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## A Voyage into Catholicism: Irish travel to Italy in the Nineteenth Century

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### Introduction

Italy has always been a crucial point of reference for Irish travel over the centuries: from monastic ventures to the Grand Tour; from pilgrimage to mass tourism, travel between the two countries has been continuous and important. This significance has rarely been acknowledged and this paper will stress the crucial impact of travel to Italy in the nineteenth century and the particular importance of travel in the emergence of divergent perceptions and representations of Catholicism. As the centre of the Roman Catholic world, travel to Italy evoked a range of reactions from the Irish including curiosity, disgust, piety and devotion, reactions which subsequently impacted on religious discourse in Ireland. During Italian unification, the temporal territories of the Pope came under threat and Italy became a key focus for religious struggles in Europe. These debates and tensions reached as far as Ireland and influenced the perception and accounts of Italy.

Discussions on travel writing and Italy have often focused on the beauty, the history and the heritage of the country; this article will argue that religion was a key element in depictions of the country and that this was especially the case for Irish writers. Classic analysis of Italian travel by Anglophone writers such that contained in O'Connor (1998) generally focuses on the Grand Tourist, the Classical visitor and the Romantic traveller. In his seminal 1957 work on the Italy and the English Romantics, C.P. Brand included a section on 'The Catholic Question' where he argued that the Italianate fashion must be considered in conjunction with the Catholic question (1957, 215-223). Pfister's anthology of travel writing on Italy has a section on religious difference which provides many examples of the impact of religion on Anglophone travellers to Italy (1996, 197-222). Since then, however, religion has surprisingly not generally featured as an important element of the analysis of travel writing on Italy.<sup>1</sup> Of the 21 chapters in *Travels and Translations: Anglo-Italian cultural transactions*, only one deals directly with religion (Yarrington, Villani, and Kelly 2013), while in the recent special issue of *Studies on Travel Writing* dedicated to Italy (2012), religion is absent as a point of discussion. The editors recognise however that the dominant image of the traveller to Italy is provided by the Grand Tourist who follows a beaten path through Italy, admiring the country's art, architecture, history and landscape but disdaining its population, its politics and its religion (Ouditt and Polezzi 2012, 99). This article shows how the Irish experience of travel to Italy was mediated through religion and how it is crucial to understand Irish travel in the light of the tense religious dynamic of the period.

### The Anglo-Irish Traveller

Some of the most famous Irish travel accounts of Italy in the nineteenth century came from the pens of Anglo-Irish travellers who could afford lengthy sojourns in Italy. These travel works include Lady Morgan's famous *Italy* which was hugely successful and controversial in its day (Abbate Badin 2007), and the works of Anna Jameson and Lady Blessington which

were also very popular (Morgan 1821; Jameson 1826; Blessington 1839). Lady Morgan (Dublin) and Countess Blessington (Clonmel) were both successful writers who achieved their aristocratic titles through marriage, while Anna Jameson travelled as the governess of a wealthy English family. A further travel account was written by Catherine Wilmot who visited Italy in 1803 travelling as part of the entourage of Lord Cashell of Fermoy – her travel writing was later published in 1920 (Wilmot and Sadleir 1920). Another important travel book was written by James Whiteside, a lawyer who subsequently became a Conservative MP and Lord Chief Justice for Ireland (1848). Although the backgrounds of all of the authors mentioned above are quite different, these accounts bear many communalities: they make minimal references to Ireland and as such, show few indications of ‘Irishness’. They do, however, bear the hallmarks of tensions of the times in Ireland, particularly in the realm of religion.

The Anglo-Irish who wrote on Italy in the nineteenth century lived in a religiously tense time where relations with Roman Catholics were very strained. Anglo-Irish Protestants were in a religious minority in Ireland; for example, according to the 1861 census, 77.69% of the population of Ireland identified as Roman Catholic (Established Church was 11.69%, Presbyterian 9.13%, other 1.23%). There were many religious flashpoints in the nineteenth century which served to make relations between the Catholic and Protestant communities in Ireland particularly tense: among these were Catholic Emancipation (1829); evangelical efforts in Ireland, particularly during the famine (1840s); the reestablishment of the English Catholic hierarchy (1850) and the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill (1851) (Bowen 1978; Larkin 1980, 1987; Barr 2003; Buschkühl 1982). This background of tension and mistrust is important when reading the travel accounts of Irish visitors to Italy in this period, particularly by members of the Protestant Anglo-Irish upper classes. When they travelled to Italy, they were going to a place in which Catholicism, a religion which many feared and mistrusted, was in a dominant position. This was a novel and fascinating experience for them and featured largely in their travel accounts. It was particularly evident in the Papal States and Rome where they came into direct contact with the temporal and spiritual power of the Roman Catholic Church.

