the means
by the end. Both of these methods of reasoning were accounted Jesuitical by nineteenth-century standards.

Jesuitism was seen as especially dangerous, however, because it produced individual Jesuits who could pass undetected among normal Englishmen. Steinmetz gives the following description of a proper Jesuit:

Bold or submissive—firm as a rock, or pliant as a willow—the Jesuit must know his 'time for all things'—when a virtue must be possessed or feigned, or a vice absent or dissembled. Thus, without, he is a Proteus of wonderful versatility—within, always and for ever the same—man of obedience—fashioned and trained in heart and mind strongly to will, and promptly to act—and yet, if it should seem more expedient, content to bide his time! (5–6)

This contrast between the Jesuit without and the Jesuit within means that “Jesuits are invisible people, known by their effects only” (44). In other words, Jesuits do not conform to the standards of open, upright behavior that Adams argues were central to the definition of the English gentleman, but instead they live a double life, hiding their subversive agenda behind a facade of respectability.

This characterization of the Jesuits as an undetectable Catholic secret society serves at least three important functions for nineteenth-century anti-Catholicism. First, like the Lord Advocate’s plea that discovering evidence against the spinners was made almost impossible by the very conspiratorial secrecy that he sought to establish, saying of the Jesuits that "by their outward man you cannot tell them" allowed Protestant opponents of Catholic emancipation to use the very lack of recent evidence of a Jesuit conspiracy to prove that such a conspiracy must exist (Steinmetz 370). Second, representing the Jesuits as undetectable meant that their numbers and political clout could be widely exaggerated in order to gain support for anti-Catholicism through fear. Third, this support could be generated whenever needed—whether during the debate over Catholic emancipation in the 1820s, the reaction to Tractarian reserve in the 1830s, or the response to so-called “papal aggression” in the 1850s. It is to the second of these events that we now turn.

II. Tractarian Reserve

Even though accusations of conspiracy, and specifically of Jesuitism, were mainly directed by anxious English Protestants at Roman Catholicism, the Oxford Movement also excited the same rhetoric of religious denunciation grounded in the figure of the secret society. Opponents of the Movement cited its emphasis on forms and sacramentalism and
its elevation of the clergy both inside and outside of the liturgy as evidence that it was seeking to create an elite priesthood capable of secretly governing Anglicanism from within. As Adams explains, this plan would make members of the Movement guilty of a “double duplicity” (86), since not only were they preaching false doctrine and thus subverting the Protestant Establishment, but they were doing so under the respectable guise of Oxford fellows and dons. Especially during moments of public controversy in the 1830s, this fear of duplicitousness could be translated into outright charges of conspiracy and even Jesuitism.

However, there remained two fundamental problems with attempting to discredit the Tractarians using the figure of Jesuitism. First, applying such anti-Roman Catholic rhetoric to powerful members of the Establishment—many of whom were staunch opponents of Popery and all of whom consistently maintained that their doctrine was taken from the Protestant Book of Common Prayer—required a significant elision of the very distinction between Protestantism and Popery that the figure was meant to uphold. In fact, a number of Tractarians cited such denominational “hair-splitting” as evidence for an anti-Tractarian and suspiciously Jesuitical conspiracy. Second, associating the Oxford Movement with what Adams refers to as “the sinister designs of a secret society” allowed its members to capitalize on the aesthetic and spiritual valuation of such formally secretive behavior (86); according to Adams, this very “aura of conspiracy seems to have been a part of the appeal of the Movement to many of its younger followers” (87). By shifting the terms of the debate out of the political register, Tractarians like Isaac Williams were able to make a virtue of the very secrecy with which the Movement was charged.

The first public controversy in which members of the Oxford Movement embroiled themselves concerned the Crown’s appointment of Dr. Hampden as Regius Professor of Divinity at Oxford University. Pusey and other members of the burgeoning Movement opposed the appointment on the grounds that Hampden’s historical approach to theological discourse in general, and to the Thirty-Nine Articles in particular, betrayed Catholic leanings. They sought to block Hampden’s candidacy first by an appeal to the Crown and then by placing the issue before a Convocation of the clergy. Ultimately, they were unsuccessful—the king rejected their appeal, and they were cleverly outmaneuvered by the proctors of the Convocation—but their opposition brought them a great deal of publicity, much of which evoked the figure of the secret society.26

Perhaps the most famous article on the subject was written by Dr. Thomas Arnold and published in the April, 1836 issue of the Edinburgh Review. Arnold’s article, entitled “The Oxford Malignants and Dr. Hampden,” retells the events of the Hampden controversy, using both the rhetoric of conspiracy surrounding trade unionism and that deployed against seventeenth-century Roman Catholics to represent the
Puseyites as suffering not from “intellectual error” but from “moral wickedness” (238). Arnold seems unconcerned with this mixing of rhetoric and collapse of chronology, readily characterizing the “Malignants” as both “unionists” and “the very Nonjurors and High Church clergy of King William’s, and Anne’s, and George the First’s reign, reproduced with scarcely a shade of difference” (228, 234–35). Like the prosecution at the Glasgow spinners’ trial, Arnold condemns the formation of a select committee among the Puseyites, as well as their apparently democratic leanings, both of which together he sees as the practice of factional intimidation:

As a first step, they met in the common room of Corpus Christi College, and named a committee to conduct their business. The committee drew up a declaration, which was submitted to the whole body of conspirators, and then published, with a long list of names subscribed to it” (226). . . . A vote, they knew, might give them what they could never hope from a verdict. If Justice were to decide upon the case, they were sure to be disgracefully defeated; if Faction could be made the judge, they had a reasonable prospect of success. (229)

However, at the same time, Arnold also calls on the anti-Catholic rhetoric of the time when he describes these same men as contemporary Nonjurors. He continues in this anti-Catholic vein, casting the “High Church party of the Church of England—the party of the Oxford conspirators” as dedicated merely to preserving “fanaticism,” “folly” and “virulence,” as expressed by “A dress, a ritual, a name, a ceremony,” without progressing in any way (235). Arnold concludes by labeling them as nothing more or less than a “heresy” (235).

