The rise of mass society was a protracted affair that passed through various phases and was manifested through various interacting phenomena. The concrete way modernism formed in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe involved the marginalisation of traditional ties and the advancement of the individual’s assertion of this active status. The affirmation of individualism over the community principle did, however, entail a need to reckon with society’s mass dimension. One feature of mass society was the birth of political communities in which individuals, acknowledged as such, tended to organise into groups. Such groups, often branded as irrational crowds, tended to develop political awareness and disseminate their views through the channels of mass culture and mass society. Political organisations thus contributed to forming mass society through a multi-faceted relationship: via the consumer, and via networks associated with the culture industry.

So far, the advent of mass culture in Italy has tended to attract researchers from a range of disciplines. Scholars of literature, history, sociology and anthropology have had their say without an overall viewpoint having been put together. Historians have concentrated on the story of publishing, following a, by now, well-trodden path through the history of books and their dissemination. While publishing history has been a happy hunting ground for historical studies, far less attention has been paid to public response, especially around the turn of the nineteenth century. One should note that pioneering works such as Hoggart’s did not begin to circulate in Italy until the 1970s. This period was marked by a deepening interest in culture, especially literature, among the working class. Nevertheless such studies have failed to generate a research field of any prominence along the lines of other coun-

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tries. While this is no doubt partly due to a declining interest in the social history of the labour movement, it also seems to me to be a consequence of too much production-oriented and not enough response-oriented methodology. The opposite has occurred among scholars of literature such as Giuseppe Ragone, who linked production to consumption and hence examined the way literary texts were received. Such studies have since become benchmarks to historians as well. With a focus on genre, interest has grown for literature that targeted the popular classes. Semioticians have promoted the study of the serial story and other minor genres. Though interest in popular literature has also spread to historians, they have nonetheless failed to produce any systematic body of research. One important contribution to mass culture studies has come from the Italian translation of David Forgacs’ work on the development of the culture industry. Recently Forgacs and Stephen Gundle also published a volume on mass culture, dating the rise of mass society to the 1930s, which challenges the mainstream assumption that 1945 was the time when Italy fully joined the modern world. The value of these works has been to dispel the cliché of a forever backward country, constantly seeking an elusive modernity. This had been the prevalent view until then, especially with regard to periods closer to our times coinciding with the advent of mass television. Although Italy undoubtedly presents features that distinguish it from other countries – like the low circulation of dailies, a high number of illustrated magazine readers and persistently high illiteracy – it is beyond dispute that the dynamics of mass culture followed a trend similar to other European countries.

In order to understand the Italian path into mass cultural modernity and with the aim of widening the methodological horizon of current historiography on this topic, this contribution will probe an approach that takes into account not only the popular but also the elitist response to the dynamics of both cultural production and political movements around 1900. This article strives to analyse how the appearance of the «crowds» on the political as well as on the cultural scene contributed to

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11 Forgacs, Industrializzazione, 9.
the formation of new organisations that furnished themselves with their own mass-orientated media (journals, popular libraries, serial editions, etc.). It will also analyse how the specific situation of younger Italian intellectuals at the turn of the century contributed to the appropriation of mass culture, thus adding a new social-historical perspective to the explanations of the rise of a seemingly «massified» culture. To this end I am able to draw on many publications covering the role of intellectuals both as producers of high culture and as an influence on the political sphere. Little has been written, however, on the condition of the intellectual within the culture industry. My working hypothesis is that the rise of a culture industry in Italy bred malcontent among intellectuals, which was due partly to reactions against mass society as such and partly to the material difficulties they experienced. The examination of the specific interests of intellectuals when rejecting and/or using popular literature and journals for their own sake combined with a closer analysis of the literacy rates, reading habits and production methods at the time yields a more comprehensive view of the birth of the Italian culture industry. As it was the literary market that received the greatest attention from the intellectual elites around 1900 and which also experienced the deepest changes in becoming a mass cultural market, this article will concentrate on the realm of popular literature, journals, magazines and newspapers. Cinema and radio also began providing different, audiovisual strategies to reach the «crowds» at the time, but it was not until later, with fascism, that intellectuals discovered these other powerful representations of mass culture.