These travel accounts of the Anglo Irish in Italy graphically describe their encounters with Catholicism and they detail the travellers’ bafflement at ceremonies, amusement at superstitions, and derision of the temporal authority of the Catholic Church. The adoration of saints, the facility of absolution from sin and the intercession of angels caused particular bewilderment and at times scorn from Protestant tourists in this period. Catholicism for many of these travellers was an element of the exotic and strange nature of Italy and it is listed along with other sights and attractions of Italy in Catherine Wilmot’s account of Naples:

[...] groups of lazzaroni lapping slow at their Macaroni, Monks and Capuchins in endless lines of expiatory Dirges, crucifixions, Holy emblems, Christmas Symbols, Improvisatores haranging their incircling [sic] mob (Wilmot and Sadleir 1920, 139).

In Naples, the devotion to San Gennaro and the miracle by which his blood liquidified every year never ceased to attract amusement and scorn (Whiteside 1848, 412; Blessington 1839, 2.299-301). When in Rome, Whiteside recounts seeing the tradition of the Bambino which is narrated in terms of curiosity, amusement and ultimately condemnation; he comments that the religious ceremony lacks ‘any vestige of the spiritual religion of the Gospel’ (308). Travellers were also fascinated with convents: Catherine Wilmot was appalled with the idea of women being professed as nuns (154-155); Whiteside attended the ‘taking of the veil’ by

a young novice nun who would be forevermore enclosed in the 'living tomb' of a nunnery, a practice which he condemns as 'evil' (447-448). For those coming from a Protestant tradition, Italian religious practices were seen to contain much revelry and little piety. Although James Whiteside admired some aspects of Catholic worship that he witnessed in Rome during Christmas and Easter, he was happy to 'escape' to a Protestant religious ceremony in Rome which he felt was 'infinitely more appropriate, because more humble, pure, and scriptural; more acceptable to Him who judgeth not by outward splendor, but searcheth the heart' (462). The Catholic ceremonies and practices were deemed theatrical and extravagant, something to amuse and shock the visitors. Catherine Wilmot said of Catholic Church ceremonies: 'It really and truly would be endless to describe these strange theatre pageants, sumptuous as they are and so frequently repeated' (Wilmot and Sadleir 1920, 183). At the same time, while Countess Blessington observed: 'There is, to say the truth, too much decoration in foreign churches, where the glare and glitter remind one more of a place dedicated to theatrical exhibition than to the most solemn and important of all duties – prayer' (Blessington 1839, 1.383-384).

In common with many Anglophone travel writers in this period, priests and monks form a regular part of Whiteside's observations when visiting new cities in Italy. In Rome, religion was viewed as an inconvenience by Whiteside – he resided near a convent and the monks were permitted

'to disturb their unoffending neighbours, morning, noon and night, by the everlasting ringing of their bells. Many a sleepless night have they caused me.' (53)

The writer was struck by the numbers of priests, monks and members of religious orders thronging the streets of Rome and Naples and listed off figures for the amount of nunneries and convents in Tuscany, a figure which he feels is very disproportionate to that of the population. While some of the travel accounts praised the art and architecture of Italian churches, when it came to the Papal government, the travellers were united in their condemnation. Whiteside felt that a political government such as that of the Papal States was 'fraught with evils' (418) and the visitors condemned practices such as the tight control of publications and the use of the Index and censorship. Lady Morgan was particularly scathing in her condemnation of the Papacy and she regularly detailed instances of papal misrule of its lands. Her description of Pope Pius VII during her visit to Italy in 1819-1820 clearly shows her feelings:

Then comes personified Infallibility! Feeble as womanhood! Helpless as infancy! Withered by time, and bent by infirmity; but borne aloft, like some idol of Pagan worship, in the necks of men above all human contact. The conclave follows, each of its princes robed like an Eastern Sultan. Habits of silk and brocade glittering with gold and silver, succeeded by robes of velvet and vestments of point lace, the envy of reigning Empresses. [...] The Pope is at last deposited on his golden throne: his ecclesiastical attendants fold round him his ample caftan, white and brilliant as the nuptial dress of bridal queens! They arrange his mitre, they blow his nose; they wipe his mouth and exhibit the representation of Divinity in all the disgusting helplessness of driveling caducity. (Morgan 1821, 2.399-401)