Despite Arnold’s righteous assurance, his conflation of political (anti-union) and spiritual (anti-Catholic) registers remains open to challenge from those on the other side of the debate. An exactly contemporary article in *Blackwood’s* charged that Hampden’s “promotion is the work of that powerful influence which has had all our late Administrations in the hollow of its hand . . . the same combination of Papistry and Jacobinism, which is hurrying the whole constitution, in church and state, hourly down a precipice” (“Oxford and Dr. Hampden,” 433). Here, it is the Catholic faction in Parliament acting exactly as *Blackwood’s* had predicted they would during the debate over emancipation. However, once again the presence of a recognized public body in the accusation leads to a collapse of political (anti-Jacobin) and spiritual (anti-Catholic) discourse similar not only to Arnold’s, but also to the opposition to emancipation voiced in *Blackwood’s* eight years earlier. The ease with which both sides of the Hampden controversy combined these two distinct registers under the rubric of conspiracy reveals a powerful Protestant anxiety over Catholics’ increasing social and political equality in the wake of emancipation. That this anxiety is self-divided and even at cross purposes with England’s
public commitment to democratic institutions is indicated by the immense chronological and political gaps that such accusations of Popish plots were meant to elide.

The broader community of popular writers largely agreed with Arnold that the actions of the Puseyites in the Hampden controversy smacked of Romanism. One writer, in fact, responded to the incident with the farcical Pastoral Appeal from his Holiness the Pope to some Members of the University of Oxford, which not only read evidence of Romanism in the Tracts already published, but also uncannily anticipated later denunciations of Williams’s Tracts “On Reserve” by having the “Pope” urge upon the Tractarians the following practical advice:

   to study attentively, and to adopt for your own guidance the instructions which we have ever given to those faithful men whom we have employed to win over others to the one true faith: “we have always urged them not to expose their doctrines too openly to the public view; to be satisfied in the first instance that much ignorance should remain, and only to press truth gradually as the minds of men seemed prepared for its reception. . . . [T]hose around you have some misgivings that you are attached to what they call Popery. Do not awaken any such suspicions by avoidable imprudence. Rather be satisfied with a slow progress than run the risk of injuring the work in which you are engaged.” (33)

The “faithful men” referred to are almost certainly the Jesuits, making this document a prescient foreshadowing of those works that would charge the Tractarians with Jesuitism in 1838.

Isaac Williams’s two Tracts on reserve were made additionally vulnerable to charges of Jesuitism by historical events over which he had no control. The first of these, the posthumous publication of Richard Hurrell Froude’s Remains early in 1838, excited widespread denunciation of the Oxford Movement because of a number of passages in which Froude, one of the leading figures in the Movement up to his death, appeared sympathetic to Roman Catholicism. At the same time, many contemporary conservative periodicals anxiously responded to the recent Catholic unrest in the British colony of Canada by “exposing” the increasing and dangerous power of Popery throughout the world. Articles like “The Progress of Popery” in Blackwood’s and “Statistics of Popery in Great Britain and the Colonies” in the extremely anti-Catholic Fraser’s Magazine pretended to present unbiased statistical evidence that “Popery, both at home and abroad, is in the possession of immense strength, and has been, and is now, marching forward with giant strides to its old ascendency” (“The Progress of Popery,” 494). The extraordinarily reactionary article in Fraser’s even occupied two successive issues and was accompanied by a map detailing the location of every Catholic church, school, training center, etc. in Great Britain. As the reviewer remarked, such publication
was necessary, because “The Jesuits . . . are now again called into action, and are
allowed in a degenerate age to undermine, with impunity, and prosper without remark”
(502). Accusations of Jesuitism thus enjoyed a high public prominence at precisely
the same time that Williams offered his doctrine of reserve.

Even without these historical events, however, the doctrine of reserve had
already met with suspicion when it first appeared in John Henry Newman’s History
of the Arians (1836). A lengthy review in the Edinburgh Review judged that “the upholding
a secret instruction, and the need of the teaching of the church as a key to the
collection of passages which relate to the mysteries of the gospels, looks extremely
Popish” and “is no part of genuine Christianity” (“Newman’s History of the Arians,”
65, 68). According to the reviewer, reserve runs counter to the spirit of the Reformation—
which he aligns with the free exercise of reason—because it demands absolute irra-
tional obedience, a distinctly Catholic attribute (50). Moreover, the promulgation
of such a doctrine indicates almost Jesuitical motives, which the reviewer implicitly
contrasts with motives of the Established clergy: “It is but justice to them [the
Tractarians] to say, that their views are less worldly, and the objects they aim at of
a nobler character: the worldly power and splendour of the establishment are less
attractive to their ambition than the more real, and . . . more precious power of rul-
ing the minds and consciences of men” (45).

