The Beautiful Country

Tourism and the Impossible State of Destination Italy

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3 Destination Nation: The Grand Tour, Thomas Cook, and the Arrival of Mass Tourism

In the mid-nineteenth century intense political turmoil gripped the Italian peninsula. Dynasties were in flux, and power relations were often tense as territories were contested among the Hapsburgs of Austria-Hungary, the papacy, and regional leaders in Lombardy, Piedmont, Tuscany, the Veneto, and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. While such power struggles played out, most inhabitants suffered severe food shortages and worsening living conditions, and this hardship stirred unrest among intellectuals and rural poor alike. Future Risorgimento leaders, like Giuseppe Mazzini and Massimo D'Azeglio, published invectives against the existing political structures and the widespread imbalance of power.[1] Their shared animosity for the geopolitical powers set the stage for the first war of Italian independence, in 1848–9, which, to the dismay of Mazzini and D'Azeglio, resulted in a protracted loss to the French troops fighting for Austria-Hungary.[2]

Indeed, for several months in 1849 the French soldiers laid siege to Rome, where Italian soldiers led by Giuseppe Garibaldi defended the newly founded but ultimately short-lived Roman republic. The city's highest hill, the Janiculum, became a tattered battleground. The sovereign Aurelian walls were cleaved and pockmarked by bayonet fire. The Villa Aurelia, one of several majestic villas on the hill that also served as headquarters for the Italian resistance, was bombarded by cannon fire and reduced almost entirely to rubble. In the midst of the fighting, Garibaldi cemented his reputation as a military strategist and a charismatic leader by famously crying, "Roma o morte!" (Rome or death!), rather than surrendering to the French. Although Italian forces were defeated here, historians contend that the changes wrought by these first revolutions set into motion an irreversible process of unification

which, despite deep political and geographical divisions, culminated in the creation of the Italian nation state in 1861.[3]

The following chapter explores the convergence of the difficult creation of Italy as a unified political entity during the Risorgimento and the arrival of mass tourism on the peninsula to show that the history of the modern Italian state is intimately bound up with the history of tourism and vice versa. The decade following Unification, 1861–71, saw the uneven development of the country's political infrastructure alongside the rapid growth of a regulated tourist system that conveyed unprecedented numbers of foreign travellers across Europe. This was the age of the democratization of travel.[4]

Mass tourism in Italy was conceptualized initially as the solution to specific political problems. In 1864 the British tour operator Thomas Cook led the first package tour through northern Italy. He was deeply engaged with the political circumstances of his time and believed that tourism had the power to infuse a sense of morality into politics. For example, he championed the right to leisure for the burgeoning middle class in Britain and gave them opportunities to exercise that right with organized trips to the Scottish Highlands and London's Crystal Palace. The 1864 Italy trip marked one of Cook's most significant accomplishments for, in his opinion, it gave middle-class tourists symbolic access to the aesthetic education once reserved for the aristocratic elite. In short, the benefits of the Grand Tour could now be had by all on a limited budget and an abbreviated timetable.

Italy, too, held special meaning politically for Cook, who, like many Britons, fervently supported the cause of Italian unification (thanks in no small part to the influence of Mazzini, who had been exiled in London from 1837 to 1848). In the same way that his touristic infrastructure made the Grand Tour accessible to the masses, Cook believed that it could make a politically unified Italy accessible to Italians. He believed that, by enabling Italians to travel their own country, his tourist system would foster sentiments of national belonging among them. He surmised that Italians would take patriotic satisfaction in seeing and experiencing the progress that was made in new railroads, hotels, travel agencies, banknotes, and the urban development of the national capital (which moved from Turin to Florence and finally, in 1870, to Rome). Cook imagined, on the one hand, that destination Italy was a setting for resolving class issues through the democratization of travel and, on the other hand, that his tourist system could be a solution to the seemingly irrational divisions among Italians within their own country.

In such ways, not only were the practices of mass tourism (inaugurated and operationalized by Thomas Cook in the 1860s) inspired by the Grand Tour, but also they formatively connected the modern Italian state to Italy as destination.

Model Voyages: The Grand Tour

The Grand Tour of the eighteenth century was unquestionably the most important phenomenon that shaped Cook's Italian tours, and its influence is still evident among present-day touring patterns in Italy. What were once requisite sojourns in Rome, Florence, and Venice are still mandatory stops for contemporary tourists. At its most basic the Grand Tour took the form of a multi-year journey that was undertaken by young, wealthy men who were either aristocrats or members of the bourgeoisie, predominantly from Britain and Germany. The goal was an aesthetic education, and Italy served as both the fount of inspiration and the finishing school for budding artists and aristocratic gentlemen.[5] According to Christopher Hibbert, the Italian journey was recognized as an "ideal means of imparting taste and knowledge in the mind of a youth."[6] There were so many of these young men on tour that the community they formed emerged as something of an independent, wandering academy, easily the largest in Europe.[7]

The Grand Tour was known by many names (for example, *voyage en Italie*, *viaggio in Italia*, *Italienische Reise*), and its golden age lasted throughout the 1700s, effectively ending when Napoleon invaded northern Italy in 1796.[8] Routes and itineraries were well established, as were travel schedules. Grand Tourists were encouraged to plan their trips around particular events, such as Carnival in Venice, the Octave of the Sacrament in Bologna, and Holy Week in Rome. The route from Britain to Italy typically went through France, where there was usually an obligatory stop in Paris before the journey over the Alps into Piedmont or Lombardy, or via passage by sea from Marseilles to the Ligurian coast.