Lady Morgan's critical description of the rituals of the Church was not inspired by sectarian animosity; in fact, she was a supporter of Catholic emancipation in Ireland. Her criticism intended rather to point out the immediate problems of Papal misrule and to highlight the discrepancy of a Pope surrounded by wealth and opulence while presiding over one of the poorest states in Europe. The economic status of the inhabitants of the Papal States was a

particular bone of contention between Catholics and Protestants in the nineteenth century with the former arguing that conditions were favourable and amenable in the Papal territories while the latter described the land and people as destitute and deprived. Views of the Papal States were thus coloured by religious affiliations: in the countryside around Rome, Catherine Wilmot says that ‘we observ’d that the few residents had their legs swell’d, their faces pale, and their children rickety.’ (Wilmot and Sadleir 1920, 138). Having viewed the extravagance of the Papacy and the ill-treatment of the inhabitants of the Papal States, Lady Morgan concluded that a reverence for the Pope is ‘almost universally extinct in Italy’ (Morgan 1821, 3.25) and that the papal throne is considered the primary instrument of the degradation of the land. Interestingly she says that Irish Catholics are perhaps single in their attachment to the See of Rome, to which they are bound by ‘the noblest of feelings, by a point of honour, and a hatred of oppression’ (Morgan 1821, 3.25).

Degrees of anti-Catholicism vary from book to book, depending on the author’s particular outlook; indeed many of the Protestant writers felt that they were being very reasoned and ecumenical in their approach. Nonetheless each work reflected the religious tensions and divisions of the times and anti-Catholicism was in fact a familiar trait in Anglophone travel writing (Morgan 2001). It has often been argued that British support of Italian unification stemmed from formative experiences of the Grand Tour and the impact that travel to Italy had on members of the aristocracy and politicians (Brand 1957; Duggan 2007). If travel to Italy in this period is also viewed as a voyage into Catholicism, it can be seen how such travel confirmed the British view that papal rule should be overthrown and the forces of unification supported as a means of undermining Catholicism in its seat of power. This position is evident in Anglo-Irish accounts of Italy and it led to many future bitter divisions in Ireland, as Protestants supported the unification of Italy and Catholics advocated for the retention of the status quo (Barr, Finelli, and O’Connor 2013). The role that religion played in influencing attitudes towards Italy, and the role that travel writing played in disseminating these views are important elements which must be taken into consideration as a central factor in British, Irish and Italian relations in the nineteenth century.

### Irish publications

A common feature of the Anglo-Irish accounts of Italy, along with their anti-Catholicism is the minimal references to Ireland that they contain. It is clear that they are aimed at a British audience and even when references to Ireland appear, their function is to educate the British about aspects of, for example, British misrule in Ireland. Writings by the Irish travellers and their British counterparts were very much in harmony and indeed, one of the most popular travel guides to Italy in the early nineteenth century was written in 1802 by an Irishman (John Chetwode Eustace) although it is next to impossible to know this from his book (Eustace 1817). The lack of ‘Irishness’ in Irish travel accounts to Italy in the early nineteenth century can be ascribed in part to the limited nature of the Irish publication industry in that period. Following the Act of Union in 1800, Irish publishing suffered a catastrophic decline and only recovered to a degree in the 1830s and 40s (Ó Ciosáin 1997; Murphy 2011). At this time, new Irish Catholic publishers such as James Duffy emerged and these new publishers, based in Belfast and Dublin allowed for different accounts of Italy which would cater more to a local audience. This could mean more Catholicism or more Irishness in the publications. Take for example George Downes’ *Letters from Continental*

*Countries* (1832) of which a reviewer says, 'There is one peculiar point which ought to be pleasing to his countrymen in particular, as it is to us; his comparisons are drawn from Ireland' (Anon 1832, 249). The emerging publication industry in Ireland allowed for books containing sympathetic views on Catholics to be published such as Mrs T. Mitchell's travel book which was published in Belfast (n.d.1846?). In her work, Mitchell makes regular references to Ireland and makes comparisons between poverty/slavery in Italy and Ireland and the state of labourers in these countries. The development of an Irish publication industry facilitated alternative narratives and Mitchell's book differs in approach and sentiment to other Irish travel accounts published in London with a British readership in mind.

The nineteenth century saw the gradual emergence in Ireland of periodicals with a distinctly Catholic and nationalist stance; publications such as *Duffy's Hibernian Magazine*, *Irish Ecclesiastical Record*, *Irish Monthly*, to name but a few, allowed for the publication of Irish narratives which were Catholic in orientation (Tilley 2011). It is not surprising, therefore, to find many alternative accounts of travel to Italy in these periodical publications. This publishing shift is very significant because when the Irish were no longer writing for a British audience, the travel literature on Italy changed dramatically. The growing market of middle-class Catholic readers no longer wished to read accounts of Italy written from an Anglo-Irish or English perspectives and aimed at a British audience; they wanted accounts which reflected their world views and soon new publications appeared which would address this gap in the market.

