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## Vatican Ceremonies and Tourist Culture in Nineteenth-century British Travelogues

The decades after the 1815 peace treaty of Versailles saw the growth of mass tourism. The British middle class, who benefitted from increased prosperity and significant improvements in the transport network, played an important role in the development of this new cultural activity, and the Italian tourism industry became one of its main beneficiaries. In the two centuries since, Italy has become the world's fourth highest earner from tourism and the fifth most visited country (World Tourism Organization 5). The confrontation with otherness that occurs in tourism is key to giving an insight into the tourist's values as well as opening up a dialogue between the self and the visited culture. Alongside remnants from Roman antiquity, Italy's main sights were and are its religious architecture and artefacts. As these sacred sights were Catholic, they represented a significant challenge of otherness to British tourists of the post-Napoleonic era they were not likely to encounter when travelling within the UK or other Protestant countries. The accounts of visits by British tourists to Italian religious sights predictably reveal attitudes shaped by anti-Catholic prejudice. Going beyond the obvious theological dimension of this opposition to Italian Catholicism, these travelogues offer important insights into the tourists' broader cultural assumptions about Italians and Catholicism as well as their own culture.

Reversing the normal perspective of these texts from their focus on the foreign 'other' to an observation of the tourists' manner of observing, this essay examines whether the apparent dichotomies between self and 'other' stand up to closer scrutiny. We have to ask what attracted significant numbers of British tourists to seek abroad an encounter with a religion which British public opinion often treated with hostility and how texts deal with this tension. The texts under consideration mostly date from the 1820s to 1850s, and most of the authors are professional writers, first and foremost Charles Dickens, whose *Pictures from Italy* (1846) is the only text among them which is still in print. Compared to ordinary tourists, professional authors should be more self-conscious, but the analysis will show that even they are sometimes unaware of incongruities in their own attitudes which their texts expose.

A textual focus on accounts of religious ceremonies promises a better insight into the tourists' response to lived Italian culture than reports about static, historical artefacts. The primary texts for this essay concentrate mainly on Holy Week in the Vatican, not only because this longest and most elaborate succession of Catholic ceremonies elicited extended descriptions, but also because, being a must for foreign visitors, it offers an ideal opportunity for observing the behaviour of the British tourists and for probing their ambiguous attitude towards Italian Catholicism. Moreover, since the Vatican's ceremonies of Holy Week followed a strict pattern, it is legitimate to assume that the texts describe very similar events even if they date from different years. This allows us to distinguish between observations based on facts, since they are made by several authors, and the artistic license of individual writers. Despite the absence of sources directly conveying the Vatican's attitude to the presence of tourists at its most important ceremonies, the essay will also consider indications in the travelogues of how the Catholic Church responded to these rather obtrusive observers. As in the case of the tourists' paradoxical attraction to these ceremonies, critical concepts from tourism studies will be useful for analyzing how the Vatican dealt with the appropriation of its rituals as tourist displays.

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Before turning to the texts about Holy Week, it is necessary to give a quick *tour d'horizon* of the preconceptions regarding Italy and Catholicism which many nineteenth-century British travel writers and their readers would have had. There was widespread appreciation of the picturesque Italian landscape and Classical and Renaissance architecture, which had been fostered by landscape painting and the writings of famous Romantic visitors to the country such as Byron, Shelley and Samuel Rogers. However, the Romantics and later travellers also expressed their disappointment with the cultural, moral and economic degradation of Italy's contemporary inhabitants (see e.g. Jones 2:67). The heroine of Anna Jameson's fictional *Diary of an Ennuyée* (1826), which draws on the author's own experiences in Italy, hears the Italians 'styled six times a day at least' – presumably by her British compatriots – 'a dirty, demoralized, degraded, unprincipled race, – centuries behind our thrice-

blessed, prosperous, and comfort-loving nation in civilization and morals' (Jameson 293). Explanations for the Italians' perceived backwardness were commonly sought in their innate South European temperament and in their political oppression.

Following texts like Sismondi's *History of the Italian Republics*, which praised the Renaissance with its city republics as a period of personal and civic liberty providing ideal conditions for a flowering of culture, British commentators blamed Italy's decline on the foreign occupation of the peninsula's north and south and on the authoritarian regime of the Papal States.<sup>1</sup> For instance, in her *Life in Tuscany* (1859), Mabel Sherman Crawford commented: 'it cannot be denied that the defects of character, attributable to the Italians of the upper and middle classes of society, spring in a considerable degree from the despotic form of government to which they are subjected' (Crawford 119). This line of reasoning had also been adopted by the republican leaders of the Risorgimento, who found many sympathisers among British intellectuals (Thurin 73; Pemble 222-223; Brand 33, 222-223). Dickens, whose support for the Risorgimento is well documented (Carlton; Hollington; Caponi-Doherty), counted among his acquaintances the prominent Italian exiles Giuseppe Mazzini and Antonio Gallenga. After the defeat of the Roman Republic of 1849 by France, he became a member of the Italian Appeal Committee and wrote *An Appeal to the English People on Behalf of the Italian Refugees*, and 'The Italian Prisoner' (1860) also expresses his sympathy with the Risorgimento.