Williams does not respond to this already extant hostility toward reserve with
conciliation; rather, he promotes his doctrinal secrecy as a source of spiritual author-
ity, thereby shifting the debate to an extra-political register in which reserve could
be made attractive to his spiritually radical but politically conservative readers. Williams
seems especially desirous of provoking an extreme reaction to his doctrinal radical-
ism in Tract 80, which appeared on the heels of Froude’s Remains. In the follow-
ing passage on the need for reserve in a post-lapsarian world, for example, Williams
not only invokes sacramentalism but also appears to say that Protestants are as much
in error as Roman Catholics on the subject:

when religion has been decaying in the minds of men, GOD has either allowed His
Divine presence to be hid from them, by the errors of the Roman Catholics on the
one side, which would have the effect of a veil, like a type and figure, in concealing
His presence under a low and carnal notion; or has left men to deny that pres-
ence altogether, (as Protestants are inclined to do,) so that a Sacrament would be
to them no Sacrament, as far as the Divine power is displayed in it—but merely
like a picture, or representation of our SAVIOUR’S sufferings—no more. Nor in
this view are we at all considering it, as if GOD was the author of evil, but rather
seeing His hand controlling the errors of men, and judicially present, as so often
represented, even in their wickedness. (Tracts, IV: 80.33)
In fact, the Evangelical Protestant approach to communion is characterized as “evil” and an example of “wickedness.” Even in the less sensational Tract 87, Williams proposes doctrine and bases for doctrine that would have been very difficult for many Protestants to accept. For example, in the following genealogy of reserve, Williams explicitly refers to Newman’s description of a disciplina arcana in the History of the Arians:

[There were two customs which embody and strongly put forth the principle [of reserve]. The first an external system of discipline, designated by the Latins the Discipline of the Secret [Disciplina Arcani], according to which they kept back in reserve the higher doctrines of our Faith, until persons were rendered fit to receive them by a long previous preparation. The other an universal rule in the explanations of GOD’S Word, which is founded on the supposition that it contains mystical meanings disclosed only unto the faithful (Tracts, V: 87.6).

What would have made this reference so troubling for many Protestants was not only its doctrine—though that was already cause for suspicion, as the earlier review of Newman’s History of the Arians plainly showed—but the way in which this doctrine was justified. Contrary to Establishment teaching and Evangelical practice, Williams proposes that sources for doctrine can be found outside of the Bible, in both early Christian practices and later scriptural exegesis. Such a proposal would have looked suspiciously Popish since it implies that “ordinary” readers of the bible need guidance and instruction from those better versed in Church history and scriptural commentary, from what anti-Catholic rhetoric would call a “priesthood.”

This implicit division between ordinary Christians and those fully initiated into the secrets of Christianity appears more explicitly when Williams cites the Platonist divine, Origen (c.185–c. 254), as an authority on reserve: “Thus every soul which is given up to GOD, and hath entered into His truth, beyond what is known to the many, and hath partaken of His Divinity, surpasses comprehension of the multitude, so that it assumes a veil in order to direct inferiors, by discoursing on matters level to their comprehensions” (Tracts, V: 87.21). Not only does Origen appear to confirm Williams’s yearning for a “priesthood,” but such an appeal to an extra-biblical, and, even for the early Church, a theologically questionable source, reinforces the Tract’s earlier assertion that bases for doctrine can and should be sought for outside of Scripture. According to Williams, the reason that such extra-biblical sources can provide authoritative doctrinal proscriptions is that all human experience, not just Scripture, can be read typologically:

But the principle upon which ancient writers explain Scripture they do not apply to that alone, but to all the ways of GOD, and frequently connect this also with our
LORD’S conduct. It is not Holy Writ only with them, but the visible creation also, and natural providence, and sacramental mysteries, which are the veils of Divinity, through which and by which the ALMIGHTY speaks darkly to His creatures, concealing or disclosing Himself as they are found worthy” (Tracts, V: 87.27).

For many, Williams’s proposal for a divinely-sanctioned hierarchy of worthiness meant, in the words of W. R. Church, “that the real spirit of the party was disclosed; its love of secret and crooked methods, its indifference to knowledge, its disingenuous professions, its deliberate concealments, its holding doctrines and its pursuit of aims which it dared not avow, its disciplina arcani, its conspiracies, its Jesuistical spirit” (264–65).

However, there remains another side to Tractarian reserve, and Williams employs a number of rhetorical strategies to emphasize the attractiveness of his secretive doctrine. His most visible device is to repeatedly attack Evangelical Protestantism, a move we have already seen in his remarks on the sacrament of communion. As Adams explains, one goal of these attacks was to strengthen the bond among Tractarians by making them the target of reactionary counterattacks: “reserve . . . might be deployed in part to solicit the hostility of the world at large, and thereby to underscore the corporate integrity of the Oxford Movement as a male order akin to a secret society” (88). This strategy had a class dimension as well; as the religious movement most closely associated with what Bagehot would label the masses, Evangelical Protestantism serves as an emblem of middle-class standards of value which Williams views as symptoms of fallenness. He argues that broadly middle-class attempts to cast aside reserve and to “speak the truth plainly” reveals a paucity of natural feeling, an absence of the very truth its speakers seek to express:

When that reserve is cast aside, there is a want of true and deep feeling; and this may be seen in the rejection of strong typical and figurative, and, therefore, half-secret expressions with which deep feeling is apt to clothe itself. Thus, in early periods of a nation, when their sense of the great and marvelous is strongest, they make use of those terms or modes of speech, which partake more of the infinite and divine; and their language, as they become more civilized, will partake more of the character of what is earthly and human. They adopt what they think to be more full expressions of their meaning; but the fact is, that they are general expressions, and therefore more limited and finite, and as such indicate rather a straining after such strong feeling, which they have not, than an expression of it. (Tracts, IV: 80.54)