### Catholic Italy

An early indication of an alternative Irish travel narrative on Italy came with the publication of guidebooks to Italy written by Irish priests. The first of these was Rev. John Chetwode Eustace's *A Classical tour through Italy* (1802). It was followed by Dr. Jeremiah Donovan's *Rome, ancient and modern* (1842) and then Dr. John Miley's *Rome under paganism and the Popes* (1843) and *The history of the Papal States, from their origin to the present day* (1850). These publications indicate the authors' dissatisfaction with the depiction of the Catholic religion in other travel accounts and thus their narratives are seen to fill a need in the market. Eustace clearly sets his travel narrative in contrast to previous 'prejudiced' accounts. He says of Joseph Addison's famous [eighteenth-century](#) travel book- [Remarks on Several Parts of Italy](#):

But though Addison had naturally an enlarged mind, humane feelings, and a fancy teeming with imagery, yet prejudice had narrowed his extensive views, and party spirit had repressed his imagination. [...] In his eyes countries appeared fertile and happy, or barren and miserable, not as nature formed them, but as they were connected with France or with England, as their religion was Protestant or Catholic- (Eustace 1817, 28-29).

Eustace felt that this trend had continued and that subsequent travellers had 'improved' on Addison's defects and 'loaded their pages with misrepresentation and invective' (30). Eustace was happy to declare his beliefs in the Roman Catholic religion in his book and felt that 'evil reports' of Catholicism were the natural consequence of 'polemic animosity, of the exaggerations of friends, of the misconceptions of enemies' (xii). He wrote his book in a spirit of reconciliation and union, under the common umbrella of Christianity and his travel guide can thus be seen as an ecumenical response to the religious prejudice displayed in

many English-language travel accounts of Italy. Jeremiah Donovan's travel guide to Rome (1842) similarly sets itself against the 'slanders and self-refuting invectives of partisans' (628) and the author steadfastly defends the Pope, his temporal authority and claims that the charges of tyranny brought against Gregory XVI are false and utterly preposterous (Donovan 1842, 648).

These Irish Catholic accounts of Italy were published in reaction to perceived slanders in Protestant publications on Italy and the anger felt by Irish Catholics at the depiction of Roman Catholicism in English-language travel accounts of the nineteenth century is captured in many reviews of these works published in Catholic periodical literature. In a review of *Notes of a Residence in Rome in 1846* by the Protestant Clergyman M. Vicary, *The Dublin Review* was scathing of the author and of the general trend of attacking Catholicism through travel accounts:

There is hardly a single "Tour of Italy" that is not a disgrace to common sense, as well as to good feeling and propriety, and that does not contain outrages against truth, charity, and justice, sufficient to disentitle the author, not alone to the ordinary privileges of hospitality, but even to the lowest degree of toleration. We have had occasion, many a time since the commencement of our career, to denounce the ingratitude and treachery with which the unsuspecting hospitality of Italy is requited by strangers, to whose criticism she too confidingly lays open her treasure of religion as well as art. But we had hopes that a better feeling had begun to prevail; that men had come at length to look, at least with toleration, on usages, which, heretofore, were regarded as unmingled Paganism; and that it was no longer a matter of course that every thing which differed from the preconceived notions in which the tourist had been educated, must be condemned because it is not understood, and because it departed from the conventional standard according to which his ideas of propriety had been adjusted. (Anon 1848b, 79)

Of Vicary's work, the review remarks that 'It is filled with the worst and most vulgar prejudices of the olden bigots; and to what in them, Heaven knows, was already sufficiently offensive, it super-adds the further offensiveness of a patronizing and apologetic tone' (79). The solidarity felt with Papal Rome and Catholicism is encapsulated when the reviewer finishes by stating that it is a duty 'to our unsuspecting and defenceless co-religionists in Italy to shield them, as far as in us lies, from this and every similar attack, whether it proceeds from ignorance which misunderstands, or from malevolence which seeks to misrepresent, their religion, their character, and their institutions' (98). Reviews of travel narratives in the Catholic press reveal a dislike of the depiction of Italy in an anti-Catholic light and a rejection of the views expressed in these works.

The contrast between the Protestant and Catholic accounts of Rome was so stark that the *Dublin University Magazine*, in reviewing a Catholic and a Protestant travel book, claimed that there were obvious advantages in entering Rome with a Protestant clergyman on one side and a Benedictine monk on the other, because then you might be able to form an impartial judgement of the city. The publication says,

The two opposing clerics will hold you in a sort of gently oscillating equipoise – a beautiful, bland, well-tempered, well-balanced, equable and equitable *lay* state of mind, equally removed in its sympathies from the Reformation Society and the Propaganda. In short, your bane and antidote are, if not both before you, at least one on each side – the poison and the counter-poison; and you must manage both very badly, if you take harm from either. (Anon 1848a, 57).

