

## XII POPULAR CULTURE

### Introduction

Gramsci's interest in popular culture was bound up with his conception of revolutionary change as a process in which popular mentalities and behaviour are transformed (see Section XI). In Italy, there had been historically – with the partial exception of opera – no 'national-popular' culture, that is to say no form of culture in which there was an organic relationship between Italian intellectuals and the broad national masses. This, Gramsci argues, is because of the age-old detachment of Italian intellectuals from the people, their tendency to make up a 'caste' remote from popular life. The intellectuals' failure to forge a national-popular alliance had contributed to the perpetuation of a gap in Italy between elite culture and popular culture, of which the most manifest signs were the lack of a unified national language or of popular cultural traditions at a higher level than the local region or village. Gramsci's observations on the non-national character of Italian culture parallel those on the passive, non-Jacobin character of bourgeois revolution in Italy, the failure of the bourgeoisie to become an expansively hegemonic class (see Section VIII). In Italy, the 'lay [i.e. non-Catholic] forces ... have not known how to elaborate a modern "humanism" able to reach right to the simplest and most uneducated classes' (p.369). Instead popular culture has become permeated with foreign products (such as French crime stories) and with a bombastic and insincere 'operatic' style.

The cultural situation in which Gramsci was writing was one of transition to modernity, and this needs to be taken into account when reading these notes. At the time of his imprisonment a large market for books had not developed in Italy, mainly because of a still high illiteracy rate, though illustrated magazines and comics were taking off. Cinema and sound-recording had been around since the turn of the century, but radio broadcasting was still in its infancy and television would not be introduced until the 1950s.

Gramsci was interested, in this situation, in drawing up a 'map'

of popular taste in order to establish the 'terrain' upon which cultural transformation might take place. His aim was not to produce a static, descriptive picture but to explore the relations between dominant and subaltern cultural forms in dynamic terms, as they act upon each other historically. He has a form of 'seepage theory' of popular culture. He sees popular culture and folklore as containing the 'sediments' or residues of earlier dominant cultural forms which have remained from the past and have entered into combination with other forms. For example, he sees the popular literature of rural areas as containing residues of medieval and Renaissance romances of chivalry and of earlier, superseded scientific conceptions. By a converse process, he sees popular cultural forms as being 'raised' into the dominant artistic literature. Dostoyevsky for instance 'passes through' popular serial fiction in order to draw materials for writing artistic fiction (see Section XIV below, p.397). This latter process interests Gramsci in particular because of its bearing on how a dominated class can become hegemonic in its turn.

In his notes on popular culture Gramsci tends explicitly to privilege written over spoken or visual cultural forms like radio and film, even though the latter were becoming increasingly important in the 1930s. This may be attributable in part to a widespread tendency in Italy at that period to identify culture largely with the written word. But more particularly it seems to be bound up with Gramsci's own conception of hegemony and intellectual and moral reformation as a process of acquisition of a critical outlook, of logical capacities, of 'coherent and systematic thought', all of which he tends to identify with writing and the print media.

## 1 Concept of 'National-Popular'

A note in *Critica Fascista* of 1 August 1930 complains that two major daily newspapers, one in Rome and the other in Naples, have begun serial publication of these novels: *The Count of Monte-Cristo* and *Joseph Balsamo* by Alexandre Dumas and *A Mother's Calvary* by Paul Fontenay. *Critica* writes:

The nineteenth century in France was undoubtedly a golden period for the serial novel; but those newspapers which reprint novels of a century ago (as if taste, interest and literary experience had not changed at all from then until now) must have a very poor idea of their readers. Furthermore, why not take account of the fact that, despite opinions to the contrary, a modern Italian novel exists? And to think that these people are ready to shed tears of ink over the sad fate of our national literature.