Within the Italian peninsula travellers normally followed two popular routes: one beginning in Milan and the other in Genoa. The first proceeded south from Milan to Venice, Florence, Rome, and Naples. The second headed east from Genoa to Pisa and Florence and later to Rome, Naples, and Venice. Of course, there were variations on all of these routes, and for most travellers Naples marked the southernmost extreme of the tour.[9] A few intrepid travellers (most famously Goethe) travelled further south, most frequently to Sicily; yet this was more the

exception than the rule. Most stopped in Naples, content to view Mount Vesuvius and what were then the recently unearthed ruins of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Travel was done in short distances and mostly by diligence (*vetturini*) for the dusty, tortuous roads did not make for comfortable long-distance travel. Grand Tourists and their horses and attendants often needed to rest, and they typically did so at less-than-genteel establishments across the Italian countryside. Guidebooks and travel accounts make it clear that being robbed was chief among the travellers' concerns. Some aristocrats went so far as to travel incognito to avoid becoming targets for brigands. Among the other hazards of the road, Grand Tourists encountered inconsistent customs and passport controls (often requiring bribes), carriage breakdowns and accidents, and recurring stomach problems owing to bad water and food.[10]

Not only did Grand Tourists share the common experiences of being on the road, but they also understood Italy to be a place that stimulated and satiated all of the senses. One of the most famous Grand Tourists, Edward Gibbon, who wrote the landmark *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (ca 1788) after an inspired tour, praised the profusion of pleasure and knowledge that he experienced there: "I do not pretend to say that there are no disagreeable things in [Italy] … but how amply is a traveler repaid for those little mortifications by the pleasure and knowledge he finds in almost every place."[11] Natural and artistic beauty stimulated his vision above all else, and, in the same letter as above, Gibbon described the viewing of art as constructive of his aesthetic tastes: "I flatter myself, that the works of the greatest artists, which I have continually before my eyes, have already begun to form my taste for the fine arts."[12]

Goethe, too, wrote in his famed *Italianiesche Reise* (Italian journey; ca 1788) that the visions of Naples infiltrated his mind and prevented him from expressing the city otherwise: "Every time I wish to write words, visual images come up, images of the fruitful countryside, the open sea, the islands veiled in a haze, the smoking mountain, etc., and I lack the mental organ which could describe them."[13] Put differently, Goethe found himself caught between visual and verbal fragments. Indeed, visions of Italy were sublime and picturesque in the eighteenth century, sometimes even grotesque. Few tourists went without witnessing some form of public execution or prisoner torture there, and, according to Hibbert, these horrendous acts provided a shockingly visceral and yet visual counterpoint to the aesthetic beauty of landscape.[14]

Destination Italy stimulated the visceral among the other senses, too, be it through culinary offerings, sexual pleasures, or sundry things. For example, Thomas Nugent described the country's abhorrent cuisine in his popular 1749 guidebook. His palate (and digestive system) apparently suffered from tasting the likes of boiled snails, fried frogs, kites, magpies, and, most offensively, "buffalo's flesh [that] is black, stinking, and hard."[15] Likewise, Grand Tourists repeatedly indulged in the pleasures of the flesh while on tour. In particular, Venice gained notoriety for its skilled and alluring courtesans.[16] Richard Lassels, a Catholic priest, warned of Venice in his 1670 guidebook, *The Voyage of Italy*: "Others desire to go into *Italy,* onely because they heare there are fine *Curtisanes* in Venice … these men travel a whole month together, to *Venice*, for a nights lodgeing with an impudent woman. And thus by false ayming at breeding abroad, they returne with those diseases which hinder them from breeding at home."[17] Few of these young men heeded Lassels's advice, and most indulged in sensual pleasures, some more formally than others. Many Grand Tourists hired prostitutes, others officially took on mistresses, and still others acted on repressed homosexual desires.[18] Female Grand Tourists, who were quite rare, tended to engage in cicisbeship, or the arrangement in which a married woman had a male companion who acted as her social escort (and sometimes lover).[19] Yet sex was just one part of the myriad experiences of Italy.

The visceral pleasures (and pain) of the Grand Tour secured destination Italy's cachet as a land of the senses. Even as the Tour drew to a close at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and its demographics shifted from European aristocrats to wealthy American bourgeois, Italy still retained this reputation. When Thomas Cook arrived with his first organized tour of Italy in 1864, the country existed not just as a superlative aesthetic space but also as a vivid sensorium that had been brought alive by the travelling practices of the Grand Tour. And it was Cook, a Baptist minister on a touristic mission, who integrated the nationalist politics of the newly unified Italian state into the aesthetic and sensory contours of Italy as destination.

Thomas Cook and the New Voyage to Italy

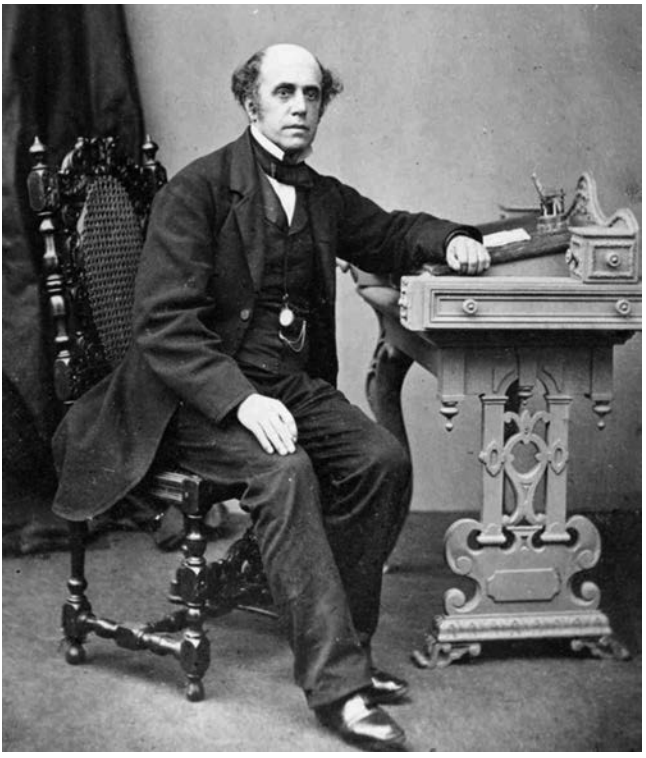
Unlike the Grand Tour, in which tourists lingered for months in a single city, Thomas Cook's first organized tour of northern Italy in July 1864 was unprecedented in scale and speed; his fifty tourists rushed through