As Joseph Phelan has argued, Dickens's concept of a socially conscious 'new picturesque' in *Pictures from Italy* also constitutes a political critique of the Church of Rome: it 'is consistent with a clear and easily recognizable program of political action, namely the overthrow of both the temporal and the moral power of the Roman Catholic church' (Phelan 131). The most telling indicator in *Pictures from Italy* that Dickens considered the Catholic Church responsible for Italy's social and economic state is his comment on the opening of a railway line, the Victorian symbol of progress, between Leghorn and Pisa: it 'is a good one, and has already begun to astonish Italy with a precedent of punctuality, order, plain dealing, and improvement – the most dangerous and heretical astonisher of all. There must have been a slight sensation, as of earthquake, surely, in the Vatican, when the first Italian railroad was thrown open' (PI 109-110). Despite a disclaimer in the volume's preface, the 'Reader's Passport', that he intended the text to be apolitical, his emphatic denunciations of poverty, decay and Catholic 'superstition' in a text which was serialised in the liberal *Daily News* could not but be read as indictments of the powers that ruled Italy.

Dickens's implicit comparison between Italian culture and British 'punctuality, order, plain dealing' suggests that the representation of Catholic Italy also needs to be considered in the broader context of the long-standing self-definition of the British and other North Europeans in opposition to South Europeans. The most famous eighteenth-century advocate of this national and cross-national stereotyping based on climatology was Montesquieu in *De l'Esprit des lois* (Montesquieu 474-477; 486-487), and it was still largely accepted in the nineteenth century and propounded in influential texts such as Henry Thomas Buckle's *History of Civilization in England* (Buckle 36-137) and John Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* (Ruskin 174-175). According to this theory, the cold North European climate was thought to foster reason, a critical mind, a Protestant work ethic and liberalism, while the hot southern climate produced sensuous, passionate but passive people who were therefore attracted to the pomp and spectacle of Catholicism and submitted readily to its authoritarian power structure. The recourse to national temperament to explain the degradation of the Italians is thus closely linked to the political explanation for their situation and to the combined spiritual and political power of the Catholic Church. It also suggests how closely the conceptualization of the foreign 'other' is bound up with a dialectical self-definition. In *The Beaten Track*, James Buzard states that a function of nineteenth-century continental tours was to 'make one a better citizen at home, confirming the superiority of British social arrangements over those found elsewhere' (Buzard 100). It is this assumption that British culture is significantly different from, and superior to, Italian culture which the essay will examine.

Turning finally to attitudes towards Catholicism in the British context, the development of tourism coincided with the Catholic Revival. The repeal of the Test Acts in 1828 and the Catholic Relief Act of 1829 represented the last major steps in the gradual Catholic Emancipation. The restoration of Catholics to equal civic rights was followed from 1833 onwards by the theological debate over the compatibility of Anglicanism with Catholicism in the Oxford Movement. Moreover, the influx of Irish immigrants, especially in the wake of the Potato Famine of 1845-52, increased the number of

Catholics in England. Anglican unease about a resurgence of Catholicism, historically associated with autocracy and a threat to the principles of the Protestant, liberal state, was repeatedly reflected in negative portrayals of Italian 'Popery.' For instance, *The Romanism of Italy* (1845), by the interdenominational evangelical Sir Culling Eardley Smith, denounced Catholic practices such as the sale of masses, the Church's fostering of belief in letters allegedly written by the Devil and the Virgin Mary, and the imprisonment of priests who had advised parishioners not to fast. Similarly, the Reverend Michael Hobart Seymour complained in his *Romanism in Rome in the Nineteenth Century* (1849) that no bibles in the vernacular were available in Italy, attacked Mariolatry and idolatry, and spoke out against the intricate system of indulgences. Publishing during the short-lived Roman Republic of 1849, Seymour reveals the political allegiance underlying his theological argument when expressing the hope that a post-revolutionary Italy will be able to follow the example of the Glorious Revolution and break the shackles of an oppressive religion (Seymour 28).<sup>2</sup>

Dickens, with his perennial suspicion of any kind of dogmatic religion,<sup>3</sup> intervened in the debate about the Catholic Revival in 1843 by writing a satirical commissioners' report on the Oxford Movement for the *Examiner*. In 1850, after the re-establishment of Catholic Sees in Britain, he composed a satire on that event for *Household Words*. It is therefore surprising that in the 'Reader's Passport' to *Pictures from Italy* he tries to attenuate his criticism of Catholicism:

When I mention any exhibition [of Catholic faith] that impressed me as absurd or disagreeable, I do not seek to connect it, or recognize it as necessarily connected with, any essentials of [the Catholic] creed. When I treat of the ceremonies of Holy Week, I merely treat of their effect, and do not challenge the good and learned Dr. Wiseman's interpretation of their meaning. [...] I do no more than many conscientious Catholics both abroad and at home. (PI 6)

Contemporary responses to Dickens's travelogue, such as the hostile review in the *Dublin Review* (Murray) or the withdrawal of the Catholic illustrator Clarkson Stanfield from the project (Schlicke 450), and the political implication of his reference to the Pisa – Leghorn railway suggest that this denial of anti-Catholicism is disingenuous. It is, however, fair to say that his account of the 1845 Holy Week is primarily concerned with the 'effect' of the ceremonies on the British tourist. Dickens's well-known text and several more obscure descriptions of the same ceremonies offer the opportunity to scrutinise the behaviour of British tourists in a situation where the spectacular effect of Catholic ritual collides with their theological and cultural preconceptions.