*Critica* is confusing different categories of problems: that of the non-circulation of so-called artistic literature among the people; and that of the non-existence in Italy of a 'popular' literature, which means that the newspapers are 'forced' to take in supplies abroad. Of course, in theory nothing prevents the possible existence of an artistic popular literature. The most obvious example is the 'popular' success, even today, of the great Russian novelists. But in fact neither a popular artistic literature nor a local production of 'popular' literature exists because 'writers' and 'people' do not have the same conception of the world. In other words the feelings of the people are not lived by the writers as their own, nor do the writers have a 'national educative' function: they have not and do not set themselves the problem of elaborating popular feelings after having relived them and made them their own. Nor does *Critica* set itself these problems and it is unable to draw the 'realistic' conclusions from the fact that if people like the novels of a hundred years ago, it means that their taste and ideology are precisely those of a hundred years ago. Newspapers are politico-financial bodies, and they do not propose to put out *belles-lettres* in their own columns if these *belles-lettres* increase the return of unsold issues. The serial novel is a way of circulating newspapers among the popular classes – remember the example of *Il Lavoro* of Genoa, under the editorship of Giovanni Ansaldo, which reprinted all the French serial literature, while at the same time trying to give the most refined cultural tone to the other parts of the newspaper – and this means political and financial success. Hence the newspaper looks for that novel, that type of novel, which the people are 'certain' to enjoy and which will assure a permanent and 'continuous' clientele. The man of the people buys only one newspaper, when he buys one. The choice is not even personal, but is often that of the family as a group. The women

have a large say in the choice and insist on the 'nice interesting novel'. (This does not mean that the men do not read the novel too, but it is the women who are particularly interested in it and in items of local news.) This always meant that purely political papers or papers of pure opinion never had a large circulation (except in periods of intense political struggle). They were bought by young people, men and women, without too many family worries, who were keenly interested in the fortunes of their political opinions, and by a small number of families highly compact in their ideas. In general, those who read the newspapers do not share the opinion of the newspaper they buy or are minimally influenced by it. From the point of view of journalistic technique, then, one should study the case of *Il Secolo* and *Il Lavoro* which used to publish up to three serial novels in order to gain a large and steady circulation. (One does not consider that for many readers the 'serial novel' has the same importance as quality 'literature' has for educated people. It used to be a kind of 'social obligation' for the porters, the courtyard and the people upstairs to know the 'novel' that *La Stampa* was publishing. Every instalment led to 'conversations' sparkling with the logical and psychological intuitions of the 'most distinguished' presences. It can be claimed that the readers of serial novels enthuse about their authors with far more sincerity and a much livelier human interest than was shown in so-called cultured drawing rooms for the novels of D'Annunzio or is shown there now for the works of Pirandello.)

But the most interesting problem is this: if the Italian newspapers of 1930 want to increase (or maintain) their circulation, why must they publish serial novels of a hundred years ago (or modern ones of the same kind)? Why is there no 'national' literature of this type in Italy, even though it must be profitable? One should note that in many languages, 'national' and 'popular' are either synonymous or nearly so (they are in Russian, in German, where *völkisch* has an even more intimate meaning of race, and in the Slavonic languages in general; in France the meaning of 'national' already includes a more politically elaborated notion of 'popular' because it is related to the concept of 'sovereignty': national sovereignty and popular sovereignty have, or had, the same value).<sup>1</sup> In Italy the term 'national' has an ideologically very restricted meaning, and does not in any case coincide with 'popular' because in Italy the intellectuals are distant

from the people, i.e. from the 'nation'. They are tied instead to a caste tradition that has never been broken by a strong popular or national political movements from below. This tradition is abstract and 'bookish', and the typical modern intellectual feels closer to Annibal Caro or Ippolito Pindemonte than to an Apulian or Sicilian peasant.<sup>2</sup> The current term 'national' is connected in Italy to this intellectual and bookish tradition. Hence the foolish and ultimately dangerous facility of calling 'anti-national' whoever does not have this archaeological and moth-eaten conception of the country's interests.

One should also see Umberto Fracchia's articles in the June 1930 issues of *L'Italia Letteraria* and Ugo Ojetti's 'Letter to Umberto Fracchia on Criticism' in the August 1930 number of *Pégaso*. Fracchia's complaints are very similar to those of *Critica Fascista*. The so-called 'artistic' 'national' literature is not popular in Italy. Whose fault is it? That of the public, which does not read? That of the critics, who are not able to present and extol literary 'values' to the public? That of the newspapers, which publish the old *Count of Monte-Cristo* instead of serializing the 'modern Italian novel'? But why does the public not read in Italy, when in other countries it does? Besides, is it true that in Italy nobody reads? Would it not be more accurate to state the problem in this way: why does the Italian public read foreign literature, popular and non-popular, instead of reading its own? Has not Fracchia himself published ultimatums to the editors who publish (and thus must sell, relatively speaking) foreign works, threatening them with governmental measures? And has the government not tried to intervene, at least partly, in the person of Michele Bianchi, Undersecretary of Internal Affairs?