The *Dublin University Magazine* was a unionist periodical with Protestant leanings; <sup>50</sup> although the article purports to be balanced, its choice of Catholic text is Francis Mahony's *Facts and Figures from Italy* (Mahony 1847).<sup>2</sup> This publication was written by a lapsed and highly critical Catholic Priest who was writing about Italy for publication in the British *Daily News*. His views on the state of Italy, and particularly Rome, were therefore very far from representative of traditional Irish Catholics and his criticism of papal temporal rule was hardly the antidote to Vicary's outpourings that the *Dublin University Magazine* suggests it could be.

The divisive nature of opinions on religion in Italy and the outrage felt at the depiction of Catholicism in travel works resulted in an alternative Irish travel narrative which was very Catholic in its outlook and filled what it perceived to be a gap in the travel market. Exemplary of this form of publication is John Francis Maguire's *Rome, its Ruler and its Institutions* (1857). Maguire was a Catholic MP for Cork who throughout his life fought for Catholic causes and promoted the Catholic religion against the perceived Protestant threat. Following his travels to Italy, he wrote some letters which were copied and published and subsequently gathered in a book whose aim was:

to encounter, by a representation of the true state of things in Rome, that system of falsehood and misrepresentation which has been too generally adopted with reference to all matters connected with the government and institutions of the Papal States: which system of falsehood and misrepresentation is not owing to the circumstance of the nation and government being *Italian*, but of both being *Catholic*, and of the latter being that of the Head of the Catholic Church. (Maguire 1857, viii)

Maguire's religious motivation in writing his account of Italy and developing his letters into a published book is clearly linked to the prevailing religious tensions surrounding Italy and the Catholic religion. He wrote in order to counteract English criticism of the Papal States and his publication includes many appendices, such as 'How Lunatics are treated in Scotland' and 'Poverty in London, treated worse than Crime' which document the need for reform in the British Empire - the author states that these need to be addressed before 'we venture to become the self-appointed censor of other nations' (xi). It is no surprise that Maguire was to take a leading role three years later in 1860 in sending Irish troops to defend the Pope and the Papal States (O'Connor 2011) when they were threatened with invasion during the upheavals of Italian unification. Maguire's loyalty to Roman Catholicism made his book ~~is~~ a counter-narrative to Protestant texts and the author hoped that his work

[...] may have the effect of removing from the minds of many honest and well-intentioned readers, the dark veil with which ignorance and prejudice have obscured the truth, - and that these pages may enable the conscientious of every communion to comprehend the character and appreciate the virtues of one of the best of Men, one of the most beneficent of Rulers, and one of the most illustrious of Popes. (xii).

Maguire's book can be seen as an alternative Irish account of Italy, which must be viewed in contrast to the accounts of Italy which stemmed from the Protestant tradition. In fact his work is referenced by Whiteside (1860) in a second edition of his work, who says that Maguire 'exhausted panegyric' in describing the character and conduct of the Pope (xiv) and doubts the accuracy of his assessment of the papacy (xv).

In contrast to the authors of many Protestant publications, Maguire was quite happy to make reference to Ireland in his writing; his target readership was not the general British populace but rather a Catholic readership which felt very different links to Italy than those put forward in the Protestant narratives. Maguire, for example, remembered at length the



'generosity of the Pope to Ireland' in the famine and the gratitude that Irish people felt towards him for his efforts on their behalf:-

No sooner had the cry of a distressed nation reached the ear of Pius IX, than it found a ready echo in his benevolent breast; and not only did he at once send, out of his small means, a munificent contribution towards the fund for its relief, but caused the churches of Rome to resound to the earnest solicitation of his clergy in the same cause of suffering humanity- (69)

Emerging Irish accounts of travel positioned themselves in opposition to Anglo-Saxon travel and as, Raphael Ingelbien's discussion of Eugene Davis's book *Souvenirs of Irish Footprints over Europe* (1889) demonstrates, the self-consciously Irish nationalist writer was anxious to distance himself from the behaviour of the closeted Irish landlord class on holiday in Rome (Ingelbien 2010, 109). Davis, a new form of Irish traveller, wished for a de-Anglicized Irish tourist; in the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, this de-Anglicization meant increased Catholicization. It was in the middle decades of the nineteenth century that Catholic and Irish came to be seen as synonymous despite the existence of Protestant nationalists and Catholic unionists. From this time, Catholicism and Irishness were closely linked, so much so that *The Harp*, an Irish Catholic monthly magazine could declare in 1859 that like Siamese twins, Irish Catholicity and Irish Nationality have been inseparably united 'Destroy one, and shall the other live?' (Anon 1859, 41). Interestingly, in making this point, the publication referenced Irish devotion to Rome and concern at the threats posed to the Papal States by Italian unification. The links between Irishness and the Catholic religion which strengthened as the century progressed, become very apparent in travel writing which demonstrates this search for an Irish Catholic voice on Italy.