1. Starting Conditions: Literacy, Cultural Production and Intellectuals in the Nineteenth Century

In the aftermath of Italy’s 1861 unification, the pursuit of cultural activities was quite limited. For one thing, high illiteracy rates made for a low pool of readers and restricted public opinion in general. The overall illiteracy rate was 78 per cent, with two opposite extremes at a regional level: 54 per cent in Piedmont and Lombardy, and peaks of 89 per cent in Sicily and 90 per cent in Sardinia. One should also recall that in the north there were considerable differences between city and countryside, as well as between women and men. If we analyse the figures comparatively, the differences separating Italy from the more advanced European countries stand out clearly. The fledgling state tried to foster literacy, introducing free education for the first school years as part of state and nation building. But the progress

made in lowering illiteracy rates was far from rapid. By 1901, around 50 per cent of the population in Italy was illiterate, with still as much as 70 per cent in the south: an obvious advance on the earlier figures, but less encouraging if compared with other European countries. In the same period, the illiteracy rate was slightly more than 3 per cent in Great Britain.\textsuperscript{16}

Of course, low literacy did not prevent culture from circulating by word of mouth as in the past, or products of the culture industry from being enjoyed by illiterate social classes.\textsuperscript{17} But it is obvious that wide-scale illiteracy had an impact on the potential sales of books. In particular, it has been pointed out that it undermined «the diffusion of new cultural products and new forms of publishing on which [...] the development of modern publishing would be based».\textsuperscript{18} Before addressing the vexed beginnings of Italy’s culture industry, a few preliminary remarks are in order on the state of publishing before unification. Book publishing came mainly from the central northern region, so in the period before unification an intellectual could only hope to live of his cultural output in Milan.\textsuperscript{19} The Milan milieu saw experiments in new forms like serial editions, periodicals (for example, \textit{Il Politecnico} by Carlo Cattaneo) and novels.\textsuperscript{20} The narrow range of distributive channels as well as the lack of a legal framework on copyright meant that whoever exercised an intellectual profession would have to busy him or herself with a myriad of other culture-related jobs.\textsuperscript{21} In general the pool of potential consumers for a cultural industry was quite limited, consisting mainly of an urban upper-middle class of secondary school graduates – not a tiny elite but definitely out of touch with the lower social orders.\textsuperscript{22} Gradually a few innovations were made in production methods and copyright law. But the most significant phenomenon was the transformation of the printer-seller of the ancient régime days into a fully fledged publisher pursuing a proper strategy and commissioning works rather than simply printing what authors chose to submit.\textsuperscript{23}

During the 1870s and 1880s, legislative and social changes led to an expansion of public opinion and cultural milieus. We may therefore identify the 1880s as the turning point in the rise of mass culture. The early part of the decade was characterised by a positive economic trend, leading some historians to speak of a first tentative take-off after unification.\textsuperscript{24} The same decade also saw a growing politicisation

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\textsuperscript{16} Vigo, «Gli italiani», 47–48, 50 (tab. 3).  \\
\textsuperscript{17} On this theoretical background, see R. Schenda, \textit{Von Mund zu Ohr. Bausteine zu einer Kulturge- schichte volkstümlichem Erzählens in Europa}, Göt- tingen 1993.  \\
\textsuperscript{19} M. Berengo, \textit{Intellettuali e librai nella Milano della Restaurazione}, Turin 1980, 4.  \\
\textsuperscript{23} Cadioli / Vignini, \textit{Storia dell’editoria italiana}, 18, 27.  \\
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of the masses through the birth of several political parties focusing on the lower classes.\textsuperscript{25} Anarchist and socialist movements published their journals during the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1868, Enrico Bignami founded the political review \textit{La Plebe}, which played an important role in promoting socialist ideas.\textsuperscript{26} Publications such as \textit{La Plebe} managed to expand despite limitations to their field of action due to frequent confiscation orders by the police (which would later be rescinded) and to attempts to make not only the editor criminally liable but also everyone writing for the paper.\textsuperscript{27} Such forms of repression, common in other countries as well, confirmed the contradiction that existed between the liberal project of the ruling class and the means they used to put it in place, a contradiction that Raffaele Romanelli has felicitously described as «comando impossibile».\textsuperscript{28}