What is the meaning of the fact that the Italian people prefer to read foreign writers? It means that they *undergo* the moral and intellectual hegemony of foreign intellectuals, that they feel more closely related to foreign intellectuals than to 'domestic' ones, that there is no national intellectual and moral bloc, either hierarchical or, still less, egalitarian. The intellectuals do not come from the people, even if by accident some of them have origins among the people. They do not feel tied to them (rhetoric apart), they do not know and sense their needs, aspirations and feelings. In relation to the people, they are something detached, without foundation, a caste and not an articulation with organic functions of the people themselves.

The question must be extended to the entire national-popular culture and not restricted just to narrative fiction. The same things must be said about the theatre, about scientific literature in general (the sciences of nature, history, etc.). Why do no writers like Flammarion emerge in Italy?<sup>3</sup> Why has no popularized scientific literature arisen as in France and other countries? These foreign books are read and sought after in translation and are often very successful. All this means that the entire 'educated class', with its intellectual activity, is detached from the people-nation, not because the latter has not shown and does not show itself to be interested in this activity at all levels, from the lowest (dreadful serial novels) to the highest – indeed it seeks out foreign books for this purpose – but because in relation to the people-nation the indigenous intellectual element is more foreign than the foreigners. The question has not just arisen now. It has been posed since the foundation of the Italian state, and its previous existence is a document for explaining the delay in forming the peninsula into a national political unit: see Ruggero Bonghi's book on the unpopularity of Italian literature. The question of the language posed by Manzoni also reflects this problem, that of the moral and intellectual unity of the nation and the state, sought in the unity of the language.<sup>4</sup> The unity of the language, though, is one of the external means, and not an exclusively necessary one, of national unity. Anyway, it is an effect and not a cause. See F. Martini's writings on the theatre: there is an entire literature on the theatre which is still developing.

A national-popular literature, narrative and other kinds, has always been lacking in Italy and still is. (In poetry there have been no figures like Béranger or the French *chansonnier* in general.) Still, there have been individual popular writers who have been successful. Guerrazzi, for instance, was successful and his books are still published and circulated. People once read Carolina Invernizio and perhaps still do, even though she is inferior to the Ponsons and the Montépins. People also read Francesco Mastriani. (G. Papini wrote an article on Invernizio in *Il Resto del Carlino*, during the war, in 1916 or so: check if the article is included in a collection. He had something interesting to say on this old trooper of popular literature, observing precisely that she got herself read by ordinary people. [...])

In the absence of their own 'modern' literature, certain strata of

the *menu peuple* have satisfied their intellectual and artistic needs (which do exist, albeit in a plain and elementary form) in a variety of ways: the circulation of medieval romances of chivalry – the *Reali di Francia*, *Guerino detto il Meschino*, etc. – especially in southern Italy and the mountains; the *Maggi* in Tuscany (the subjects represented by the *Maggi* are taken from books, tales and especially popular legends like *Pia dei Tolomei*; there are various publications on the *Maggi* and their repertoire).<sup>5</sup>

The lay forces have failed in their historical task as educators and elaborators of the intellect and the moral awareness of the people-nation. They have been incapable of satisfying the intellectual needs of the people precisely because they have failed to represent a lay culture, because they have not known how to elaborate a modern 'humanism' able to reach right to the simplest and most uneducated classes, as was necessary from the national point of view, and because they have been tied to an antiquated world, narrow, abstract, too individualistic or caste-like. French popular literature, on the other hand, which is the most widespread in Italy, does represent this modern humanism, this in its own way modern secularism, to a greater or lesser degree, and in a more or less attractive way. Guerrazzi, Mastriani and our few other popular writers were also representations of it. Yet if the lay forces have failed, the Catholics have not had any more success. One should not be deceived by the moderately high circulation of certain Catholic books. This is due to the vast powerful organization of the Church, not to an inner force of expansion. The books are given away at the innumerable ceremonies and are read for chastisement, on command or out of desperation.