### Clerical travel

A significant group of Irish travellers to Italy in the nineteenth century were priests who travelled to Rome for training and ordination. It has been estimated that about 250 Irish priests (including diocesan clergy, Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians) were ordained in Rome between 1760 and 1800 (Fenning 1997). Following the Napoleonic occupation of Italy, these numbers dried up and only after 1815 was there a revival of Irish clerics in Rome, particularly after the re-establishment of the Irish College in the city (Keogh and McDonnell 2008; Carroll 2008; Donovan 1842, 969). John Francis Maguire who was in Rome in the later 1850s states that 'the students of the Irish College are steadily increasing in number': on his first visit to the Irish College there were forty six students but by the time he left Rome there were fifty four students (278). These 'brave and devoted soldiers of the Cross' (Maguire, 281) spent their time in Rome being trained in ultramontane Catholic religious tenets and on their return to Ireland, they continued in their loyalty and affection to Papal Rome. The alumni of the Irish College created a strong ultramontane network which was to influence Irish Catholicism in Ireland and abroad for many years to come (Barr 2008).

As more and more priests returned to Ireland from Italy with strong loyalty to the Pope and to Rome, Irish Catholicism came further under the sway of ultramontane Catholicism. Following the foundation of Maynooth College in the late eighteenth century, Irish priests could be trained in Ireland and this training college, with its strong French influence, often fostered a Gallican brand of Catholicism amongst its graduates (Corish 1995). For one of Rome's most brilliant Irish students, this was something to be challenged: Paul Cullen, who was to become Ireland's first cardinal, spent almost 30 years in Rome, as a

student, a member of Urban College, and as Rector of the Irish College. He returned to Ireland in 1850 and from that moment, he set about ensuring devotion and allegiance to Papal Rome in Ireland (Keogh and McDonnell 2011). Firstly as Archbishop of Armagh and then as Archbishop of Dublin, Cullen was the most influential figure in Irish Catholicism in the nineteenth century and his time in Italy was the most influential period in shaping his worldview. In Ireland, Cullen sought to bring Irish church practices in line with those of Rome and he used priests who had trained in Italy to help him in his mission. The attachment to Rome fostered by Cullen was devotional, political and administrative; ~~and~~ travel to Italy by Catholics reinforced and enabled this connection. While in Ireland, Cullen and others perpetuated the links between Irish and Roman Catholicism: they wrote to contacts in Rome, arranged papal audiences for Irish visitors and wrote letters of presentation for Irish pilgrims to the city.<sup>3</sup> Roman Catholicism (with the emphasis on Roman) was for these Irish Catholics a place of religious inspiration and of educational endeavour. Many subsequently became entrenched in an ultramontane view and the dominance of this outlook ultimately affected the direction of the Catholic religion in Ireland as it came under a greater sway from the Roman-trained priests and Ireland developed a more 'Romanised' Irish Catholic Church.

The priests who returned from Rome after training there felt a genuine affection for Italy as is clear from their subsequent writing: take for example the words of Maurice Collins, who for 44 years was Prior of St. Anne's Monastery Bohernabreena, Dublin. Even 60 years after returning to Ireland he reminisced about the pleasure of sheltering from the September sun amongst Roman ruins, reading books and listening as the 'Ave Maria chimed from many a belfry' (Rosini 1850, vii). He said that his fondest and earlier recollections were linked to Italy's ruined shrines and that he learned his first lesson under the shadow of the Vatican. As we have seen, accounts of Italy by Catholics in this period generally bear traces of the religious tensions of the period; ~~and so~~ it is thus no surprise to read Maurice Collins railing against the 'modern dyspeptic tourists' who 'grievously bely' the Pope (xxii). Like the authors of Catholic travel books, Collins saw his narrative of affection for Italy in contrast to the negative Protestant narratives. Thus, he defends the narratives of writers such as Miley (author of 'erudite volumes') who have praised the Popes and then adds:

How little can their fame suffer from the puny attacks of atobitious barristers, and other mendacious libellers – whose every page is conclusive evidence that they have not mastered the simplest rudiments of the Italian language – tourists, forsooth, whose information is derived from the pliant Cicerone, who lounges about the vestibules of hotels; and, in many instances, from the unscrupulous lips of that most reckless of all liars, the apostate – the moral suicide! (xvi)