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British accounts of the Italian Catholic ceremonies are characterised by a conflict between fascination and denigration (Pemble 212; O'Connor 50). They indulge in colourful descriptions of these elaborate ceremonies while also condemning them as obsolete, pagan and artificial. Frederick Harrison's nostalgic comment of 1893 on how Rome had changed over the second half of the century combines many of the modes in which Catholic rituals are seen by his compatriots:

the mediæval absurdities of Papal officialism; the suffumigation and the *visas*; [...] the grotesque parade of cardinals and *monsignori*; the narrow, ill-lighted streets; the swarm of monks, friars, and prelates of every order and race; the air of mouldering abandonment in the ancient city, as of some corner of mediæval Europe left forgotten and untouched by modern progress, with all the historic glamour, all the pictorial squalor, all the Turkish routine, all the magnificence of obsolete forms of civilization which clung around the Vatican and were seen there only in Western Europe. (Harrison 703)

Discourses about the picturesque, exoticism and the progress of civilization are all mobilised here. They allow the Briton to assume a pose of superior detachment, without having to reflect on or justify his attraction to Catholic Rome.

The semantic field which dominates in British accounts of Catholic ceremonies is that of theatricality (see Pemble 214). During Holy Week, this applies above all, but not only, to the re-enactments of scenes from the Passion. These are either criticised for their lack of realism or they are ridiculed for their overly naturalistic acting. In a virtuoso account of Christ's washing of the apostles' feet and the Last Supper on Maundy Thursday, Dickens combines both kinds of criticism:

The place in which this pious office is performed, is one of the chapels of St. Peter's, which is gaily decorated for the occasion; the thirteen sitting, 'all of a row,' on a very high bench, and looking particularly uncomfortable, with the eyes of Heaven knows how many English, French, Americans, Swiss, Germans, Russians, Swedes, Norwegians, and other foreigners, nailed to their faces all the time. They are robed in white; and on their heads they wear a stiff white cap, like a large English porter-pot, without a handle. Each carries in his hand, a nosegay, of the size of a fine cauliflower; and two of them, on this occasion, wore spectacles; which, remembering the characters they sustained, I thought a droll appendage to the costume. There was a great eye to character. St. John was represented by a good-looking young man. St. Peter, by a grave-looking old gentleman, with a flowing brown beard; and Judas Iscariot by such an enormous hypocrite (I could not make out, though, whether the expression of his face was real or assumed) that if he had acted the part to the death and had gone away and hanged himself, he would have left nothing to be desired. (*PI* 154)

The apostles' glasses and the incongruous nosegays defy the rules of realistic staging, and the purely decorative flowers elicit the traditional Protestant criticism that Catholicism privileges outward show over artless, inward faith – a criticism which is also frequently voiced in relation to church decorations and ceremonial robes (see e.g. Seymour 20). The unexpected presence of the nosegays seems to trigger comparisons with other mundane objects like cauliflowers and porter-pots. Such profane analogies, just like the absence of explanations for symbolic objects and acts, are a common strategy for undermining the spiritual significance of rituals in other religions (see Moran 238). The account continues:

The apostles and Judas appearing on the platform, after much expectation, were marshalled, in line, in front of the table, with Peter at the top; and a good long stare was taken at them by the company, while twelve of them took a long smell at their nosegays, and Judas – moving his lips very obtrusively – engaged in inward prayer. Then, the Pope, clad in a scarlet robe, and wearing on his head a skull-cap of white satin, appeared in the midst of a crowd of Cardinals and other dignitaries, and took in his hand a little golden ewer, from which he poured a little water over one of Peter's hands [...] This his Holiness performed, with considerable expedition, on every man in the line (Judas, I observed, to be particularly overcome by his condescension); and then the whole Thirteen sat down to dinner. [...] The manner in which Judas grew more white-livered over his victuals, and languished, with his head on one side, as if he had no appetite, defies all description. [...] The Cardinals, and other attendants, smiled to each other, from time to time, as if the thing were a great farce; and if they thought so, there is little doubt they were perfectly right. (*PI* 155-156)

A major source of delight here is the realistic acting by the apostles, especially Judas, although Dickens is doubtful whether the cleric who is impersonating him is a consummate actor or just shows his real, hypocritical character. These alternative interpretations draw both on the common Protestant prejudice against the 'corrupt' Catholic clergy and on that against the theatricality of Catholic rituals (Sage 36-37; Moran 236). Dickens thus offers his readers a balance between entertainment and moral judgment which allows them to confirm preconceptions. He clearly relishes the theatricality of the scene, just as he enjoys the secular spectacles of puppet shows and operas elsewhere in the book, but as a Protestant he can only condemn the staging of spectacles in a religious context. The comment that the 'Cardinals [...] smiled to each other [...] as if the thing were a great farce' reinforces once more the alleged hypocrisy of the ritual and the inappropriateness of acting in church.<sup>4</sup>