It is a striking fact that in the field of adventure literature the Catholics have only managed to produce mediocrities: and yet they possess an excellent source in the travels of the missionaries and their eventful and often risky lives. Yet even when the geographical adventure novel was in its heyday, the Catholic version of this literature was mediocre and in no way comparable to its French, English and German secular counterparts. The most remarkable book is the story of Cardinal Massaja's life in Abyssinia. This apart there has been an invasion of books by Ugo Mioni (formerly a Jesuit priest) which are utterly sub-standard. In scientific popular literature, too, the Catholics offer very little, despite their great astronomers, like Father Secchi (a Jesuit), and

the fact that astronomy is the science which interests the people most. This Catholic literature oozes with Jesuitic apologetics, like a goat with musk, and is nauseating in its mean narrow-mindedness. The inadequacy of Catholic intellectuals and the limited success of their literature are one of the most eloquent indications of the profound split that exists between religion and the people. The people are reduced to an extreme state of indifference and lack of a lively spiritual life. Religion has remained at the level of superstition, but it has not been replaced by a new humanistic and secular morality, because of the impotence of the lay intellectuals. (Religion has neither been replaced, nor internally transformed and nationalized as it has in other countries – like Jesuitism itself in America. Popular Italy is still in the conditions created immediately after the Counter-Reformation. At best, religion has been combined with pagan folklore and has remained at this stage.)

SCW, 206-12 (Q21§5)

## 2 Various Types of Popular Novel

A certain variety of types of popular novel exists and it should be noted that, although all of them simultaneously enjoy some degree of success and popularity, one of them nevertheless predominates by far. From this predominance one can identify a change in fundamental tastes, just as from the simultaneous success of the various types one can prove that there exist among the people various cultural levels, different 'masses of feelings' prevalent in one or the other level, various popular 'hero-models'. It is thus important for the present essay to draw up a catalogue of these types and to establish historically their greater or lesser degree of success: 1) The Victor Hugo – Eugène Sue (*Les Misérables*, *The Mysteries of Paris*) type: overtly ideologico-political in character and with democratic tendencies linked to the ideologies of 1848; 2) The sentimental type, not strictly political, but which expresses what could be defined as a 'sentimental democracy' (Richebourg – Decourcelle, etc.); 3) The type presented as pure intrigue, but which has a conservative-reactionary ideological content (Montépin); 4) The historical novel of A. Dumas and Ponson du Terrail which, besides its historical aspect, has a politico-ideological

character, but less marked: Ponson du Terrail, is, however, a conservative-reactionary and his exaltation of the aristocrats and their faithful servants is quite different from the historical representations of Alexandre Dumas, even though Dumas has no overt democratic-political tendency but is pervaded by 'passive' and generic democratic feelings and often comes close to the 'sentimental' type; 5) The detective novel in its double aspect (Lecoq, Rocambole, Sherlock Holmes, Arsène Lupin); 6) The gothic novel (ghosts, mysterious castles, etc.: Ann Radcliffe, etc.); 7) The geographical, scientific adventure novel which can be tendentious or consist simply of intrigue (Jules Verne – Boussenard).

Each of these types also has different national characteristics (in America the adventure novel is the epic of the pioneers). One can observe how in the overall production of each country there is an implicit nationalism, not rhetorically expressed, but skilfully insinuated into the story. In Verne and the French there is a very deep anti-English feeling, related to the loss of the colonies and the humiliating naval defeats. In the geographical adventure novel the French do not clash with the Germans but with the English. But there is also an anti-English feeling in the historical novel and even in the sentimental novel (e.g. George Sand). (Reaction due to the Hundred Years War and the killing of Joan of Arc, and to the defeat of Napoleon.)

In Italy none of these types has had many writers of stature (not literary stature, but 'commercial' value, in the sense of inventiveness and ingeniously constructed plots which, although complicated, are worked out with a certain rationality). Not even the detective novel, which has been so successful internationally (and, for authors and publishers, financially), has found writers in Italy. Yet many novels, especially historical ones, have chosen for their subject Italy and the historical events of its cities, regions, institutions and men. Thus Venetian history, with its political, judicial and police organizations, has provided and continues to provide subject matter for popular novelists of every country, except Italy. Popular literature on the life of brigands has had a certain success in Italy but its quality is extremely poor.