cities in a matter of hours. In the span of just ten days this tour covered some three thousand miles, departing from Como and including Florence, Pisa, Genoa, and Turin (and several small towns in between). The arrival of Cook and his organized tour signalled a new era that has been given little consideration in the historiography of modern Italy, that is, the remarkable intensification and acceleration of mass tourism that developed alongside the political formation of the Italian state. In the decade immediately following Unification in 1861, tens of thousands of tourists (most of them British) made extensive use of Cook's all-inclusive system of hotel, meal, and railway coupons to travel the peninsula. This infrastructure supported increasing numbers of tourists, who in turn experienced and understood Italy to be unified, that is, expressive of both a singular culture and a political identity. This understanding, and the perpetuation thereof, can be attributed to Cook himself, whose ultimate goal was to put tourism in the service of unifying the Italian state. Yet Cook was so successful with his tourist system that, despite all patriotic intentions, Italy as destination eclipsed the Italian political state in both structural organization and popular imagination. Indeed, the stereotypes that comprise destination Italy – as a space of leisure and aesthetics – remain dominant understandings of Italy today.

Pious Vocation, Package Vacation

In 1840 Thomas Cook thought little about Italy. At the time, the founder of modern mass tourism was a cabinetmaker by trade who also earned a small income through his work as a preacher and publisher of temperance pamphlets in the English Midlands (figure 3.1). After a long walk to a temperance meeting in Leicester one afternoon Cook decided to charter a train to transport like-minded advocates to their next meeting. This first excursion on 5 July 1841 proved so popular that Cook spent the next three summers chartering trains and organizing trips to Temperance Society gatherings, and so began his career as a tour operator.[20]

In the summer of 1845 Cook's scope changed from temperance to leisure after he arranged a tour to the Liverpool seaside. Tickets for this trip were sold out in days, prompting Cook to organize a similar one just two weeks later. The following summer Cook led some four hundred tourists to the Scottish Highlands. The sheer numbers travelling with him were without precedent, and local inhabitants were often



3.1 Portrait of Thomas Cook (1864), who is considered by many to be the founder of modern mass tourism. Image reproduced by permission from the Thomas Cook Company Archive, Peterborough, UK.

stunned by their first contact with such a crowd. Lynne Withey writes, "The prospect of such a large group of tourists descending upon Glasgow en masse was so novel that a crowd of gawking well-wishers met them at the train station. Later they were entertained with a parade and party at City Hall."[21] It was this Scotland excursion that prompted Cook to refocus his vocation entirely on vacation.

In the 1850s Cook expanded his business throughout England and the British Isles. He gained national repute in 1851 by organizing trips to the Crystal Palace at London's Great Exhibition. Some six million people visited the exhibition, and Cook was responsible for conveying

165,000 of them there.[22] That same year he started a weekly newspaper called *The Excursionist*, which codified the organized tour as an established activity of the Victorian middle class. In addition to promoting tours and excursions, the newspaper became a pulpit for Cook, who, true to his roots as a minister, espoused his philosophies on travel in it, often reflexively situating himself within the history of tourism. Given the frequency with which it was published, *The Excursionist* provides a rich historical record of Cook's activities as well as his personal views on travel.

For example, Cook penned an article titled "Past, Present, and Future. Pleasant Memories" for the 26 May 1859 edition. It was one of his more philosophical musings in which he extolled travel as a spiritual route to God, perhaps even more so than via temperance. Travel, he wrote, has the power to "unite man to man" and, more important, man to God:[23]

> The social delights, the formulation of new and extended friendships, the expansion of thought, the grasp of information, the destruction of narrow prejudices, the diffusive influence of benevolence, the opening fields of usefulness – in a word, all that unites man to man, and contributes to the love of species and of country, is associated with the memories of eighteen summers of Excursion engagements. From year to year, abundant evidence is afforded that these sentiments and feelings are the natural and common results of associated travel … But there are other fruits of travel of more exalted interest and value than those of social intercourse.
>
> "Nature with open volume stands,
> To spread her Maker's promise abroad";
>
> And it is when we are enabled to "look through nature up to nature's God" that we realize the highest of human attainments. And who can wander amidst scenes of natural grandeur without perceiving the voice – "the still small voice" – of the spirit of the Great Creator and Preserver of all the magnificence of earth?

Clearly Cook believed that travel led to spiritual connection. He not only described modern tourism as a form of Christian pilgrimage but also implied that it could be missionized (not a surprising step in logic for a Baptist minister).[24] In Cook's opinion, tourists could "spread [their] Maker's promise abroad" and in such ways connect themselves (and others) to a more divine Christian purpose. He saw himself as an

altruistic facilitator of this spiritual pilgrimage and mission, a man who helped to unite others with God by providing access to travel.