However, Dickens can be accused of a 'blind spot' in this respect: when criticizing theatricality in a religious context on an earlier occasion, he reaches for a comparison with a seemingly secular ceremony that is actually still closely connected with religion. He compares a procession in which the frail, 79-year-old Gregory XVI is carried in a chair to the English custom of parading a straw puppet of the Catholic conspirator Guy Fawkes through the streets before the effigy is burnt: 'I must say, that I never saw anything, out of November, so like the popular English commemoration of the fifth of that month. A bundle of matches and a lantern, would have made it perfect. Nor did the Pope, himself, at all mar the resemblance [...]' (*PI* 121). Dickens thus inadvertently acknowledges that in Protestant Britain, too, religion is not completely divorced from ritualistic spectacle, while also confirming that his discussion of religion is not devoid of political import. In likening a Catholic ceremony to a ritual

which celebrates the preservation of the English Protestant state from Catholic threat, he implicitly represents Catholicism as politically dangerous, and the suggestion that the Pope, like the straw puppet of Guy Fawkes, could be set alight suggests an aggressive *arrière-pensée*.

Other travellers' accounts of Holy Week also abound with comparisons to popular, secular spectacles, often loaded with negative connotations. Even John Henry Newman, looking back in 1883 on his (pre-conversion) experience of the 1833 Holy Week, remarks that 'the benediction, feet washing etc contain so much mummery that it requires a stomach to endure them, and we have not dared make the experiment' (Newman 279). Authors frequently draw on the national stereotyping of the Italians as lovers of visual display, while of course appealing to the same instincts in their British readers. Anna Jameson engages in some veiled criticism of the Pope when one of her characters likens a procession to an inferior version of a procession in the pantomime *Blue Beard*, with its murderous villain, and compares the priests and cardinals to 'so many beggar-women dressed up in the cast-off finery of a Christmas pantomime' (Jameson 296-297). This term is also used in Dickens's first dismissive description of St. Peter's: 'But, there were preparations for a Festa; the pillars of stately marble were swathed in some impertinent frippery of red and yellow; the altar, and entrance to the subterranean chapel [...] were like a goldsmith's shop, or one of the opening scenes in a very lavish pantomime' (*PI* 117). Acknowledging that the 'theatrical dresses of the mitred priests' and the congregation on Easter Sunday were indeed 'splendid' and 'enchanted the eye', Jameson's narrator nevertheless concludes: 'I could have fancied myself in a theatre. I saw no devotion, and I felt none. The whole appeared more like a triumphal pageant acted in honour of a heathen deity, than an act of worship and thanksgiving to the Great Father of all' (Jameson 320). She thus alludes to the common glossing of Catholic rituals as left-overs of pre-Christian rites (see Pemble 220). In a similar vein, Lady Morgan, in her *Italy* (1821), compares the cardinals taking off their violet robes during the Palm Sunday service to a revelation scene in a burlesque French melodrama she has seen in Paris (Morgan 3:99), and the Swiss Protestant Louis Simond, whose 'charming book' about his travels in 1817-18 Dickens praises (*PI* 48), compares a procession in which the Pope is flanked by two fans of peacock feathers to 'the march of Panurge in the opera' (Simond 198), insinuating a resemblance between Rabelais' crafty and dishonest rogue and the Pope. By extension, an analogy may also be suggested here between Rabelais' hero, the gluttonous giant Pantagruel, and the culinary indulgences and sensuality associated with southern Catholicism and especially the clergy.

Comparisons with the opera are certainly inspired by the sumptuous liturgy to which Protestants were unaccustomed, but travel writers see the similarity to the opera more in the 'audience' and the special arrangements made for their enjoyment of the performance: the best seats are, according to Dickens, 'fitted up with boxes, shaped like those at the Italian Opera in England, but in their decoration much more gaudy' (*PI* 119), and there is even 'a royal box for the King of Naples and his party' (*PI* 154) at the Last Supper, which is enacted on a 'platform' (*PI* 155) equipped with curtains. Jameson maintains that the presence and behaviour of the tourists 'metamorphosed [St. Peter's] into a mere theatre' (*PI* 155); Lady Morgan states that after the Pope's celebration of mass in the Quirinal Chapel, it 'resembles the saloon of the opera' (Morgan 2:402); and Frances Trollope, in her *Visit to Italy* (1842), is scandalised by the report that during the silent raising of the Host on Easter Sunday, the one ritual whose spirituality even the most virulently anti-Catholic travel writers acknowledge, something occurred that would not have been out of place in an opera house: 'the worshippers were startled by the popping of champagne corks, in one of the tribunes prepared for the English! Authority did not interfere...' (Trollope 2:273).