Market trends over this period show some noteworthy changes, the most important of which are the innovations in distribution and cultural production. This was when the sale of publications by instalments started at newspaper stands and book stores, making works available to readers who could not otherwise afford them, and thus enlarging the readership.\textsuperscript{29} The decade marked an essential turn in the process of expanding Italian public opinion and cultural circles, however circumscribed they might have been compared with other countries. The first sector to expand was the dailies. The daily press focused mainly on its local market and a quite limited readership; only \textit{Il Secolo} managed to reach 30,000 copies by the end of the 1860s.\textsuperscript{30} The reason for this slow expansion was not just the high rate of illiteracy, but the tendency of journalists to target a narrow elite, writing «in an allusive style clearly not aimed at the masses».\textsuperscript{31} The birth of \textit{Corriere della Sera} in 1876 marked a turning point, and the newspaper soon reached a very high circulation for Italy with more than 75,000 copies by the end of the century, and 600,000 in the 1920s.\textsuperscript{32} The above-mentioned \textit{Il Secolo} reached 115,000 copies in the early twentieth century, though all other newspapers at that time still lingered below a circulation of 50,000 copies.\textsuperscript{33}

Not only the dailies market, but the publishing industry as a whole developed. Concentrated in a few urban centres, it reflected the polycentric municipal tradition of culture in Italy.\textsuperscript{34} It was the publication of novels in particular that blossomed in
the first half-century. From 1820 to 1840, over 400 titles were published. The most popular were historical novels that followed the models of Walter Scott’s and Alessandro Manzoni’s books.\textsuperscript{35} The publishing sector grew substantially after unification: from 4,243 titles in 1863 to more than 9,000 in 1886.\textsuperscript{36} Much of the growth in book publishing was due to popular literature like the serialised novel following the format of Eugène Sue’s \textit{Mysteries of Paris}.\textsuperscript{37} Some publishers like Sonzogno, Salani and Bietti tailored their serials to a popular audience that wanted economical editions.\textsuperscript{38} Sales were usually around a few thousand copies and few authors sold more than 10,000 copies. In special cases, this threshold was surpassed, as with De Amicis’s \textit{Cuore} (Heart) which sold more than 300,000 copies.\textsuperscript{39}

Next to daily newspapers and popular literature, periodicals experienced the greatest increase in circulation: the total number went from 193 in 1846 to 1606 in 1890.\textsuperscript{40} The rise in circulation corresponded with a broadening of the target audience. During the 1880s, periodicals devoted to the very young began to appear, such as \textit{Il giornale dei bambini} (1881–1887), \textit{Il giornale illustrato per i ragazzi} (1886–1888) and \textit{Il tesoro dei bambini} (1893–1897).\textsuperscript{41} The greatest novelty was the rise of a new kind of periodical disseminated by the publisher Angelo Sommaruga. His publications – \textit{Il Fanfulla, La Farfalla, Le Forche Caudine} – aimed at a wider audience than scholars or political militants. In 1881, Sommaruga published \textit{Cronaca Bizantina}, a literary review for a wider readership that was geared to raising debate and controversy. The publication succeeded in attracting personalities from different Italian cultural milieus, from classicism to \textit{Verismo}, and was characterised by the polemical tone it took with the ruling classes and the bourgeoisie.\textsuperscript{42} This new type of review combined literary criticism, cultural information and news of political life in a well-designed graphic layout.\textsuperscript{43} Although Sommaruga’s success was short-lived and led to several court convictions,\textsuperscript{44} his publishing venture is often cited as an example of the period when Italy’s culture industry started.

The range of periodicals highlighted three major problems besetting Italian culture at the time. The first was the link between national and foreign cultural productions. In the 1880s, \textit{Cronaca Bizantina} aimed – quite provocatively – to liberate Italian literature and art from their «subservience» to French influences.\textsuperscript{45}
second was the phenomenon of the out-of-work intellectual. The issue of intellectual unemployment in Italy after unification was noted as early as the 1880s by Aristide Gabelli, pedagogue and minister of education, who spoke of «doctors without patients, lawyers without court cases, engineers without bridges». This condition of imbalance between the opportunities provided by the economy and the number of university graduates has been confirmed by historical research.\textsuperscript{46} The persistence of an imbalance between literary ambitions and employment became a lasting leitmotif in the Italian cultural system. This further reflects the third problem: the voicing of a generational protest against the narrow-mindedness of universities and cultural circles. At the start of the new century, one of the editors of a defunct review – a provincial intellectual then working as a bank clerk – stigmatised the country’s attitude towards outsiders and young people in telling terms:

I am quite convinced that Italy is full of people lacking flair and patriotism, as felt by the peoples of other European countries. Here the work of some young people, doing what they know and what they can, is hindered, mocked and disparaged instead of being encouraged. [...] Either out of arrogance or contempt, the emergence of young people is frowned on, yet they do not detract from anyone’s greatness, but simply want to express their own artistic talent.\textsuperscript{47}

Professional men of letters did not fare any better. In an interview with Ugo Ojetti, Giovanni Verga himself confirmed that «no man of letters in Italy live[d] on an income from literature or at least [...] on an income from literature alone».\textsuperscript{48} Verga’s own most significant works brought far less economic return than some of the novels he wrote for a wider public and which are long forgotten today. It was normal for literary writers to have parallel jobs in teaching or journalism.\textsuperscript{49} The economic success of writers like D’Annunzio was partly linked to the understanding that they had of the means of transmitting culture, and an ability to enter the production mechanism.\textsuperscript{50} But not everyone was so successful. Indirect confirmation of the difficulty of living off one’s culture comes from the turn-of-the-century rise in critical voices inveighing against the proletarianisation of intellectuals and the presence of potentially dangerous «misfits».\textsuperscript{51} Criticism of the intellectual proletariat was the corollary to criticism of mass society, being focused on the presence of groups with untapped intellectual potential, which could be directed against the state and the established order.

\textsuperscript{47} Alfredo Baruzzi, Letter to Oreste Trebbi, 30 June 1900, Biblioteca dell’Archiginnasio Bologna, Fondo Trebbi, I, 23.
\textsuperscript{48} U. Ojetti, \textit{Alla scoperta dei letterati}, Milan 1899, 64.
2. The Phantom of Mass Politicisation

The dawn of mass politicisation is accompanied by an intensified social unrest. In the 1880s, criminal anthropologists began to focus on political crime. Cesare Lombroso wrote a pathological profile of the anarchist and went on to study political crimes in detail.® Late in the decade, a new type of crime, no longer attributed to individuals but to groups, attracted criminologists’ attention. At the root of such analyses were a series of factors that bourgeois public opinion tended to repeat and amplify. Undoubtedly, the Paris Commune sparked something in the collective imagination and was soon followed – again in France – by the Boulangiste mobilisation, in which mass politics played a decisive role. Worker unrest intensified and often ended in clashes during the 1880s; heinous crimes were perpetrated by enraged crowds. The most notorious case was certainly the lynching of a Belgian factory manager in 1886, but there were other examples of crowds venting their rage, not to mention the many lynchings perpetrated in the United States and reported in the European press. Together, these factors kindled scholars’ interest in collective crime. Interest in these phenomena may also have been related to the fears of politicians, as elected assemblies seem to have been left the task of policing the public squares.

In response to these fears and news reports, criminal anthropologists started to focus on the crowd. In the mid-1890s, a series of studies were devoted to the topic.® One of the Italian pioneers was Scipio Sighele, author of a book on criminal crowds that was partly indebted to the French Essays of Gabriel Tarde. Attention to the criminal behaviour of crowds raised an interest in socialists as well. Filippo Turati and Napoleone Colajanni, two important leaders of the Socialist Party, were both lawyers who had toyed with criminal anthropology and espoused the primacy of social causes behind crime. They opposed the pathological line of reasoning and stressed the influence of the environment.® Initially, even Sighele found favour with the socialist review Critica Sociale, as the unrestrained violence of enraged crowds was increasingly perceived as a problem. The socialists revised their attitude, however, when Sighele extended his remarks about the behaviour of crowds to include parliamentary institutions.

One should note that in Italy the word ‘crowd’ only slowly gave way to ‘the mass’ or ‘masses’. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the predominant term ‘popu-

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® On Lombroso, see D. Frigessi, Cesare Lombroso, Turin 2003.


® On the debate between Filippo Turati and Enrico Ferri, see N. Colajanni, Il socialismo, Catania–Tropea 1884, 10–31; N. Colajanni, Sociologia criminale, Catania 1889.
lace) (plebe) denoted the lower social ranks, often in a derogatory sense. In the second half of the century, it gradually gave way to the term «proletariat». As for the word «mass» or «masses», one dictionary in 1853 offered the meaning «armed multitude» with an explicit reference to the French term levée en masse. By the beginning of the twentieth century, the idea of masses as groups of people with characteristics in common is presented by some dictionaries.\(^{55}\) Though the term mass was not always positive, «crowd» had a much more negative connotation: social psychologists identified the masses with crowds insofar as they meant gatherings of people in public places and mass organisations, i.e. organised crowds. Their irrationality contrasted with the individual’s rationality.