The Irish Catholic travel narrative of Italy can thus once again be seen to be formed in contrast to and in opposition to the Protestant narrative. The affection felt for Italy and Rome is also captured in Rev. C.P. Meehan's 'Recollections of Italian vacations' which recounts his happy years spent in Rome and opens with a quotation from Nicolini 'E ricordai l'Italia, un cor gentile può l'Italia obliar?/ And I remembered Italy: what gentle heart can forget Italy?' (1847, 283). Meehan speaks of 'blissful hours' spent amongst Roman ruins, mixing with the locals, sitting in 'shady-scented groves' listening to some 'sweet strain of music gushing from the lips of the peasant girls (1847, 289). Interestingly, he justifies the publication of his 'Recollections' of his Italian vacations because he says Irish people are reading about Italy every day. The upheavals in the Papal States, particularly around the

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revolutionary years of 1848 and 1859-60 were avidly followed in Ireland where Catholics worried that a blow to Papal Catholicism would be a blow to their own position in Ireland.

Travel accounts of the changing conditions in Italy, particularly in the Papal States during the Risorgimento, fed an Irish interest in Italy and kept the country in the public eye. [Martin](#) Haverty wrote in 1861 about the changed conditions in Rome following unification. [Writing](#) from a Catholic perspective, Haverty expressed a negative opinion on nationalist developments and a desire that Rome itself would never form part of the Kingdom of Italy under King Victor Emmanuel, 'whose power commenced, and has grown up in chicane, aggression, mean subserviency, and irreligion' (1861, 140). Illustrating the divide in Irish travel accounts of Italy, Haverty attacked Whiteside's depiction of the Papal States in his writings with the points of difference centring on papal responsibility for the well-being of the inhabitants of the states and on the rights of the Pope to temporal rule. Haverty was conscious of the Catholic and Irish nature of his readership (his account featured in the Catholic publisher James Duffy's *Hibernian Magazine*) and therefore listed developments in Rome 'which to a Catholic are so full of interest' (138). He gave an account of visits to places in Rome of particular Irish interest such as O'Connell's heart and monument, St. Isidore's and the graves of the Earls of Ulster. Such accounts of travel to Italy were more congenial to his readership than the publications of the early century.

Many of the Catholic-influenced texts mentioned above are hybrid works which blend reminiscences of personal travel to Italy with religious history and political statements on contemporary events in Italy. The travel element combines with historical research and personal religious ideology to produce texts which reflect a particular Irish Catholic viewpoint. The Irish had a variety of modalities of travel and residence in Italy in this period, ranging from the ecclesiastical student to the travelling aristocrat and the accounts which they published on Italy fit into a wide rather than narrow understanding (Hooper and Youngs 2004; Bohls and Duncan 2005) of what constitutes travel writing. The ecclesiastical accounts in particular often do not feature in anthologies of travel writing but in the Irish context, they are as important as the Grand Tourist genre because of their centrality in the emergence of a distinctly Irish Catholic travel narrative.

## Pilgrimage

With the growth of the middle classes in the nineteenth century and the expansion of transport networks, greater numbers of Irish were able to travel to Italy. This expansion meant greater Catholic travel to Italy and subsequently different travel narratives of the country. In particular, it led to the development of pilgrimage to Italy as a form of travel. For the Irish, an Italian pilgrimage moved from being a voyage of medieval monasticism to becoming an achievable journey for middle-class Catholics. From Daniel O'Connell, whose pilgrimage to Rome was to be his final journey, to the devout middle-class Irish traveller, travel to Italy became accessible and desirable. This form of travel impacted on levels of Catholic devotion in Ireland and further linked the allegiance felt to Rome. One of the most famous voyages to Italy by an Irishman was the final voyage of the politician Daniel O'Connell who died in Genoa on his way to Rome in 1847. The great political figure of the first half of the nineteenth century, O'Connell's wish to make the pilgrimage to Rome demonstrates the close religious bonds that existed between Ireland and Italy. This closeness is captured by O'Connell's desire to leave his body to Ireland but his heart to Rome - a heart that was subsequently buried in the Irish College in Rome (Keogh and

McDonnell 2008). O'Connell's gesture is exemplary of the religious feelings of the time but it also provided an added incentive for travel and a link between the two countries. Carlo Bianconi, a man who revolutionised travel in Ireland through the development of a coach network, paid for a monument to O'Connell in the Irish College where his heart was kept and this monument became a subsequent site of pilgrimage for Irish visitors (Maguire 1857, 280; Nolan 1893, 88). That the O'Connell monument became part of the Irish travel itinerary is in itself a statement of difference of an emerging Irish travel narrative which preferred a visit to the resting place of O'Connell's heart rather than say, the burial place of Shelley and Keats.