The opera analogy is due not only to the Vatican's double function as both holy space and princely court (Vicary 95-96), but also to its status as a prime site for (would-be) fashionable tourists, eager to see religious art and architecture but, on this occasion, mainly to experience living Italian culture. However, leaving aside the clerics, there are surprisingly few natives present at these apparently so Italian events. As seen in the quotation about the washing of the apostles' feet, the 'congregation' is mainly composed of North European visitors. Indeed, after visiting the Vatican Museum on Good Friday, Jameson's heroine remarks that she is the only foreigner there, '[a]ll the foreigners in Rome having crowded to St. Peter's, or the chapels, to see the ceremonies going on' (Jameson 304). Dickens states that his countrymen make up 'three-fourths' of those present in the Capella Paolina on Maundy Thursday (*PI* 153). This accords with reports that in the 1830s and 1840s the British were the most numerous component among Rome's foreign visitors (Pemble 39), although the claim by an

anonymous reviewer in the *Westminster Review* of 1825, that 'the English [visitors to Rome] outnumber those of every other country by at least fifty to one' ('Italy' 360) seems exaggerated. Across a good number of texts, descriptions of the 'English' in attendance outweigh those of Italians, and repeatedly the direction of the observer's gaze is reversed, so that the spectators become themselves the spectacle. This is most graphically illustrated by Dickens's ludicrous description of an 'eccentric entertainment' afforded by a group of tourists just outside the Sistine Chapel, trying to catch the strains of Gregorio Allegri's famous 'Miserere', which not all nineteenth-century visitors are able to appreciate (see Boursy 294-324):

Hanging in the doorway of the chapel, was a heavy curtain, and this curtain, some twenty people nearest to it, in their anxiety to hear the chanting of the Miserere, were continually plucking at, in opposition to each other, that it might not fall down and stifle the sound of the voices. The consequence was, that it occasioned the most extraordinary confusion, and seemed to wind itself about the unwary, like a Serpent. Now, a lady was wrapped up in it, and couldn't be unwound. Now, the voice of a stifling gentleman was heard inside it, beseeching to be let out. Now, two muffled arms, no man could say of which sex, struggled in it as in a sack. Now, it was carried by a rush, bodily overhead into the chapel, like an awning. Now, it came out the other way, and blinded one of the Pope's Swiss Guard, who had arrived, that moment, to set things to rights. (*PI* 151-52)

The curtain no longer provides the frame for the religious spectacle but becomes the stage of a farcical side show. Simond recounts a similar scene in which 'some of the *forestieri* [foreigners], mostly English, tired of standing' during a long ceremony, are trying to lean against a wall which is covered by a tapestry and end up pulling it down. He comments laconically: 'This episode served to fill up some part of the time' (Simond 197-198). It appears that any kind of spectacle, and not necessarily the religious ceremony which the tourists came to see, will do as a source of entertainment.

John Pemble makes a defensible point in suggesting that the foreigners' disrespectful behaviour during such scenes is a vent for the British Protestants' disgust at Catholic ritual and for their general fear and envy of Catholicism, with its increasing proselytizing power at home (Pemble 224). However, I would argue that scenes such as the two just described rather demonstrate the tourists' eagerness to witness a famous attraction. They suggest the degree to which the Vatican has been turned into a tourist site. The 'ticking off' of sights, irrespective of one's taste for them, and socializing with other tourists coincide, and conventional restraints on behaviour no longer apply. Jameson's heroine implies that the Vatican is indeed perceived as just another fashionable place for encountering one's peers: 'I found the church as usual crowded with English, who every Sunday convert St. Peter's into a kind of Hyde Park, where they promenade arm in arm, shew off their finery, laugh and talk aloud' (Jameson 155).

Such demeanour is fairly civilised compared to the reports about 'disgusting' behaviour, primarily by English *women* (Butler 1:239). According to the diary entries about the 1846 Holy Week by the actress Fanny Butler (née Kemble), they distinguish themselves by '[t]heir indecent curiosity, and eagerness to satisfy it' (Butler 1:239) and 'render every Catholic place of worship a perfect bear-garden' (Butler 1:225). They wrestle each other and the Italian priests and officials, suffering and inflicting physical injuries in their fights for the best views (Butler 1:225-226, 241-242). The descriptions of such acts of violence in other sources are proof that Butler is not guilty of satirical exaggeration. In her account of the spectators' entry into the Sistine Chapel on the Maundy Thursday of 1820, Lady Morgan reports that '[t]he ladies (and the English ladies ever foremost) press with an imprudent impetuosity upon the guards, who with bayonets fixed and elbows squared, repress them with a resistance such as none but female assailants would dare to encounter a second time' (Morgan 3:108). Dickens writes about the representation of the Last Supper: 'The ladies were particularly ferocious, in their struggles for places. One lady of my acquaintance was seized round the waist, in the ladies' box, by a strong matron, and hoisted out of her place; and there was another lady (in a back row in the same box) who improved her position by sticking a large pin into the ladies before her' (*PI* 155; see also Jarves 268). Despite their ostensible denigration of the ceremonies, these British women are overcome by an uncontrollable desire to see the spectacles on offer.