The latest type of popular book is the novelized biography, which at any rate represents an unconscious attempt to satisfy the cultural needs of some of the popular strata who are more smart

culturally and are not satisfied with the Dumas type of story. This literature, too, has few representatives in Italy (Mazzucchelli, Cesare Giardini, etc.). Not only do Italian writers not compare with the French, the Germans and the English in terms of numbers, significantly, they choose their subjects outside Italy (Mazzucchelli and Giardini in France, Eucardio Momigliano in England) in order to adapt to the Italian popular taste formed on historical novels, especially French ones. The Italian man of letters would not write a novelized biography of Masaniello, Michele di Lando or Cola di Rienzo without feeling obliged to cram it with tiresome, rhetorical 'padding', for fear people might think ... might wonder ... etc. It is true that the success of novelized biographies has induced many publishers to start running series of biographies, but these books are to the novelized biography what *The Nun of Monza* is to *The Count of Monte-Cristo*.<sup>6</sup> They consist of the familiar, often philologically correct, biographical scheme which can at most find a few thousand readers but cannot become popular.

One should note that some of the types of popular novel listed above have parallels in the theatre and now in cinema. In the theatre the considerable success of Dario Niccodemi is doubtless due to his ability to dramatize ideas and motifs eminently related to popular ideology. This is true of *Scampolo*, *L'Aigrette* and *La Volata*, etc. There is also something similar in G. Forzano's work, but on the model of Ponson du Terrail, with conservative tendencies. The theatrical work – of an Italian character – that has had the greatest popular success in Italy is Giacometti's *La morte civile*, but it has not had imitators of any merit (still speaking in a non-literary sense). In this section on the theatre, we might note how a whole series of playwrights of great literary value can be enormously liked by the people as well. The people in the cities greatly enjoy Ibsen's *A Doll's House* because the feelings depicted and the author's moral tendency find a profound resonance in the popular psyche. And what should the so-called *theatre of ideas* be if not this, the representation of passions related to social behaviour, with dramatic solutions which can depict a 'progressive' catharsis,<sup>7</sup> which can depict the drama of the most intellectually and morally advanced part of a society, that which expresses the historical growth immanent in present social behaviour itself? This drama and these passions, though, must be

represented and not expounded like a thesis or a propaganda speech. In other words, the author must live in the real world with all its contradictory needs and not express feelings absorbed merely from books.

SCW, 185-7 (Q21§6)

### 3 The Operatic Conception of Life

It is not true that a bookish and non-innate sense of life is only to be found in certain inferior strata of the intelligentsia. Among the popular classes, too, there is a 'bookish' degeneration of life which comes not only from books but also from other instruments of diffusion of culture and ideas. Verdi's music, or rather the libretti and plots of the plays set to music by Verdi, are responsible for a whole range of 'artificial' poses in the life of people, for ways of thinking, for a 'style'. 'Artificial' is perhaps not the right word because among the popular classes this artificiality assumes naïve and moving forms. To many common people the baroque and the operatic appear as an extraordinarily fascinating way of feeling and acting, a means of escaping what they consider low, mean and contemptible in their lives and education in order to enter a more select sphere of great feelings and noble passions. Serial novels and below-stairs reading (all that literature which is mawkish, mellifluous and whimpery) provide the heroes and heroines. But opera is the most pestiferous because words set to music are more easily recalled, and they become matrices in which thought takes shape out of flux. Look at the writing-style of many common people: it is modelled on a repertory of clichés.

However, sarcasm is too corrosive. Remember that we are not dealing with superficial snobs, but with something deeply felt and experienced.

SCW, 377-8 (Q8§46)

### 4 Popular Literature. Operatic Taste

How can one combat in Italy the operatic taste of the man of the people when he comes into contact with literature, especially poetry? He thinks that poetry is characterized by certain external

traits, largely rhyme and the hammering of metrical accents, but above all bombastic solemnity, oratory and operatic sentimentalism, a theatrical rendering coupled with a baroque vocabulary. One of the causes of this taste is to be sought in the fact that it has been formed not through private and individual meditations on poetry and art but through the collective expressions of oratory and theatre. 'Oratory' does not just refer to the notorious popular assemblies of the past but to a whole series of urban and rural instances. In the country, for example, funeral oratory and that of the local magistrate's court and law-courts is closely followed. All of these manifestations have a popular audience of 'fans' and, for the law-courts, an audience made up of those waiting their turn, witnesses, etc. In certain district magistrate's courts, the hall is always full of these people who memorize the turns of phrase and the solemn words, feed on them and remember them. It is the same for the funerals of important people which always draw large crowds, often just to hear the speeches. Lectures in the cities have the same function and likewise the law-courts. Popular theatres, with what are called arena performances (and today perhaps sound films, but also the subtitles of old silent films, all done in an operatic style) are of the utmost importance for the creation of this taste and its corresponding language.