In post-lapsarian England, then, the only way to express the truth is to ignore the ceaseless yammering of middle-class preachers and pundits and to remain, like Carlyle’s Teufelröckh, eloquently silent.
Williams justifies this rejection of middle-class openness by appealing to what his readers were likely to view as the ultimate extra-political source of spiritual authority, the Bible. Specifically, he grounds the doctrine of reserve in Matthew 7.6, from the Sermon on the Mount, in which Jesus advises the people against “giving that which is holy to the dogs,” and “casting pearls before swine.” Speaking on parables, Williams declares, “Might it not be that the most spiritual and heavenly precepts were thus left to the rude and rough world, so that the veil of the figure might still be over them, through disclosing its import to any attentive and thoughtful person; performing thus by themselves through the wonderful wisdom of GOD, that which He has commanded us to observe, in not ‘giving that which is holy to the dogs,’ and not ‘casting pearls before swine’” (Tracts, IV: 80.10). Generalizing from this he later explains, “That, as our LORD wrapt up the most sacred and divine truths in parables and mysterious sayings, so we find, that in good men there is a natural reserve of expression, which is apt to veil from the world holy sentiments; in both cases the end is observed, of keeping ‘that which is holy from dogs’” (Tracts, IV: 80.58–59). He also reinforces this apparent biblical injunction with the spiritual authority of St. Athanasius. According to Williams, reserve is “a moral duty incumbent on teachers of the truth. We have, again, the very high authority of St. Athanasius for knowing, that the disciples themselves did observe precisely a similar caution from the beginning to that which our LORD had observed towards them, and this testimony connects this reserve of the Ancient Church by an unbroken chain with our LORD Himself” (Tracts, V: 87.13).

Williams thus offers reserve as an even more spiritually-resonant version of Arnold’s yearning, two years earlier, for privileged access to “life in its true reality.” This assiduous promotion of the biblically-authorized spiritual side to reserve makes politically-resonant attacks on Tractarian secrecy as Jesuitical ring hollow. The engineered irrelevance of the figure of Jesuitism is especially noticeable in an August, 1838 article in Fraser’s Magazine, entitled “Treason Within the Church.” This article describes as its chief object an exposure of the fact that the Tractarians were attempting “to lower the Reformation; to restore Popery to high estimation among us, and thus to prepare the way for a reunion with Rome, and an abandonment of Protestantism” (192). For the writer, such an attempt could mean only one thing: “Remembering the well-authenticated facts which are now upon record, as to the disguises assumed by Jesuit priests in the days of Elizabeth and her successors, we cannot dismiss from our minds the apprehension, that, among the leading spirits of this sect, there must exist some one or more who are diligently, though covertly, doing the work of the apostolic church and of her most subtle missionaries, the followers of Ignatius Loyola” (187). Unfortunately for its author, such general appeals to Elizabethan precedent carry little weight when compared with Williams’s specific citations of much older spiritual authorities. In fact, printed under the same title in the December issue of Fraser’s, a response
called the above article “a piece of Protestant jesuitism, quite worthy of Loyola” (751). Not only does this response echo the charges of a counter-conspiracy that surfaced in the periodical debate over the Hampden controversy, it also reveals just how vulnerable spurious political invocations of the figure of Jesuitism could be to competing claims of spiritual authority made by Anglo-Catholics.

III. Papal Aggression

This potential for instability in the political stance of anti-Catholicism surfaces again in mid-century debates over the restoration of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Britain, or “papal aggression” as it was popularly known. The years between Williams’s two Tracts on reserve and the papal brief that elevated Vicars Apostolic to Bishops and Archbishops were trying ones for the Establishment. Irish immigration in the “hungry forties” both increased the number of Roman Catholics in England dramatically and pushed Roman Catholic political opinion in the direction of working-class Radicalism by sheer dint of numbers. In addition, the Irish brought with them a penchant for membership in various Irish nationalist secret societies (i.e., the United Irishmen and the Ribboners) that often blurred the distinction between religion and politics. The public uproar over government funding of Maynooth College and the conversion of prominent public figures like Newman added to Protestant anxiety. The proverbial last straw, however, was the highly publicized Gorham decision, in which the courts upheld Parliament’s right to intervene in the affairs of the Established Church. Calls for disestablishment soon followed. “Papal aggression” provided a convenient target for cathartic attacks by English Protestants, many of whom revived the accusations of conspiracy and Jesuitism already employed earlier in the century in order to foster, even if only briefly, a common spirit of nationalism. The fact that the papal brief immediately followed the Pope’s restoration to the Vatican by Republican France encouraged such a nationalistic response, as did the supremely self-confident language of the brief itself. This nationalistic reaction to the so-called “papal aggression” reached the highest levels of British society, with Lord John Russell feeling moved to write his infamous “Durham Letter,” the national publication of which appeared to add ministerial authority to the anti-papal position. Even at its most vehement, however, criticism of “papal aggression” was always careful to claim the majority of English Catholics as loyal citizens, including them within the fold of those under attack. This strategy of using the figure of Jesuitism to attack a largely foreign threat represents a shift in England’s rhetoric of conspiracy, and provides an early indication of the ways in which that rhetoric would be internationalized in the following decades.
Ironically, public reaction might never have reached quite the peak that it did had not the announcement of the restoration been accompanied by the newly-promoted Cardinal Wiseman’s pastoral, *Out of the Flaminian Gate*. Sent to the Roman Catholic clergy in England on 7 October and publicly read and reprinted in most of the nation’s newspapers on 17 October 1850, Wiseman’s pastoral seemed to confirm that the papal brief constituted a direct challenge to England’s national sovereignty. Exuberant declarations that Catholic England had been “restored to its orbit in the ecclesiastical firmament” around the papal “centre of unity, the source of jurisdiction, of light and vigour,” appeared to claim an almost territorial right to England (*The Annual Register, 1850*, 413). At the same time, references to the “Saints of our country” and “those blessed martyrs of these latter ages,” both said by the pastoral to be rejoicing over “this new evidence of the faith and Church which led them to glory,” were simply insulting to many Protestants, who were implicitly branded as persecutors responsible for the long “departure of England’s religious glory” (*The Annual Register, 1850*, 413). However, Englishmen objected most strongly to Wiseman’s assertion that “we govern and shall continue to govern the counties of Middlesex, Herrford, and Essex . . . and those of Surrey, Sussex, Kent, Berkshire, and Hampshire, with the islands annexed” (*The Annual Register, 1850*, 412). The fact that Wiseman meant “govern” in a purely ecclesiastical sense and only in regard to English Catholics was largely lost in the ensuing public reaction.