The British tourists are thus exposed as sharing the attraction to spectacle which eighteenth-century climate theory attributes to South Europeans. That theory is of course very schematic and open to obvious challenges. It could be argued that the Italians' unashamed appreciation of the spectacular may have encouraged the tourists to respond in a similar way. Moreover, the nineteenth-century Britons' taste for spectacle is less surprising in view of the fact that, since the climate theory in question had been formulated, British culture had undergone significant developments. The purportedly southern emphasis on the visual and the spectacular was making its way into mainstream British culture. The period saw a remarkable increase in the invention and use of visual toys and devices (Marsh). Moreover, the attraction to the spectacular and the sensational, which had in Britain been the preserve of the working class, was spreading to the middle class. Journalism became increasingly sensational, and in the 1860s sensational fiction plots were eventually transferred from texts aimed at working-class readers to the sensation novel with its middle-class setting and readership. However, the acknowledgement of a taste for the sensational was still a source of embarrassment for the middle class, threatening its dialectical self-definition as a preserve of high culture in relation to an inferior 'other' (Pykett 9; Debenham 213). Foreign tourism relieves the pressure on the middle class to distinguish itself from the working class. What would in a British context be considered vulgar behaviour redolent of the lower orders is acceptable because the tourist is detached from his social environment at home and enjoys a certain degree of anonymity. The desire to witness the spectacular event temporarily seems to eliminate self-consciousness about decorum.

Nevertheless, the British middle-class tourists must not be seen to succumb to the charms of an aspect of Italian culture which is key to their own inverse self-definition as rational Protestants, more civilised and enlightened than the Italians. Such strained efforts to claim detachment are succinctly illustrated by Dickens's observation on the tourists' behaviour after witnessing the Pope's ceremonial procession from the Sistine Chapel to the Capella Paolina on Maundy Thursday: 'Then, the chapel door was shut; and it was all over; and everybody hurried off headlong, as for life or death, to see something else [i.e. another ceremony], and say it wasn't worth the trouble' (*PI* 154). The middle-class tourists are here seen to act with undignified haste, but they consciously or unconsciously disguise their irrational desire for spectacle with indifference or denigration. However, their dismissive comments are in such stark contrast to their behaviour that their assertion of superiority is undermined.

The travelogues do not merely efface assumed cultural differences between the Italians and the British; the opposition is sometimes even reversed. While some commentators confirm national stereotyping in their criticism that the Italians chat and flirt in church (Eaton 164), others detect this kind of behaviour above all in the foreign visitors (Morgan 3:117, Butler 1:239). An explicit statement of this view is made by George Augustus Sala, who also denounces the reductive association of attraction to the spectacular with the lower classes. He reports on the New Year's Eve mass of 1866 in the Chiesa del Gesù, where, as at other ceremonies, the Papal authorities operate a system of class-based segregation 'to preserve decorum and exclude the *canaille* by enacting [sic] that only persons in evening-dress, and ladies in black, with black veils, shall be admitted to the precincts of the altar'. However, in the case of the well-dressed foreigners, this policy fails. Sala contrasts the 'extreme indecorum' of 'a large number of foreigners, presumably Protestants, and I am afraid mostly of the Anglo-Saxon race', who were 'pushing, jostling, stamping on the bystanders' toes, or digging elbows into their chests, the whole accompanied by very free-and-easy remarks in the English tongue' with the 'ten times better conduct observed in the body of the church, in the darkened aisles, and remote chapels, where the people who are ordinarily termed *canaille* [were] to be found thick clustered' (Sala 388-389). In addition to this reversal of national stereotyping, Sala also rates the demeanour of the Italian working class above that of the British middle class. This might be explained by the fact that Sala's legal father was an Italian dancing master; he might therefore have had a personal interest in challenging British preconceptions regarding both class and nationality.

When ridiculing the inappropriate and inconsiderate behaviour of tourists, nineteenth-century travel writers either refrain from self-reference or they present themselves as sophisticated travellers and assume an ironic distance towards those of their compatriots who are mere tourists. Yet on closer inspection they cannot always sustain this distinction. Dickens may ridicule the tourists' frantic rushing from one ceremony to another and stress that he watches the farcical entanglement in the

curtain while he is 'seated at a little distance' (*PI* 152), but at other times he is a member of the crowd who is just as eager to catch a glimpse of events as others. In his correspondence, he casts a supercilious glance at his countrymen who tour the Vatican during Holy Week armed with Mariana Starke's popular guidebook, but it seems that he, too, has consulted her practical advice on which ceremonies are most worth seeing, on where to stand or sit for the best views, and on the quickest way of getting from one ceremony to the next (Starke 212ff.; Dickens, *Letters* 4:282-283). In Trollope's case, we can even see a travel writer being involuntarily 'contaminated' by the tourists' vulgar behaviour. During a mass in the Sistine Chapel, she declares herself 'exceedingly disgusted, and not a little ashamed, at the conduct of a party of English young ladies' who ridicule the physical appearance of the clerics; but, despite her indignation, she cannot help laughing at their jokes, unable fully to distance herself from them (Trollope 2:270-271).

Our travel writers repeatedly resort to military metaphors to describe the tourists. Dickens speaks of them as a 'besieging crowd' (*PI* 151) and likens their rush to enter the Capella Paolina on Maundy Thursday to 'a charge of the British heavy cavalry at Waterloo' (*PI* 153), while Butler expresses her disapproval at the 'determined perseverance [of Englishwomen] in their flirtations and absurd conversation in the midst of the devotions of the people whose church they were *invading*' (Butler 1:239; my italics). These metaphors encapsulate the paradoxical coexistence of curiosity and hostility in this situation. They can also be read as a more general critique of the aggressive side of tourism, as the foreigners make the Italians' sacred space their tourist site. As Buzard observes, jokes about a British 'invasion' of Europe after the Napoleonic Wars can be found throughout contemporary writing about European travel (Buzard 19, 83ff.). With the foremost continental Catholic nation, France, defeated militarily on the battlefield, the field of engagement has now shifted to culture. Yet in contrast to post-World War Two American cultural hegemony, the aim is not to impose British culture on others. On the contrary, Italian religion has to remain as it was in the past to offer an exotic spectacle and to confirm the tourists' feeling of cultural superiority over the backward Italians.