These self-declared altruistic intentions were the subject of another article written by Cook for the 19 October 1861 edition of *The Excursionist*. Conscious of his place in tourism history, Cook positioned himself in this text as central to the revolution in transport technology as well as the democratization of travel in general:[25]

> What a change in the views, feelings, and pursuits of men, has the last twenty-one years produced! The Railway has been one of the greatest of modern teachers, and lessons of locomotion have ranked with the most powerful agencies in their practical results.
>
> It is nearly twenty-one years since the thought of applying the great powers and facilities of the railways to the advancement of the Temperance Movement first came into our mind, and soon resolved itself into a definite project. Since then the idea has expanded and diffused itself into a thousand shapes and varieties, until we are now led to regard Excursions and Tours as amongst the settled institutions of civilized life.
>
> Our vocation – be it profession or trade, however designated – has been a novel one, quite unpremeditated, and almost unparalleled. Others have followed in the wake of our first movements, and have acquired positions more advantageous, locally, than our own; but none have so entirely thrown their souls and energies into the Tourist system. In the wide range of Tourist enterprise and travel, there is not another Excursion Manager who has so entirely placed himself at the service of the travelling public as the conductor of this paper.

In this passage Cook presented himself in the language of Christian martyrdom: not only had he thrown his soul completely into the tourism industry, but also he had committed his existential being to the service of others, the travelling public. Interestingly, Cook's tone turns messianic, too, as he figures himself the man who capitalized on a technological invention (the railway) to organize an ideological project (tourism) that became a fundamental part of civilized life. In other words, tourism became synonymous with civilization under Cook's watch. By extending that logic, if excursions and tours were now "settled institutions of civilized life," then Cook had succeeded in a civilizing mission. It was a mission not unlike the civilizing missions that served to justify the projects of European colonialism taking hold across Africa and Asia at the same time. Thus, Cook figuratively brought

civilization to tourists by institutionalizing it within daily life, much like colonizers sought to bestow the same upon colonized subjects elsewhere.

With tourism firmly established as a commercial industry in Britain, Cook turned his sights to the Continent in the 1860s and decided that his first international trip would be to Paris. Since 1861 was also the first year in which British citizens no longer needed passports to travel to France, Cook negotiated a return ticket from London to Paris with the appropriate railway and ferry companies, priced at one pound. The trip was an astounding success, with 1,625 tourists taking part in the six-day excursion.[26] By 1863 Cook was running multiple tours to France each year and had expanded his Continental operations into Switzerland. But his true "dream of months, and hope of years" was an excursion over the Alps to the destination of the Grand Tour itself: Italy.[27]

Italy, a Dream Realized

According to those who journeyed on the first organized excursion in Italy in July 1864, the trip was a terrific success: "During the whole tour of nearly 3,000 miles, embracing so many different kinds of conveyance, scarcely a hitch happed in any of the arrangements. The published programme was worked out most admirably, and such a tour has never been accomplished by so large a party before."[28]

Cook's inaugural Italian tour was unparalleled in speed and distance. On the first day the group was up at 4:00 a.m. to begin the journey over the treacherous pass of Saint Gotthard in Switzerland and finally reached Bellinzona by evening. Over the next eight days these tourists sailed on Lake Como, marvelled at the Milanese duomo, stood next to the leaning towers in Bologna, and toured all of Florence. In Milan Cook noted that his large party of English tourists astonished the locals. Of course, not everyone was stupefied by these tourists; for instance, the many British expatriates who considered themselves holdovers from the Grand Tour reacted vehemently against the "Cook-ites" who invaded "their" country. One of these expats, Charles Lever (writing under the pseudonym Cornelius O'Dowd), proclaimed: "I have already met three 'flocks' and anything so uncouth I never saw before – the men mostly elderly, dreary, sad-looking, evidently bored and tired, the women somewhat younger, travel tossed, and crumpled, but intensely lively, wide awake and facetious. The cities of Italy are deluged

with droves of these creatures, for they never separate, and you see them, 40 in number, pouring along a street with their director – now in the front – now in the rear – circling around them like a sheep dog and really the process is as like herding as may be."[29]

Cook's tourists moved across the country in a hurried deluge. Withey notes that, to cover so much distance in so little time, "it seems to have been a cardinal principle on Cook's tours never to start on any journey later than 6:00 a.m."[30] Consider the travel that was done on the final three days of the trip. On 19 July 1864 the group departed Florence in the morning by railway, and, reaching Pisa in the afternoon, they took a break to climb the city's famed leaning tower. The group then reboarded the train and headed to Livorno, where they arrived in the evening to have a hasty dinner and glance about town before boarding a steamer bound for Genoa. They spent the following day sightseeing in Genoa and left for Turin on the evening train. The group's final day in Italy, 21 July, was spent sightseeing in Turin before they headed back to England via the pass at Mont Cenis early the next morning. While the tour was intended as a sort of Grand Tour for the middle classes, its frenetic pace was far from that of the years-long sojourn of its predecessor.

Yet this first Italian tour was an unabashed success, so much so that it inspired another one a few months later in September 1864. In the months that followed, Cook expanded the tour to include Rome and Naples, and several trips went out over the next year (figure 3.2). By 1866 Cook had written a guidebook and inaugurated two more annual trips in addition to his regular excursions, which would prove to be among his most popular: an Easter trip to Rome and a Great Autumnal Excursion to Switzerland and Italy. In all, Cook's first tour established a way for tourists to tour destination Italy en masse, that is, to compress all of the Grand Tour into a week-long itinerary. In the following decade so many British tourists travelled on Cook's itineraries that daily departures from London to Italy were required to meet the demand.[31] By 1874, just ten years after that inaugural excursion, Italy had become firmly ensconced as one of Cook's premier tourist destinations.