This reaction to the Papal brief had actually begun three days earlier in *The Times*, with a somewhat naïve editorial dismissing Wiseman’s appointment as Archbishop of Westminster as a ridiculous Papal delusion. Once the paper had determined that Wiseman’s title signaled a full-scale restoration, and once it had been sufficiently aroused by Wiseman’s unfortunate choice of words in *Out of the Flaminian Gate*, its reaction became much more vehement. In quick succession, editorials from 19, 22 and 24 October denounced the restoration as “an audacious and conspicuous display of pretensions to resume the absolute spiritual dominion of this island which Rome has never abandoned” and “a direct usurpation of a supreme spiritual power by a foreign priest over the length and breadth of this land.” As the paper explained, “these seditious synods, these fictional dioceses, and these indefinite episcopal powers, are avowedly intended to carry on a more active warfare against the liberties and the faith of the people of England.” Certainly the most threatening of the new Roman Catholic dioceses was that of Westminster, over which Wiseman himself would preside. This apparently direct challenge to the existing Anglican diocese of Westminster and the eminent Protestants buried therein prompted *The Times* to declare,

> Is it then here, in Westminster, among ourselves and by the English Throne, that an Italian priest is to parcel out the spiritual dominion of this country—to employ
renegades of our national Church to restore a foreign usurpation over the consciences of men, and to sow division in our political society by an undisguised and systematic hostility to the institutions most nearly identified with our national freedom and our national faith? Such an intention must either be ludicrous or intolerable—either a delusion of some fanatical brain or treason to the Constitution.  

After these three editorials, Prussian military exploits in Europe largely supplanted the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy as the leading story in The Times, although the paper continued to keep a close anti-Catholic eye on the progress of “papal aggression.” For example, two articles printed on 6 and 7 November as part of the national commemoration of Guy Fawkes day and headed “The Gunpowder Plot” both suggested that the specter of Jesuitism might be especially relevant for contemporary readers. However, three more moderate pieces between 8 and 16 November show that the early furor over the restoration was giving way to less exclusively inflammatory language. A letter to the editor from 8 November entitled “Papal Aggression” even minimized the danger posed by Rome in language that echoes chapter 37 of Barnaby Rudge: “Whatever be the destiny of Smithfield as a market, I do not look forward to its reappropriation as a place of execution for heresy.”

By mid-November Roman Catholic leaders, too, had begun to respond to the explosion of anti-Catholicism prompted by the restoration of the hierarchy, with Wiseman’s An Appeal to the Reason and Good Feeling of the English People serving as the most complete statement of their position. Begun on 11 November and completed in less than a week, Wiseman’s Appeal appeared on 20 November and sold an incredible 30,000 copies in three days (Norman, Anti-Catholicism, 62–63). Employing a calm rationality much removed from the rhetoric of Out of the Flaminian Gate, this pamphlet responds to all of the major objections to the Roman Catholic restoration. It begins by providing readers with background on the prior administration of the English Catholics through the Vicars Apostolic and the desire for a better regulated internal structure for English Catholicism (1–6). This desire, and not “thoughts of aggression” or “stupid ideas of rivalry with the Established Church” (4), led to a deputation to Rome in 1847 and subsequent approval from the Pope to reestablish the hierarchy. Once this background is out of the way, Wiseman cleverly appeals to the same middle-class definition of Englishness repudiated by Williams in order to palliate suspect readers, calling upon “the manly sense and honest heart of a generous people; that love of honourable dealing and fair play, which, in joke or in earnest, is equally the instinct of an Englishman; that hatred of all mean advantage taken, of all base tricks and paltry clap-traps and party cries employed to hunt down a rival or a foe” (9).
He then goes on to provide a point-by-point rebuttal of every objection raised in the papers. He distinguishes between the Crown’s temporal and spiritual supremacy, declaring that, like Dissenters, Catholics fully admit the first but not the second, which is reserved for members of the Church of England alone (10–13). Using the Catholic Emancipation Act, Wiseman also asserts the legality of having local bishops (13–16). In addition, he explains that the Pope was involved not as a foreign political power, but as the only legitimate spiritual authority for Roman Catholics. As Wiseman explains it, this involvement of the Pope does not infringe upon the Crown’s prerogative because England does not even formally recognize the authority of the Vatican and hence cannot lose its prerogative to a non-existent power. Finally, Wiseman demonstrates the fundamental inconsistency of objecting to a Catholic hierarchy in Britain when such a hierarchy had already been sanctioned in many of Britain’s colonies.