This taste can be combated in two principal ways: by ruthlessly criticizing it, and by circulating books of poetry written or translated in non-'elevated' language, where the feelings expressed are not rhetorical or operatic.

See the anthology compiled by Schiavi; Gori's poems. Perhaps translations of Marcel Martinet and other writers who are more numerous now than before: sober translations, like Togliatti's versions of Whitman and Martinet.<sup>8</sup>

SCW, 379-80 (Q14§19)

## 5 Oratory, Conversation, Culture

In his essay 'On the Athenian orators' (check the source), Macaulay attributes the facility with which even the most educated Greeks let themselves be dazzled by almost puerile sophisms to the predominance of live and spoken discourse in Greek life and education.<sup>9</sup> The habit of conversation in oratory generates a

certain ability to find very quickly arguments that are apparently brilliant and that momentarily silence one's adversary and leave the listener dazed. This observation can also be applied to certain phenomena of modern life and to the ephemeral cultural preparation of some social groups like the urban workers. This partly explains why the peasants are distrustful of intellectuals speaking at political meetings. The peasants spend a long time chewing over the statements they have heard and whose sparkle has temporarily struck them. But, after the emotion stirred up by the words has cooled and their good sense has regained the upper hand, they see the deficiencies and the superficiality and become distrustful as a matter of course.

There is another important observation by Macaulay that is worth recalling. He reports a remark by Eugene of Savoy, who said that those who ended up being the greatest generals were those who were suddenly put in charge of the army and thus had to concern themselves with large-scale operations and manoeuvres. In other words, he who by profession has become a slave of trivial details is the victim of bureaucracy. He sees the tree, but loses sight of the wood; he sees the regulation and not the strategic plan. Yet the great captains could take care of both: the soldiers' rations as well as large-scale manoeuvres, etc.

One might add that the newspaper comes very close to oratory and conversation. Newspaper articles are usually written in a hurry, improvised, and are almost always like speeches made at public meetings because of the rapidity with which they are conceived and constructed. Few newspapers have specialist editors; when they do, their work is largely improvised. Specialization helps one to improvise better and more rapidly. Especially in the Italian newspapers there are no pondered and detailed periodical reviews for such sectors as the theatre and the economy. The contributors only partially make up for this and, lacking a unified approach, do not leave much of a mark. The solidity of a culture can thus be measured in three principal degrees: a) the culture of those who only read the newspapers, b) of those who also read magazines (not the variety ones), c) of those who read books – not to mention all those people (the majority) who do not even read the newspapers and who form their handful of opinions by attending occasional public meetings, such as those held in election periods, where they hear speakers of

widely differing levels. Observations made in prison in Milan, where *Il Sole* was available: most of the prisoners, including politicals, read *La Gazzetta dello Sport*. Among about 2,500 prisoners, eighty copies at the most of *Il Sole* were sold. After the *Gazzetta dello Sport* the most read publications were the *Domenica del Corriere* and *Il Corriere dei Piccoli*.

It is evident that for a very long time the process of intellectual civilizing has especially taken an oratorical and rhetorical form, in other words one with no or too few written aids. The recollection of notions expounded by word of mouth was the basis of any education (and still is in some countries, for example Abyssinia). A new tradition began in the Humanist period when the 'written exercise' was introduced into schools and teaching. But already in the Middle Ages, with scholasticism, there was an implicit criticism of the tradition of teaching based on oratory and an effort to supply the memory with a firmer and more permanent skeleton. It can be seen, on reflection, that the importance given by the schools to the study of formal logic is in fact a reaction against the old loose style of exposition in teaching. Errors of formal logic are especially common in spoken arguments.