Mass Tourism and Italian Unification

In the years following his first tour Thomas Cook grew profoundly aware of Italian politics and became particularly concerned with the fate of the newly unified Italian state. He often referenced the Risorgimento in his *Excursionist* articles and pondered how tourism could ameliorate

3.2 Thomas Cook, sixth from the right (seated), poses with a group of his tourists on a trip to Pompeii in 1868. Image reproduced by permission from the Thomas Cook Company Archive, Peterborough, UK.

the economic and political difficulties that stemmed from Unification.[32] Indeed, there was much British sympathy for the Italian cause, for a unified Italy was seen as a defence against other potential imperial powers in Europe. No one in Cook's circle, it seems, wanted the rise of another Napoleon or Austro-Hungarian empire. Withey notes that in most British travellers of that era "the Italians inspired sympathy as a people oppressed, whether by the Papacy, Austria, Sardinia, or one of the several petty dukedoms … Travelers blamed the Italians' poverty and disinclination to work on corrupt governments – which exercised arbitrary rule and taxed their subjects excessively – and on the Catholic Church, which siphoned off money from the people to support an excessive number of priests and decorate already overly decorated churches."[33] Cook certainly felt likewise.

After a preliminary scouting trip to Italy, Cook described with a sombre tone in *The Excursionist* a memorial to fallen Italian soldiers at Magenta. These soldiers, he wrote, had died in battle against the Austrians in 1859:[34]

> The Railways which connect Turin and Milan form a junction at MAGENTA, which could not be passed without the recollection of one of the great events of the late war of Italian Independence. As the train approaches Magenta station, there is on the right of the line, a monument recently erected in commemoration of the great battle that was fought there; and on the opposite side of the line, immediately facing the station, is a large grave where thousands of the slain were buried. The ground is sunk for a considerable distance, and two or three plain wooden crosses were all that stood to indicate the great cemetery. Mingled emotions of sorrow for the dead and joy for the resurrection of Italy['s] social and political life, are awakened by the monuments of Magenta.

In this passage Cook adopted a patriotic tenor that echoed that of Risorgimento leaders like Mazzini and D'Azeglio. He too engaged the rhetoric of resurgence – indeed *risorgere* (to resurge) is the very root of *Risorgimento* (resurgence) – to describe the renewed "social and political life" of the newly unified Italian state. Cook was, in fact, a staunch supporter of this new state.[35]

Likewise, Cook also revealed his Christian faith in this quote. By pairing the death of Italian soldiers with the resurrection of the state, he implicitly applied the Christian tenets of death and resurrection to understand both his visit to Magenta and the Italian political sphere. Cook vehemently opposed the doctrines and institutions of the Roman Catholic Church. He actively supported King Victor Emmanuel II and the Liberal government when the Church took measures to destabilize the political state with its 1871 *non expedit* policy, which both prohibited Catholics from voting in parliamentary elections and excommunicated all who participated in state politics.[36] Nowhere did Cook issue a clearer or more passionate invective against the Church than in his August 1864 article in *The Excursionist*:[37]

> It was also a rare privilege to be permitted to mingle with a noble, ingenious and vivacious people, who have but recently emerged, and are not yet quite free from the taints of mental and political bondage – to see these noble Italian men and women walking forth in the pure air of political freedom, though thousands are yet the victims of priestly domination and besotted superstition. No one can look upon the condition of the Italian people without mingled feelings of joy and pain. The ecclesiastical system of Italy would appear to an intelligent observer at once the glory and the curse of that favoured land. Art and wealth have lavished their treasures on gorgeous temples, and jolly pampered priests contrast most strikingly

> with the evident poverty and degradation of devotees and beggars. Above these hordes stand out in bold relief a noble race of intelligent educated men and women, who, though they may bear the infidel brand, are the real regenerators of Italy. In the social aspects of society, Milan and Turin contrast strangely with such places as Bologna and Florence, where we witness exhibitions of priestly domination and superstitious abjection of the most distressing character, and we felt as though we could but weep over the abominations and blasphemies of their rites and ceremonies. Never, never can Italy be really free till the light of Truth and Christian simplicity prevails over such solemn fooleries as it was our lot to witness in the streets and squares of Florence, where bloody crucifixes were paraded about by rude boys, and thousands fell on their knees before ridiculous figures and effigies of Virgin and child.

The Catholic Church, according to Cook, held the Italian state and its citizens hostage with spiritual demands and irrational superstitions. He smarted at the Church's appalling hypocrisy, too, contrasting the avarice of its "jolly priests" and the excesses of its "gorgeous temples" with the poverty, degradation, and dispossession suffered by "devotees and beggars," or the very people whom the Church purported to help. In such ways, the Church, as a structure of complete inequality, limited the political agency of citizens in the newly formed Italian state. Cook intimated that the Church targeted anyone who threatened its power by branding them as infidels, a clear foreshadowing of the *non expedit* policy to come. For him it was imperative that Church and State remain separate and that "intelligent educated men and women," not ecclesiastics, run the new Italian government.