In many ways, the *Appeal* was a success, largely silencing *The Times* and reaching a wide audience of metropolitan readers; however, as the *Westminster Review* remarked two months later, “An uneasy suspicion remains that a step made good by the papal hierarchy, introduces an unsound element into English life; that the case of the Roman Catholics, is not parallel with that of the modern Nonconformists; and that, however we may ignore the red hat and the archepiscopal title, Dr. Wiseman continues after all something more to the state than a ‘Dissenting minister’” (“The Battle of the Churches,” 446). Other periodicals, noticeably *Blackwood’s*, demonstrated just how strong this “uneasy suspicion” remained, and how much of it was based on fears of Catholic conspiracies. For example, one reviewer used the apparently imperial sentiments expressed in Wiseman’s pastoral as evidence that some Catholics were treasonably breaking the oath of allegiance provided in the Catholic Relief Act and therefore did not deserve the full rights of citizenship:

> The sacredness of oaths is essential to the *existence* of society: the man who is not to be believed on his oath is self-banished, self-disenfranchised, self-excluded from all the rights of society; for the obvious reason, that, if all men were equally false, society *must* dissolve. Such a man is no longer entitled to the protection of the law. And the same rule is inevitably applicable to any institution which thus sets itself at war with society. Popery is *anti-social*. (“Popery in the Nineteenth Century,” 252–53)

This same article saw this anti-social side of Roman Catholicism as stemming from the inevitable presence of the Jesuitical spirit: “Rome is all *artifice*, and we may be well assured that, whether under the name of Oratorians, or Preachers, or Brethren of the Spirit, the craft of Jesuitry will be exercised to make its way into England, and keep its footing here” (255–56). A later article expressed similar sen-
timents, revealing the continued usefulness of accusations of Jesuitism to the anti-Catholic cause:

a working army they may be called, that, though they seem dispersed and banished, are emissaries everywhere, and rise up in multitudes where it was thought there were none. They are allowed to assume whatever dress they please; for their better disguise, any occupation: they are in the highest and lowest conditions, and have been known to appear as zealous members of conventicles. ("The Papal Aggression Bill," 574)

Such descriptions bordered on paranoia and encouraged the establishment of a state of panoptical surveillance not unlike that described and criticized by Steinmetz in The Novitiate. Combined with the earlier distrust of Catholic oaths, these charges of Jesuitism bear a clear resemblance to those of Thuggism brought against the Glasgow spinners. This connection between anti-Catholicism and anti-unionism became overt when the same article argued for limits to religious toleration: “It is possible that there may be religions that, being tolerated, would in practice not only destroy every other, but the very name of liberty. Even Thuggism professes to be a religion, and secret murder its duty. Would it be religious liberty to tolerate the Suttees and Juggernauts of India?” (573). Of course, the article quickly demurred, “We do not mean to make offensive comparisons: we only put the case strongly, to show how obvious it is that toleration must have its limits” (573), but by then the rhetorical connection to “Glasgow Thuggery” was hard to ignore.

These comments in Blackwood’s represent the extreme end of what was an almost-universal condemnation of “papal aggression”; in fact, aside from Catholic periodicals like the Dublin Review, only Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine dared to challenge the popular outcry. “Three articles by J. R. Beard attempted to convince Tait’s readers that “so far as the nation has joined the ‘alarm and indignation’ cry, there is a national mistake—a wide, wild, dangerous mistake” (“What Is It All About?” 43). According to Beard, this mistake occurred because otherwise sincere anti-papists have come “to the question filled with a laudable repugnance to priestly pretensions, [but] have, in their zeal and haste, allowed their feelings to master their judgment, and, among other confoundings of things that differ, have confounded the civil with the spiritual, claims with powers, and names with things” (“What Is It All About?” 45). Their zeal has also led them to ignore the facts and examples of history:

Whose mind does not, at the first hint of the subject, fly back first, but not only, to the “Popish Plot” of the seventeenth century—that most hideous page of English history? Think for a moment of the idiotic origin, and yet the long continuance and
ferocious cruelties of that alarm... A sensible people for five years struck mad; a courageous people for five years in abject terror; a generous and clement people for five years imbruing their hands in innocent blood. (“What Is It All About?” 43)

If such an extreme reaction was idiotic then, Beard declares it even more idiotic now, since “The change, we say, is one which, besides affecting Roman Catholics only, as rendering them more independent of Rome, does not affect or concern other people at all” (“What Is It All About?” 47). Beard even borrows a page from Wiseman’s Appeal when he scathingly remarks that “the spirit and language in which this misdirected and exaggerated agitation has been carried on have been discreditable and injurious to our character as Englishmen, whose motto is fair play, and as Protestants, whose doctrine is toleration” (“What Is It All About?” 51). This final reference to a definition of Englishness fundamentally opposed to the kind of false appeals to past conspiracies and the spirit of Jesuitism that made up the basis of English “No Popery” challenges the anti-Catholic position where it is most vulnerable: its confusion of nationalist ideologies.