An anti-democratic sentiment could thus be attributed to the critique of the crowds. Sighele moved from his scientific descriptions of the crowd to questioning the rationality of parliament. On the one hand, voters were deemed to be «swayed» by the speeches of political leaders and the press, and hence incapable of making a truly rational choice.\(^ {56}\) On the other hand, the elected assembly was said to function according to a crowd mentality. Therefore its deliberations could not be rational, but were inevitably subject to the assembly’s mood.\(^ {57}\) The reaction of the socialists to Sighele’s analysis was quite harsh. Leonida Bissolati, a leading member of the Socialist Party, defended the role of parliament.\(^ {58}\)

The origins of this dispute may be traced back to the changes taking place in Italy at the end of the century and are mainly characterised by a growing political polarisation, the birth of new political forces and the strengthening of structures for worker’s protection, like the Camera del Lavoro (chamber of labour). These developments highlighted the contrast between the way the liberal system functioned and parliamentarianism itself – a difficulty that the famous scholar, Santi Romano, described in 1910 as the crisis of the modern state:

Therefore, the crisis of today’s state may be deemed to be characterised by the converging of two phenomena, one necessarily aggravating the other: the progressive organising of society, increasingly losing its atomistic feature around specific interests, and the inadequacy of legal and institutional means available to society with which to reflect and assess itself and its structure within the state.\(^ {59}\)

\(^{55}\) For the history of these concepts, see Cavazza, Dimensione Massa, 23–70.


\(^{57}\) Sighele, Contro il parlamentarismo, 33.


Santi Romano’s considerations were general, but much to the point in the case of Italy. The liberal political class, representing a political society limited by suffrage and a homogeneity born out of a shared liberal ideology, was having difficulty dealing with the emerging political forces. By granting the vote to literates, the reform of 1882 increased the number of voters to 2,049,461, a figure representing about one-quarter of all adult males. Although in his first short-lived experience as prime minister (1892) Giovanni Giolitti consented to the birth of the Socialist Party, Francesco Crispi pursued a line of harsh repression. The 1890s saw increasing unrest which culminated in 1898 with the brutal stifling of protests against rising food prices. This ended with rioting in Milan that forced the authorities to declare a state of siege. The turn-of-the-century crisis seemed to question the development of liberalism, with proposals being made to strengthen the power of the King and the executive. In any event, however, the new political season started with Giolitti’s government, which – as mentioned before – was open to dialogue with the socialists.

3. Political Cultures and Mass Reading

The rise of conflicting political cultures traced in the foregoing sections did more than contribute to the evolution of political society. It also left its imprint on the developing mass culture which was discovered as a means of propaganda and opportunity of self-organisation by the Left as well as by the Right.

The Catholics had been in conflict with the liberal state since the seizing of Rome, and since 1874 they no longer took part in general elections by express wish of the Holy Father in his famous Non Expedit. But, as is well known, this did not mean that they were excluded from public life. In the 1880s, several locally published Catholic periodicals came to the fore, indicating a progressive return by the Catholics into the public arena after Non Expedit. The year 1874 also saw the foundation of Opera dei Congressi, a coordinating body of intransigent Catholic associations. During the 1880s and 1890s, the Catholics further strengthened their organisation, establishing among other things the Farm Labour Unions (Leghe bianche) which were not incorporated in the Socialist Unions (Leghe contadine). The Catholic world was split into «intransigents» and «appeasers» (conciliatoristi), the former taking a hard stance against any collaboration with the liberal state, the latter open to finding a middle ground. Civiltà Cattolica, the intransigents’ review par excellence, counted 8,955 subscribers in 1880, while Rassegna Nazionale, the appeasers’ equivalent, had about 600 subscribers. In 1880, there were 159 Catholic

60 Ibid., 94.
62 Ibid., 468–469.
publications; in 1893 there were 271; by 1903, there were 487 publications, of which 26 were newspapers.\footnote{65} Catholics could count on widespread distributive channels partly supported by religious orders for the promotion of reading and the dissemination of edifying books. Don Bosco and the Salesians were at the forefront of this drive for popular acculturation. In 1853, the publication of a series called \textit{Letture Cattoliche} (Catholic Readings) set out to sell texts at a low price and successfully continued in following years with an average circulation of some 15,000.\footnote{66} The Catholic press and publishing houses fed their own networks of distribution and audiences while speaking for the diverse factions of the Catholic world. Even among intransigent Catholics, these new patterns of cultural dissemination responded to the alleged danger of non-confessional popular libraries. In the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century, political Catholicism progressively narrowed the gap with the Italian state,\footnote{67} in parallel with the consolidation of the left-wing electoral blocs, grouping socialists with republicans and radicals as the so-called «Estrema sinistra».