While it is true that the political future of Italy concerned Cook enormously, his priorities always remained with his tourists. This is clear from his description of Turin (which had just lost its status as Italy's capital in 1864) wherein Cook emphasized the city's excellent touristic potential despite its weakened political status:[38]

> TURIN has lost its resident King, its Court and Parliament, but not its public spirit, as works of great magnitude are still progressing, including the building of new streets and piazzas; and strangest of all seeming anomalies, a new House of Parliament is in course of erection. It is really pleasant to observe the hopefulness and cheerfulness of the people, under bereavements that could not fail to cause innumerable and deep regrets. The city is certainly inconveniently situated for a Central Government, at the

> corner of the kingdom, otherwise it seems to be the best metropolitan city of Italy for purposes of government. The streets, squares, and buildings are far superior to those of Florence, and apart from the association of history and artistic fame, it is a pleasanter place than most of the chief cities of Italy. The King is said to be still ardently attached to Turin and the surrounding country. If Turin is a *widow*, she is certainly a cheerful one, and we hope yet to have many opportunities of conducting pleasant visitors to gaze upon her attractions, not the least agreeable of which are the comforts of the excellent Hotel Feder, where these notes and observations are recorded.

Cook lamented Turin's loss of its monarchy and parliament but noted the "hopefulness and cheerfulness" of the city and its inhabitants. He likened Turin to a happy widow, which in a certain way linked the city to a common literary heritage of Italy expressed in the famous lines of poets like Dante and Leopardi of an "*Italia vedova e sola*" (Italy widowed and alone).[39] For Cook, Turin's capital improvements made it not just "the best metropolitan city … for purposes of government" but also a "pleasanter place" for tourists. Its new streets, piazzas, and buildings comprised an infrastructure that facilitated the practice of tourism, the most recent example being that of the "excellent Hotel Feder."

In this vein of touristic praxis Cook was not satisfied to simply comment on Italian politics in *The Excursionist*; instead he set out to live them as a tourist. In 1866, for instance, he organized a trip to Venice to personally see "the Queen of the Adriatic emancipated from the depressing yoke of Austrian domination," and "the flag of freedom wave from her towers and pinnacles."[40] When the Austrians turned over control in August 1866, Cook led a band of fifty tourists to greet King Victor Emanuel II and to participate in the festivities:[41]

> Venice will have a carnival of rejoicing such as she never has for ages realized, when the Quadrilateral is given up to the King of Italy, and the Queen of the Adriatic is released from her bondage. We shall then expect to see the gondolas wearing brighter hues than they have been wont to assume, and to hear the cheerful song of the famed gondoliers.
>
> We only wish the Austrian troops could be made to carry away with them all the mosquitoes that have so sorely plagued the visitors to Venice; but we would rather have another fight with those midnight marauders than lose the opportunity of viewing, whilst the tricolour still waves, the joy of emancipated Venice.

Cook and his group hurried to Venice and arrived in early September 1866; however, they miscalculated the date of Victor Emmanuel's visit and returned to London without experiencing the foretold "carnival of rejoicing." Never one to be stymied by bad timing, Cook quickly organized a return trip: "Another trip to Venice was very hastily determined upon, and in a few days after returning with the September party, Mr. Cook started again with a few friends, resolved to be present and join in the acclamations of welcome to Victor Emmanuel. After waiting for ten days for his Majesty's arrival, the object of the trip was realized on the 7th of November – a day which will never be effaced from the history of the newly united and consolidated Italian kingdom."[42] Cook joined in the praises to the king in Saint Mark's Square, and, by taking part in such a momentous occasion, he and his tourists also symbolically demonstrated their support for Unification.[43] What is more, Cook believed that his company and the tourist system it put into place could facilitate and even ameliorate these uneven political processes. He wanted Italians to get to know unified Italy through travel, and to do so through his touristic infrastructure.

In an 1891 letter to *The Times* newspaper a Cook's traveller by the name of Charles H.L. Woodd described the way in which Cook made it easier for Italians to visit one another with standardized train tickets and hotel coupons. According to him, some Italians also believed that Cook played a critical role in unifying the state:[44]

> In reference to Messrs. Cook and Son, the excursionists, it may be of interest to some to hear what an intelligent Italian once said to me some years ago, when travelling in Italy.
>
> He said that Messrs. Cook and Son had done more to bring about the unity of the Italian nation than any military or political influence, through their introduction of the railway circular tourist ticket, which encouraged and enabled an inhabitant of Turin to visit Rome and Naples, and a dweller at Naples to see Florence, Bologna, and Turin, finding as a result that the inhabitants were all of one tongue and family, the intercourse at once destroying the petty jealousies and hereditary feuds of towns, small States, and communities, and leading to the formation of one nation and a "United Italy."

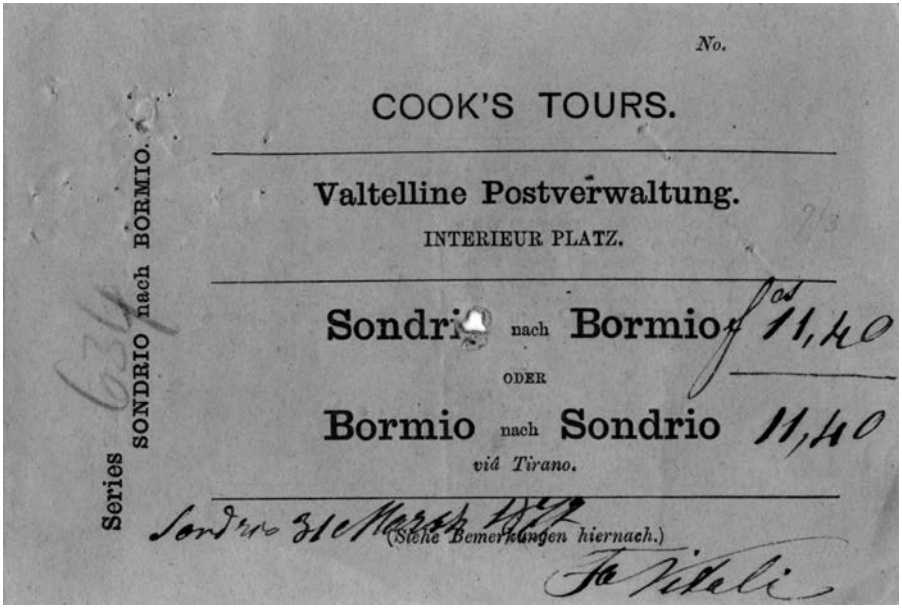
Woodd's letter provides a rare glimpse into the Italian reception of Cook's tours, albeit a glimpse filtered through the bias of an English traveller. In its citation of "an intelligent Italian" who had extolled