This same ideological confusion, especially as it was reflected in the figure of the secret society, would come under even closer scrutiny in John Henry Newman’s Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England. Written with a penetrating wit, these Lectures expose a number of fallacies within the anti-Catholic uproar over the restoration of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Britain. At the root of these fallacies is the tacit force of what Newman broadly refers to as “tradition” in its least edifying sense, what, following Jaroslav Pelikan, we might designate traditionalism, or simply the inertia of prejudice. Since anti-Catholicism for Newman is the “Tradition of the Court, and of the Law, and of Society, and of Literature” all working together (73), it remains at once imbedded and unexamined in English culture. This tradition, rather than any recognized standards of truth and falsehood, forms the basis for all English perceptions of Roman Catholicism:

it is, forsooth, our received policy, as Englishmen, our traditionary view of things, to paint up the Pope and Papists in a certain style... True or false is not the question... its costume is fixed, like the wigs of our judges, or the mace of our mayors. Have not freeborn Britons a right to think as they please? We rule Popery to be what we say it is, not by history, but by an Act of Parliament; not by sight or hearing, but by the national will. It is the will of the Legislature, it is the voice of the people, which gives facts their complexion, and logic its course, and ideas their definition.” (10–11)

At its extreme, this willfully misinformed Papal costume dresses up the Roman Catholic Church as “a sorceress, intoxicating the nations with a goblet of blood” (14). Even
when not clothed in such fantastical garb, however, “reasons of State political and national, prevent her [the Catholic Church] from being heard in her own defence. She is considered too absurd to be inquired into, and too corrupt to be defended, and too dangerous to be treated with equity and fair dealing” (11–12). As Newman succinctly states, by managing to at once represent Roman Catholicism in whatever way seems convenient and to silence all opposition to this representation, the anti-Catholic tradition in effect creates Popery in its own image, “the victim of a prejudice which perpetuates itself, and gives birth to what it feeds upon” (12).

As long as this self-generating tradition remains tacitly accepted, it allows for all sorts of logical inconsistencies to be practiced by otherwise reasonable English Protestants. On the subject of religious toleration, for example, Englishmen seem to consider it a duty to secure freedom of worship for “Unitarians, Sabellians, Utilitarians, Wesleyans, Calvinists, Swedenborgians, Irvingites, [and] Freethinkers” (75–76), many of whom, Newman notes, believe doctrines much less in agreement with Established teaching than do Roman Catholics. From a legal perspective, the treatment of Roman Catholics is also at variance with the normal English requirement “that an accuser should have something to say for himself, before he can put the accused on his defense”: “This righteous rule is simply set aside in the treatment of Catholics and their religion. Instead of the onus probandi, as it is called, the burden of proof, lying with the accuser, it is simply thrown upon the accused” (90). Even some of the charges made against Roman Catholicism are shown by Newman to be, at best, hypocritical. For example, it was common practice in nineteenth-century England to charge Catholics with an undue veneration for images; yet, Protestants seem to demonstrate a similar feeling in their delight—especially on Guy Fawkes Day—in burning “Bishops, or Cardinals, or Popes in effigy” (180). Even Protestants’ perception of history is skewed by their resolute adherence to tradition:

It is familiar to an Englishman to wonder at and to pity the recluse and the devotee who surround themselves with a high enclosure, and shut out what is on the other side of it; but was there ever such an instance of self-sufficient, dense, and ridiculous bigotry, as that which rises up and walls in the minds of our fellow-countrymen from all knowledge of one of the most remarkable phenomena which the history of the world has seen? This broad fact of Catholicism—as real as the continent of America, or the Milky Way—which Englishmen cannot deny, they will not entertain; they shut their eyes, they thrust their heads into the sand, and try to get rid of a great vision, a great reality, under the name of Popery. (43)

Given all of these instances in which English anti-Catholics violate their own principles as a result of their “traditionary view of things,” Newman concludes “that the
anti-Catholic Tradition could not be kept alive, would die of exhaustion, without a continual supply of fable” (128), much of it readily available during the debate over the restoration.

The Lectures cannily recognize that much of this “fable” sustaining popular anti-Catholic prejudice originates in the ready applicability of the figure of the secret society to Roman Catholicism. Newman refutes this figure in two ways, first by exposing the lack of factual evidence for charges leveled at the Jesuits themselves:

If there be any set of men in the whole world who are railed against as the pattern of all evil, it is the Jesuit body. It is vain to ask their slanderers what they know of them; did they ever see a Jesuit? can they say whether there are many or few? what do they know of their teaching? “Oh! it is quite notorious,” they reply: “you might as well deny the sun in heaven; it is notorious that the Jesuits are a crafty, intriguing, unscrupulous, desperate, murderous, and exceedingly able body of men; a secret society, ever plotting against liberty, and government, and progress, and thought, and the prosperity of England. Nay it is awful; they disguise themselves in a thousand shapes . . . they prowl about with handsome stocks and stylish waistcoats, and gold chains about their persons, or in fustian jackets, as the case may be; and they do not hesitate to shed the blood of any one whatever, prince or peasant, who stands in their way.” Who can fathom the inanity of such statements?—which are made and therefore, I suppose, believed, not merely by the ignorant, but by educated men, who ought to know better. (17)

Newman then expands his farcical argument to national proportions when he sets out to “try whether something of a monster indictment, similarly frightful and similarly fantastical to that which is got up against Catholicism, might not be framed against some other institution or power, or parallel greatness and excellence, in its degree and place, to the communion of Rome” (25), namely to see whether one might deploy accusations of a Jesuitical nature against the British Constitution.47