By crowding to Vatican masses and Papal audiences, the foreigners actually support and perpetuate what they criticise. They add to the prestige of the Papal court, and there are even suggestions that they encourage the Vatican to adhere to its antiquated rituals. Both Jameson and Trollope report that the Papal authorities considered sanctions against the badly behaved foreigners. Jameson recounts the rumour that 'in consequence of the shameful conduct of the English, in pressing in and out of the chapel, occupying all the seats, irreverently disrupting the service, and almost excluding the natives', the Papal Court had decided that an anthem which was particularly popular with the tourists would no longer be sung (Jameson 155). She goes on to observe, however, that an appeal to the English to curb their frivolity in St. Peter's the previous year, relayed through the authority of the Duchess of Devonshire, had not been successfully enforced (Jameson 155-156). Similarly, Trollope explains that the Papal *Propaganda Fide* discussed 'an edict forbidding the admission of English heretics from all church ceremonies for the future, but that it was negated by the majority, from the consciousness that such a measure would very seriously affect the pecuniary interest of a large portion of the citizens' (Trollope 2:274) – '[i]t is well known that the travelling gold of England is a recourse of very considerable importance to the citizens of Rome, and a patriotic wish on the part of the authorities to encourage by all means the arrival of such opulent strangers has induced them to grant the most courteous facilities for their entrance and accommodation at all the high solemnities of the Church' (Trollope 2:272).<sup>5</sup> Lady Morgan even goes so far as to cite the authority of the Pope as testimony that the elaborate Vatican 'ceremonies are kept up, rather for the amusement of the hereticks than for the edification of the orthodox. Pius VII. like Pope Ganganelli, was heard to say, on some proposed revival of an ancient ceremony, "Very well, but keep that for the English"' (Morgan 3:120).

Indeed, it appears that the system of issuing tickets, obtainable through embassies or bankers (Blewitt 104), for ceremonies in the Vatican chapels and for reserved boxes favoured tourists to the exclusion of ordinary Italians, who were relegated to St. Peter's Square and the nave of the cathedral. That a segregation of foreign, 'first-class' visitors from ordinary Italians took place is clear from Sala's text and Lady Morgan's statement that the service of the Nativity in Santa Maria Maggiore 'was scarcely seen or heard, except by the distinguished few (English, Poles, Russians) who were admitted within the choir' (Morgan 3:79), and that generally the 'heretics of England' were assigned the best seats by the cleric in charge of seating, while devout Italian Catholics were 'elbowed off' (Morgan 2:



398). Simond also remarks that during a service in Santa Maria Maggiore, with 'the Pope officiating in person', '[t]he Swiss Guards were very attentive in introducing all the decent-looking *forestieri* to the seats appropriated for them' (Simond 197). This study has uncovered no evidence that there were any direct payments by tourists to the Vatican other than donations by Catholics, but the economy of the Papal States certainly profited greatly from their spending power. This mercenary aspect of Rome is evoked by Trollope's anecdote about an unsuspecting Englishman who walks up the Scala Santa, which one should ascend on one's knees, and is subsequently advised by a fellow countryman to make up for his sacrilege by giving the *custode* a tip (Trollope 2:281-282).

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As the Holy Week ceremonies in the Vatican largely excluded ordinary Italians and seem at least partially to have been staged for the foreign tourists, their authenticity is debatable, and we have to ask whether this matters. Theorists of tourism offer two answers to this question. Dean MacCannell defines tourism as a quest for the authentic. Interestingly for our context, he describes sightseeing as a modern ritual, locating the roots of this practice in the historically older phenomenon of the pilgrimage with its purpose directly to experience authentic holy places or objects. The reason why authenticity is valued has evolved from a religious motivation to an anthropological/cultural one; however, the tourists' desire for authenticity is in conflict with the natives' desire for privacy; the latter therefore resort to a staged pseudo-authenticity to protect their privacy (MacCannell 101, 42-43). In contrast, Daniel Boorstin disputes the tourists' interest in authenticity. In his view, tourists simply seek attractions, and do not care whether these are genuine elements of the visited culture, as long as they correspond to their 'provincial expectations'. Tourism entrepreneurs and the indigenous population therefore collude in developing artificial 'pseudo-events' which satisfy this desire, creating a self-perpetuating circle of inauthentic tourist displays which confirm preconceptions (Boorstin 102-107).