Cook's role in the Risorgimento, this passage hints that at least some Italians reinforced Cook's belief that tourism could have positive repercussions in the political sphere of unified Italy. According to said Italian, tourism's ability to connect people as well as to diffuse rigid understandings of difference (that is, "destroying … petty jealousies and hereditary feuds") did more to catalyse Unification than did any other circumstance.

In economics, too, Cook attempted to bolster the Italian state. By introducing a widely dispersed coupon system, Cook helped to stabilize the burgeoning Italian economy not only by increasing the revenues from tourism but also by expanding the circulation of Italy's new currency, the lira. One of the biggest challenges facing post-1861 Italy was the reconciliation of disparate monetary policies between regional banks and the equivalent valuation of the currencies already in circulation (for example, the *ducato* of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, the *lira pontificia* of the Papal States, and the *scudo* of Emilia-Romagna). According to Michele Fratianni and Franco Spinelli, the new Italian state suffered a series of banking crises and monetary shocks in the decade after Unification, even as the new paper form of the *lira italiana* was put into daily use in 1874.[45]

In that same decade Cook introduced an alternative and more stable touristic currency system that consisted of Cook's circular tickets, circular notes, and hotel and meal coupons (figures 3.3–3.5). While he implemented similar systems in the United Kingdom, France, and Switzerland, none took hold quite as rapidly as did the one in Italy. Cook intended that foreign tourists and Italians alike use his tickets and coupons, although the former were more likely than the latter to use them.

First, the *circular tickets* (also called "tourist tickets" or "travel coupons") could be used on almost all Italian railways. Similar to a present-day Eurail pass, these tickets allowed travel by train (or select steamship) for a prescribed number of days along predetermined routes. Cook conceptualized this ticket system as early as the summer of 1864, at which time he was already in talks with Italian officials to inaugurate it in Italy. He wrote of these negotiations in *The Excursionist*:[46] "We wish to see how the arrangements work out, and especially to test the spirit of the various companies interested. Such a trip is a novelty to the Italian officials and the Italian people, and we want to see how they are satisfied with our proposals. On our return we hope to be able to submit something like a report of first progress, and see if any improvements can be made in the arrangements." The trip certainly did work out as



No.

COOK'S TOURS.

Valtelline Postverwaltung.

INTERIEUR PLATZ.

Series SONDRIO nach BORMIO.

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Bormio nach Sondrio 11,40

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Sondrio 31 March 1877

(Siehe Bemerkungen hiernach.)

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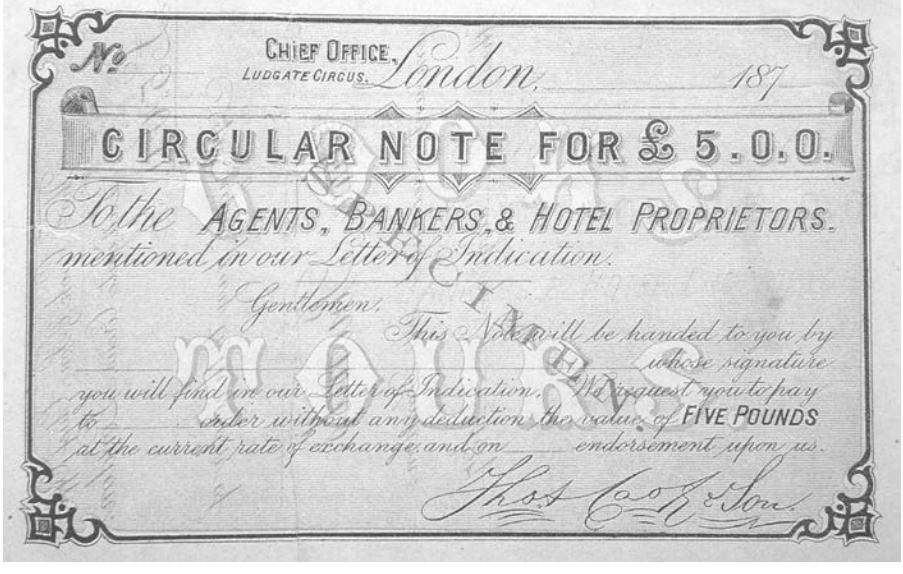

No

CHIEF OFFICE, LUDGATE CIRCUS. London, 187

CIRCULAR NOTE FOR £ 5.0.0.

To the AGENTS, BANKERS, & HOTEL PROPRIETORS. mentioned in our Letter of Indication.

Gentlemen:

This Note will be handed to you by whose signature you will find in our Letter of Indication. We request you to pay to order without any deduction the value of FIVE POUNDS at the current rate of exchange; and on endorsement upon us.