The art of printing then revolutionized the entire cultural world, giving to memory an aid of inestimable value and allowing an unprecedented extension of educational activity. Another kind of extension is thus implicit in this research, that of the qualitative as well as quantitative modifications (mass extension) brought about in ways of thinking by the technical and mechanical development of cultural organization.

Even today, spoken communication is a means of ideological diffusion which has a rapidity, a field of action, and an emotional simultaneity far greater than written communication (theatre, cinema and radio, with its loudspeakers in public squares, beat all forms of written communication, including books, magazines, newspapers and newspapers posted on walls) – but superficially, not in depth.

The academies and universities as organizations of culture and means for its diffusion. In the universities: oral lectures, seminars and workshops, the role of the great professor and the assistant. The role of the professional assistant and that of the 'elders of Santa Zita' in the school of Basilio Puoti, mentioned by De Sanctis,<sup>10</sup> namely the formation in the class itself of 'voluntary'

assistants, spontaneously selected from among the students themselves, who help the teacher and give follow-up lectures, teaching others by practical example how to study.

Some of the preceding observations have been suggested by reading the *Popular Manual of Sociology*, which is imbued with all the deficiencies of conversation, the superficial argumentation of oratory, and the weak structure of formal logic. It would be interesting to use this book as an example of all the logical errors indicated by the schoolmen, recalling the very true observation that even ways of thinking are acquired and not innate and that, once acquired, their correct use corresponds to a professional qualification. Not to possess them, not to be aware of not possessing them, not to raise the problem of acquiring them through 'apprenticeship' is like claiming to be able to build an automobile while knowing that one must rely on the workshop and the tools of a village blacksmith. The study of the 'old formal logic' has now fallen into disrepute, and to an extent with good reason. But the problem of putting people through an apprenticeship in formal logic to act as a check upon the loose expository manner of oratory reappears as soon as one raises the fundamental problem of creating a new culture on a new social base, which does not have traditions in the way the old class of intellectuals does. A 'traditional intellectual bloc', with its complex and capillary articulations, is able to assimilate the 'apprenticeship in logic' element into the organic development of each of its individual components without even needing a distinct and specialized apprenticeship (just as the children of educated parents learn to speak 'grammatically', in other words they learn the language of educated people, without even having to go through specific and tiring grammatical exercises, unlike the children of parents who speak a dialect or Italian mixed with a dialect). But not even this occurs without difficulty, friction and loss of energy.

The development of the technical-professional schools in all the post-elementary grades has posed this problem anew in other forms. According to Professor G. Peano, even in the Polytechnic and the higher institutes of mathematics the students from grammar schools are better trained than those from the technical institutes. This better training is due to the overall 'humanist' instruction (history, literature, philosophy) as is more amply demonstrated in other notes (those dealing with the 'intellectuals')

and the problem of education). Why cannot mathematics (the study of mathematics) give the same results, if it is so close to formal logic that it can be confused with it? As occurs in matters of teaching, if there is a similarity there is also an enormous difference. Mathematics is essentially based on the numerical series, on an infinite series of equivalences ( $1 = 1$ ) that can be combined in infinite ways. Formal logic tends to do the same, but only up to a point: its abstractness is maintained only at the beginning of the learning process, in the immediate and basic formulation of its principles, but it becomes concretely operative in the very discourse in which the abstract formulation is made. The language exercises that one does in the grammar school make it apparent after a time that in Latin-Italian and Greek-Italian translations there is never identity between the terms of the languages placed side by side, or at least that what identity there seemed to be at the beginning of the exercise (Italian 'rosa' = Latin 'rosa') becomes increasingly complicated as the 'apprenticeship' progresses, moves increasingly away from the mathematical scheme and arrives at a historical judgement or a judgement of taste, in which nuances, 'unique and individualized' expressiveness, prevail. And this occurs not only when one compares two languages, but also when one studies the history of a single 'language', where it emerges how a single sound/word varies semantically through time and how its function in a clause (morphological, syntactic and semantic as well as phonetic changes) varies too.

*Note.* An experiment made to demonstrate the evanescent impact of the 'oratorical' method of instruction: twelve well-educated persons repeat one to another a complex fact and then each person writes down what he has heard. Often, the twelve versions are amazingly different from the original account (which is written down as a control). Repeated, this experiment can be used to show that the memory which is not trained with appropriate methods should not be trusted.

SCW, 380-5 (Q16§21)