While MacCannell's search for authenticity is reflected in the discourse of the British visitors to the Vatican, the reality of their engagement seems closer to Boorstin's model. They prefer the Vatican – and the exceptional Holy Week ceremonies played out before a foreign crowd – to masses in normal parish churches, which would give them a more representative insight into Italian Catholicism. Their disproportionate focus on the highly formalised Vatican rituals allows them to reaffirm their association of Catholicism with artificiality and conversely to claim spontaneity and sincere spirituality for Protestantism. To complicate matters, commenting on attitudes towards Catholic relics, Dickens observes that the tourists are 'doubting the authenticity of everything on the spot – to defend it to the last gasp, when they get home again' (*Letters* 4:282). The relics fail the test of authenticity when the British view them in Italy, but back in Britain the tourists' desire to lay claim to having seen authentic objects overshadows their Protestant scepticism.

Turning his attention to the visited culture, Boorstin suggests:

Not only in Mexico City and Montreal, but also in the remote Guatemalan Tourist Mecca of Chichicastenango and in far-off villages of Japan, earnest honest natives embellish their ancient rites, change, enlarge, and spectacularize their festivals, so that tourists will not be disappointed. In order to satisfy the exaggerated expectations of tourist agents and tourists, people everywhere obligingly become dishonest mimics of themselves. To provide a full schedule of events at the best season and at convenient hours, they travesty their most solemn rituals, holidays, and folk celebrations – all for the benefit of tourists. (Boorstin 103)

This is not to claim that the nineteenth-century Vatican engaged in the same deliberate, artificial preservation of outdated folklore which Boorstin imputes to the 1950s tourist industry, and religious rituals evolve slowly, of course. However, it seems justified to suggest that the Vatican was unwittingly a forerunner of these not fully authentic displays in the service of tourism, as the massive presence of foreign tourists in Rome may have been a factor in the preservation of rituals which might have evolved more quickly if the requirements of Italian believers alone had been taken into consideration. In maintaining its antiquated rituals and privileging foreign visitors over Italians, the Vatican maintained its status as a must-see attraction for foreigners, enhancing the 'brand' of Italy as exotically attractive but at the same time confirming and sustaining anti-Catholic prejudices.

The many British travel books about Italy were complicit in this dynamic, even if they purported to show the reader the 'real Italy' and to be free from preconceptions. Authors' perspectives were informed by the accounts of their predecessors, and their books were commercial enterprises within the wider Italian tourist economy, designed to satisfy the romanticised expectations that both the real and the armchair tourist had regarding Italy and an Italian travelogue. Dickens was far from being the only author who stayed in Italy in order to benefit from the low cost of living and from the additional bonus of gathering material for a book which would be easy to write and sell to an audience with an insatiable taste for the subject.<sup>6</sup>

To conclude, British nineteenth-century visitors do not just passively observe the Vatican: they are involved in a more dynamic, two-way process. Predictably, they bring to the Vatican their preconceptions which are reinforced by travel literature and which they want to find corroborated. Their economic power may also have an impact on the preservation of this archaic aspect of Italian culture as well as on its detachment from ordinary Italians. By accommodating the tourists, the Vatican capitalises on their fascination with Catholic ritual, without being able to resolve its paradoxical conjunction with denigration. Yet while superficially confirming national stereotypes about the Italians' love of ostentatious show, the travel books that have been examined on closer inspection also reveal the presence of a disconcertingly similar attraction to spectacle in the British middle-class visitors, albeit with respect not to the traditional cultural practice of religion but to the new one of tourism. It is perhaps not surprising that this attraction, stimulated by the development of an increasingly visual and sensational culture in Victorian Britain, finds its outlet in a foreign setting which is safely distanced from home and which the British had long associated with fewer restraints on behaviour and decorum. In this respect, nineteenth-century British travel writing about Italian Catholicism could perhaps be seen as a step beyond the earlier Gothic novel which had allowed readers to indulge in sensational excess by situating its plots at a safe remove in South European Catholic countries, above all Italy.

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<sup>1</sup> For the influence on the Romantics of this text, which was first translated into English in 1812, see Butler (119ff.) and Bullen (50-58).

<sup>2</sup> For a less polemical text by a Protestant clergyman, see Vicary.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. his unsympathetic representations of the Calvinist Mrs. Clennam in *Little Dorrit*, of the Evangelical Reverend Chadband and Mrs. Pardiggle in *Bleak House* and of a High Church service in 'City of London Churches' (Drew and Slater 4:105-116). For more detail on this, see Walder (91ff) and Cole. For further anti-Catholic comments, see his 1846 letter to Forster on the difference between the Protestant and Catholic parts of Switzerland (*Letters* 4:611) and the representation of the Pope in *A Child's History of England*.

<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Simond detects 'a slight expression of restrained merriment' among the clerics 'when any of their fellow brethren acquitted themselves awkwardly' in a ceremony (Simond 199).

<sup>5</sup> Without claiming an insight into the Papal States' administration, Butler comes to the same conclusion. She observes that 'it is always a marvel to me that the Catholic clergy, and even the people themselves, do not object to the careless show which foreigners make of their places of worship and religious ceremonies. To be sure foreigners are a very considerable item of profit to the Roman people and Catholic places of worship, and so the thing resolves itself into natural elements' (Butler 1:253-254).

<sup>6</sup> See the letter to Forster outlining his Italian project (*Letters* 3:587-88). See also Paroissien (244-246). For other Victorian travellers' motivations in going to Italy, see Pemble (106-109).

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