Thos Cook & Son

3.3, 3.4, and 3.5 *On the facing page (3.3 and 3.4)*: a Cook's circular ticket (1877) and a Cook's £5 circular note (1870s) the predecessor to the modern-day traveller's cheque; *above (3.5)*: daily meal coupons (ca 1880). Images reproduced by permission from the Thomas Cook Company Archive, Peterborough, UK.

did the coupon arrangements, for one year later Cook's circular tickets were widely accepted throughout northern Italy.[47] By 1868 the tickets were being accepted as far south as Rome, Naples, and Pompeii.[48] And by 1870 these tickets enjoyed such great success that Cook felt confident enough to proclaim his "mastery of all the details of Italian travel":[49]

> For six years we have been exploring, and repeatedly visiting Italy with a view to a mastery of all the details of Italian travel, and we speak with no egotistical vanity when we affirm the entire command of our acquaintance with the travelling arrangements of the country. Our Tickets are specially prepared for our Agency by the Company of High Italy, and are printed both in the English and Italian languages for the twofold convenience of English travellers and Italian Railway servants. These Tickets can be had for individuals or small parties travelling alone, as well as for those who choose to accompany our tourist parties under personal management.

Typically tickets were printed in booklets of four or five, and tourists carried a series of them depending on their destinations. They were most often bought in the United Kingdom; however, by 1869 they could be purchased on the peninsula as well. Descriptions and advertisements in *The Excursionist* show that Cook's circular tickets were available for more than twenty tours of various Italian regions by the early 1870s. For example, a traveller equipped with a Cook's circular ticket could take one month to travel from London to Paris, Milan, Padua, Venice, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Civitavecchia, Livorno, Genoa, Alessandria, and Turin, and back to London again, all for £16 in first class or £13 in second class. By and large, these tickets emerged as a popular, stable, and widely accepted voucher system for travel throughout Italy, even as the country suffered the throes of economic instability in the decades that followed Unification.[50]

Second, Cook designed a series of *hotel coupons* to complement circular tickets, which could be exchanged for lodging and meals at designated accommodations. Again, these coupons were bundled in books of four or five, each valid for either one night's lodging or a single meal. In practice, tourists would redeem a circular ticket to travel from Florence to Pisa, for example, and then cash in a hotel coupon at a predetermined hotel, which in the case of Pisa was the Hotel de Londres. In addition to lodging, this coupon provided the tourist with dinner and breakfast. The influence of this hotel coupon system grew quickly, and by 1869 more than twenty hotels, from as far north as Turin to as far south as Brindisi, accepted them as valid currency.

Third, Cook introduced the *circular note* in 1872, which is often considered the precursor to the modern traveller's cheque. These paper notes could be changed at designated hotels, banks, and ticket agents for Italian lire at a predetermined exchange rate. As the Italian economy struggled to get on its feet, Cook's circular notes created demand for its new national currency and, in so doing, helped to legitimize it. While many British tourists chose to carry Cook's tickets, coupons, and circular notes instead of money, when they did pay in cash, it was almost always in Italian lire, which they acquired after exchanging their circular notes. As Cook's tourists travelled throughout Italy, not only did they create a demand for the lira, but they also circulated it at breakneck speed.

There is a paucity of exact statistics as to how many circular tickets, hotel coupons, and circular notes Cook actually issued in the early years of his Italian tours. One might surmise that the hundreds of travellers departing daily from London to the Italian peninsula were using circular tickets. As for hotel coupons, Cook claims to have issued forty thousand of them for use in Italy during their inaugural year, 1869. There is unfortunately little information about the use of Cook's ticket system by Italians at the time.[51] Prior to 1874, coupons were only available at specific hotels through appointed agents, who were usually British expatriates. After 1874, however, Italians would have had greater access to these coupons thanks to the opening of Cook's tourist offices in several major Italian cities. The first opened in 1874 at Piazza di Spagna in Rome and was followed by another in Naples in 1880. By 1897 Cook had offices in Florence, Milan, Turin, Venice, Brindisi, and Genoa, as well as Rome and Naples.

Indeed, the extraordinary success of Cook's tours in the decades following Unification prompted the Italian government to join forces with the company in 1880. Italian officials approached John Cook – the founder's son who was now head of the family business – with an unprecedented offer as the younger Cook was looking to establish tours in India. These officials convinced him to route his India tour overland so that instead of sailing to the subcontinent via the Straits of Gibraltar as was most common, Cook's tourists would travel through the Italian peninsula and depart from Brindisi instead.[52] Cook would receive a commission from the Italian government on all passengers booked from Brindisi to India, and the developing Italian economy would benefit from additional tourism profits that otherwise would have been lost.

This deal brokered between Cook and the Italian government attested to the significant economic value attached to tourism in the context

of the unified Italian state. Since 1861, in the mere arc of twenty years, Cook's tourist system had propelled the construction of touristic infrastructure like railways and hotels; had established routes and itineraries for large tour groups; had inaugurated a coupon system that stabilized the national currency; and in general had designated Italy as a favoured tourist destination in Europe.

Thus, by the turn of the century, more than two decades after Italian forces had retreated from the Janiculum hill and the first war of Italian independence had ended in defeat in 1849, the unified Italian state and Italy as destination came to mutually coexist. It was a convergence not simply catalysed but generated by the tourist system that Cook had inaugurated. In these decades, too, destination Italy actually proved to be a more stable imaginary than the political state. Whereas the national capital moved three times between 1861 and 1870, tourist circuits solidified in this era and established cities like Rome, Florence, and Venice as requisite attractions on an increasingly travelled tourist track. In such ways, Italy as destination proved to be a stabilizing foil to the unstable state in these decades, in terms of both popular opinion (that is, the case for Italian sovereignty) and civic governance (that is, currency circulation). In the decades to follow, the complex political potentials inherent in such an articulation between Italian political and touristic imaginaries would become the focal points of an emerging domestic tourism industry: first, with the Touring Club Italiano at the fin de siècle and, later, more ominously, with the Fascist regime.