The culmination of Irish religious travel to Italy in the nineteenth century came in 1893 with the organisation of an Irish National Pilgrimage to Rome on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the episcopate of the Pope. As part of this mass pilgrimage to Loretto and Rome, over 350 pilgrims made the journey to Italy and the pilgrimage was supported financially and spiritually by 1,500,000 Catholics in Ireland who enrolled as Associates of the pilgrimage. The religious affection felt for Rome and the desire to travel to Italy are captured in an account of the pilgrimage by Rev. J. Nolan in which he underlines the importance of the event when 'hundreds of our people [...] forsake their homes and endure the perils of a long and arduous journey in order to proclaim in person their undying devotion to the Chair of Peter' (Nolan 1893, 2). In writing his account of the pilgrimage, Nolan lists his sources which include standard travel guides to Italy such as Baedeker and Murray but also religious texts such as *The Catholic Dictionary* and *The Catholic Pilgrim's Guide to Rome*. The journey was undertaken as an expression of the attachment felt by Irish Catholics to Rome and the Pope. As such, it is the natural climax of nineteenth-century Irish travel to Italy. It charts the evolution of travel from single, upper-class travellers at the start of the century to mass, group travel at the close of the century. It is also illustrative of the emergence of a distinctly Catholic strand of Irish travel which found its voice in the middle of the century, mainly in opposition to Protestant travel accounts which were deemed offensive. This Irish Catholic travel was fuelled by clerical links with Italy and by worries about the impact the events in Italy would have on Ireland. Nolan framed the Irish pilgrimage of 1893 in defiant national terms:

Three hundred and fifty years of the most ruthless persecution have succeeded in only bring this to pass, that 350 Irish pilgrims leave their native land to-day to testify to the Vicar of Christ that the faith which St. Patrick planted in the green valleys of our native land still lives and thrives in the hearts and homes of Ireland (21).

The pilgrims obviously followed a very religious programme in their travels, calling to the shrine in Loretto and to churches across Italy. They also followed a very Irish agenda which entailed visits to sights of uniquely Irish interest: the first religious ceremony that they attended in Rome was at the Church of St. Agatha which was attached to the Irish College. They visited O'Connell's monument, St. Isidore and participated in the unveiling of a Memorial to Cardinal Paul Cullen in the Irish College. The pilgrimage thus represented a reinforcement of the links between Catholic Ireland and Rome that had been encouraged by Cullen and the many other Irish priests who had trained in Italy. The 1893 pilgrimage and the travel narrative it generated were very much Irish and Catholic in nature and reflected the compelling development of these strands in Irish travel in the preceding decades.

## Conclusion

Although the Grand Tour has dominated narratives of Italy, in the Irish case it really only depicts a fraction of the travel to the country and the form of travel narrative it produced leaves little trace of Irishness. Instead, in the Irish case, in order to capture the a broader form of travelling Irishness, the net needs to be cast wider to encapsulate the religious traveller, the pious pilgrim and the young priest. In the context of Irish travel to Italy and the travel accounts this generated, it is important to question the notion of travel as a force for change. Rather, from most of these accounts, it can be seen that travel can accommodate and reinforce pre-existing prejudices and divisions, particularly in the religious arena. For Protestant travellers the voyage into Catholicism generally resulted in revulsion at religious practices and the temporal rule of the papacy. For Irish Catholic travellers, on the other hand, travel to Italy represented a voyage of renewal and affirmation in their faith. Italy therefore became a conflictual site for Irish religious debates in the nineteenth century and a trope of Catholic entrenchment, of religious inspiration, of educational endeavour and ultimately of sectarian division. The sample of texts studied in this article show how religion was a central aspect of Irish travel writing and how narratives of Italian travel developed against the background of religious tensions in this era.

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<sup>1</sup> On the rare occasion when religion is considered as, for example, in Stabler (2003), the conclusions drawn that travel and contacts herald 'the revaluation of Italian Catholics as a worthy British cause' which 'predicts the "worship" of Garibaldi' (33-4) are completely at odds with the religious and political realities of the Risorgimento and with Anglo-Italian relations in which anti-Catholicism was in fact a driving force behind support for Italian unification and Garibaldi. For an analysis of the position of religion in Anglo-Italian relations in this period, see Carter (2015) and for Catholicism and Early Victorian writing see Fisher (2012).

<sup>2</sup> This publication must also be viewed through a number of authorial layers: Francis Mahony (also known by his satirical nom-de-plume, Fr. Prout) put down as the author of the work the fictitious Don Jeremy Savonarola, Benedictine Monk. In so doing, he invoked many shades of Catholic rebellion – this publication was certainly not a straightforward Benedictine publication, in fact Mahony had trained as a Jesuit. For the history of Mahony's work on Italy, see Dunne (2009).

<sup>3</sup> Many of these letters are preserved in the Cullen and Kirby archives of the Pontifical Irish College in Rome. The catalogues to these archives are available at <http://www.irishcollege.org/archive/online-catalogues/>