In order to present such a hypothetical scenario and to make it comparable to that of the Roman Catholics in England, Newman transports his readers to a public square in Russia. Here, he supposes a speaker who knows nothing first-hand of England, “but who has dived into Blackstone and several English writers, and has picked up facts at third or fourth hand, and has got together a crude farrago of ideas, words, and instances, a little truth, a deal of falsehood, a deal of misrepresentation, a deal of nonsense, and a deal of invention” (26). This speaker, “a member of a junior branch of the Potemkin family . . . who has acquired the title of Blood-sucker” (27), is set to harangue a sympathetic crowd, got together for just this purpose by Russian leaders, on the dangers of those who support the British Constitution. According
to the fictional speaker, these “Anglo-maniacs, or John-Bullists, as they are properly termed” (26), constitute “a perfidious power . . . which is yearly aggrandizing itself in East, West, and South, which is engaged in one enormous conspiracy against all States, and which was even aiming at modifying the old institutions of the North, and at dressing up the army, navy, legislature, and executive of his own country in the livery of Queen Victoria” (27). They support something called the British Constitution, a “crazy, old-fashioned piece of furniture, and an eyesore in the nineteenth century, and would not last a dozen years” without their conspiratorial plotting (28).

Once Newman begins to put the more extreme language of the anti-Catholic position into the mouth of his speaker, his farce grows even more critical of “No Popery.” Using uncontextualized excerpts from Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, the fictional speaker constructs a case for John-Bullists being agents of the Antichrist, who turns out to be none other than Queen Victoria: “Queen Victoria is distinctly pointed out in the Book of Revelation as having the number of the beast! You may recollect that number of 666; now, she came to the throne in the year thirty-seven, at which date she was eighteen years old. Multiply then 37 by 18, and you have the very number 666, which is the mystical emblem of the lawless King!!!” (35). Mirroring of the way in which the exponents of “No Popery!” justified their collapse of past and present evidence, the speaker then uses various historical examples of English executions, wars, etc., to prove that “John-Bullism, through a space of 800 years, is *semper idem*, unchangeable in evil” (37). The meeting ends with a public riot in which “all poured out into the square, and proceeded to break the windows of all the British residents. They then formed into procession, and directing their course to the great square before the Kremlin, they dragged through the mud, and then solemnly burnt, an effigy of John Bull which had been provided before hand by the managing committee, a lion and unicorn, and a Queen Victoria” (41).

Such actions so closely emulate those of actual English anti-Catholics that it is almost unnecessary for Newman to “deliberately assert that no absurdities contained in the above sketch can equal—nay, that no conceivable absurdities can surpass—the absurdities which are firmly believed of Catholics by sensible, kind-hearted, well-intentioned Protestants” (41). In order to convert these misinformed but ultimately fair-minded critics to a more tolerant position, English Roman Catholics need to wage a war of accurate information. As Newman explains, modern religious debate is different “from the case of actual warfare, in which ignorance is weakness, here ignorance is power” (365). Hence, Catholics need to replace the popular anti-Catholic tradition with a truer picture of their actual beliefs and practices if they hope to gain public acceptance.
IV. Conclusions

By ultimately advocating publicity in the Lectures, Newman acknowledges and draws upon the authority publicly accrued in middle-class Victorian England through transparent, open behavior. His strategic deployment of a vision of the English as willing to reform their anti-Catholic prejudices in light of evidence that is fairly and unreservedly presented echoes the conciliatory tone adopted by earlier apologies for Roman Catholicism, including the two articles on Catholic emancipation, “Catholic Question” and “The Last of the Catholic Question,” Wiseman’s Appeal and J. R. Beard’s concluding remarks in “What Is It All About?” At the same time, it is important to recognize that Newman’s advice to his readers, that they should better educate their neighbors about Catholic doctrine, does not open up formerly secretive behavior to public view; in other words, Newman is not inviting Protestants into the confessional, he is merely explaining the doctrinal value of auricular confession. In this way he reemphasizes the prior arguments of those like Wiseman and J. R. Beard that the temporal and spiritual aspects of Roman Catholicism need to remain distinct. In partitioning off doctrine from practice, Newman also allows for the continued aesthetic and spiritual attractiveness of divinely-sanctioned Roman Catholic reserve by cannily tacking between both sides of Victorian England’s dialectic rhetoric of secrecy.48

Newman’s Lectures, together with other material from the period surrounding the restoration of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Britain also demonstrate a gradual turning outward effected by the twenty-year discussion of Catholicism in England. During the public debate over the Catholic Emancipation Act, critics were primarily concerned with repressing what Blackwood’s referred to as the “contemptible domestic enemy.” This strategy of branding Catholic and Catholic-like groups as an internal threat to English sovereignty continued through the reaction to Tractarianism, as Fraser’s Magazine’s provocatively titled article, “Treason in the Church,” makes clear. However, by 1850 anti-Catholic rhetoric began to change. Domestic Catholics were carefully included among those threatened by the “papal aggression,” which was painstakingly constructed as a foreign threat.49 In thus internationalizing the Catholic threat, English Protestants suggest how anti-Catholicism can be deployed in order to further the construction of a national ideology of Englishness as open and rational. However, because this ideology is based, at least in part, on a continued denunciation of secretive practices, and hence a grounding of meaning in the absence of secrecy, it remains open to the results of its own rhetoric. Not only might secrecy be represented as central to the open rationality of England through the kind of farcical portraiture offered by Newman, but a similar alliance of secretive practices and “respectable” English society would emerge out of later reactions to the Indian Mutiny.