The political movements of the Left produced their own publications, supporting the party cause and also endeavouring to mould their followers’ reading habits. Mazzini’s political project that affected the Republican Party in the 1890s included the promotion of lower class acculturation.\footnote{68} A similar cultural drive was pursued by the newly established Socialist Party. From the outset, the socialist movement offered political publications of its own to be distributed by militants. It also sought to provide a reading guide consistent with the principles of socialism. Though favouring political and social writing, the socialists were by no means averse to literature. Part of their heartfelt beliefs was the notion that the new age they looked forward to would inject art with fresh verve. Next to the «library of propaganda» column spurring the militant to go more deeply into socialist policy, the editors also reviewed works of art to guide their followers’ understanding. Here too, there was a penchant for political and social matter, but there was also always a review of literary works. In a positive write-up of Zola’s \textit{Doctor Pascal}, \textit{Critica Sociale} appreciated the writer’s ability to portray bourgeois society and designated him as one of those artists «whose ideas are ahead of their times».\footnote{69}

The socialist newspaper \textit{Avanti!} initially succeeded in getting 5000 subscribers thanks to the support of wealthy associations and backers. With 46,000 copies sold,\footnote{70} its circulation was close to that of the top-selling papers. Later on, however, the number of subscriptions hovered around 3000 with sales between 10,000 and

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\item F. Traniello, «La cultura popolare cattolica», in: Turi / Soldani, \textit{Fare gli Italiani}, 443–444.
\item Ibid., 441–442.
\item A. Aquarone, \textit{L’Italia giolittiana}, Bologna 1988, 55.
\item M. Ridolfi, \textit{Interessi e passioni}, 195.
\end{itemize}}
20,000. The peak during Enrico Ferri’s editorship (37,000 copies) came in late 1903.\footnote{Ibid., 38–39.} In the 1890s, the local socialist press consisted of about thirty papers that sold a total of 85,000 copies.\footnote{Ibid., 53.} In the early twentieth century the socialists attempted to keep up with the changes taking place in the distribution of culture. Popular libraries were established to foster reading, and these succeeded in reaching a large number of militants. It has been estimated that popular libraries had about 201,000 readers in Milan in 1910: 44.7 per cent of them workers, 32 per cent students, 12.7 per cent white-collar workers and 6.3 per cent «housewives».\footnote{M. Ridolfi, «La breve stagione dell’editoria socialista», in: G. Turi (ed.), 
*Storia dell’editoria nell’Italia contemporanea*, 321–338, 333.} The most sought after works were by literary authors (48.7 per cent) and to a lesser extent positivist authors like Lombroso (28.7 per cent), while the classics of Marxism were practically unread.\footnote{Ibid.} Nineteenth-century publishing was quite varied, but the Italian Socialist Party (PSI) lacked its own publishing house. There were publishers close to socialist ideas, like Nerbini, who in any case did not confine their business to selling books that were in line with socialist cultural policy. It was not until 1911 that the decision was made to establish the party’s own publishing house (*Società Editrice Socialista Avanti!*).\footnote{Ibid.}

From the point of view of mass culture the socialist movement had a pedagogical stamp that was oriented toward the cultural promotion of the working classes. The socialist approach aimed at the cultural elevation of the lower classes and was therefore a modernising factor for Italian society as a whole:

Propaganda, understood as the continual reading of the same newspaper, can produce a real and subconscious warping of the intellect. Politics do not perform an educational task but an subtle perverting action. The remedy to this evil is none other than the book: the mass-consumed book looking for its readers, enticing, ensnaring, pursuing and gripping them; the book which uplifts, enlightens and redeems. And the popular library – if successful – will not only highlight the value of books, but also infuse them with a life they do not have on their own from the law of demand; good popular books will be created thanks to the presence of readers who have been educated to seek them. If Italian socialists were to realise this ambition, namely, to make the proletariat fall in love with books, by having each worker read one book a month (and it wouldn’t matter if they were not socialist books), their work would be – we believe – a hundred times more revolutionary than a few thousand documents of protest or several dozen general strikes – since, directly or indirectly, it would act not only on the minds but also on the development of production.\footnote{F. Turati, «Il libro come strumento di redenzione sociale», in: *Critica sociale* 15 (1905) 7, 101–102.}
In other words, both political cultures (Catholic and socialist) played an important role in promoting the education of the lower classes. The socialist and Catholic the notions of the masses diverged to some extent. To the socialists, the masses were basically comprised of the urban and peasant proletariat. The Catholics gave no particular meaning to the term, and the people in the sense of the lower ranks were viewed as upholding traditional values and often forming part of an organic society. The idea of a traditional organic society in which the aristocracy had a class role was alien to Catholic culture, while the task of educating the masses was partly a response to the example set by democrats, socialists and freemasons.

4. The Birth of the Culture Industry around 1900

The early twentieth century marked important changes in the sphere of mass culture. One area of change was the increase in school attendance and therefore the enlargement of the pool of potential readers. From 1900 to 1914 the number of elementary school pupils increased from 3,000,000 to 3,700,000, while high school students grew from 91,000 to 294,000, and university enrolment increased slightly, reaching 30,000 enrolled students. From 1886 to 1891, there were 51 students to every 100,000 inhabitants, as compared with 48 in Germany. These increases had two important consequences: the first was school publishing, which became a very successful and profitable line of business. The second was the expansion of the number of readers. Urban expansion over this period enabled a new bourgeois public to acquire culture as a status symbol, distinguishing it from the lower social orders. In 1881, there were an estimated 6000 to 7000 readers; by 1921 the figure had risen to 2,000,000. In 1902, the review La Settimana, edited by Neapolitan writer Matilde Serao, stated in its first issue:

Italian people want to read! Despite the fact that they are not used to reading, have not learned to appreciate reading, do not have enough money to spend four or five lire on a book, have no intention of setting aside money to buy books, or to subscribe to useful, beautiful but expensive reviews, do not know where to go, what to pick, what to like and what not to like – all this notwithstanding, Italians want to read! For the last ten years the number of daily newspapers has doubled, tripled: their formats have become larger, their pages have increased in number, with Sunday supplements covering diverse topics. And all this has been met with a growing number of readers, as shown by the success of these small- and large-scale dailies [...] Readers are there when little money is

What lies behind these remarks is not only the understanding that there is a growing public out there to be reached of many potential readers, but there is also a different perception of the relationship between culture and industrial publishing that takes into account the need to offer quality products at low prices in order to reach those with limited means. It should be recalled here that, together with the above-mentioned sales of books in weekly instalments, in the early twentieth century UTET from Turin made the first attempt at instalment sales, a system that was later improved in the interwar period. Of course, people who had stopped their education at the primary school level had more limited reading interests than those with secondary school or university levels of education. The diversification of the cultural product responded to these differences. The advent of mass culture tended to polarise markets, separating elitist high culture from a market for daily entertainment. It tended to make essay writing and scientific reportage into niche areas and to boost the novel and entertainment genres. Alongside lofty literary reviews grew magazines of various kinds whose target was a middle-class public interested in reading. The journal La Critica, edited by philosopher Benedetto Croce and launched in 1903 by the publishing house Laterza, was the benchmark of Italian idealism, later on becoming a considerable influence on Italian culture. Its readers were highly learned academics and intellectuals or secondary school and university teachers. A different kind of public read Illustrazione italiana, a magazine which published photographs alongside articles of general interest and culture written by intellectuals and well-known authors; it was founded in 1873 and targeted a middle-high class readership. Beginning in 1890, Tribuna Illustrata was published for a wider audience, and in 1899 La Domenica del Corriere came out as a Sunday supplement to Corriere della Sera. The differentiation of reader groups also pertained to age bracket and gender. The genre of children’s literature was also on the increase with the creation of new magazines devoted to young readers, like the still-active Corriere dei piccoli, founded in 1902, and Giornalino, published in 1907. Italy’s culture industry showed a more limited level of specialisation than other countries, however, while the increase in readers remained lower than in more advanced countries. As mentioned above, the culture industry also tended to focus on urban areas where bookstores were located and had difficulty penetrating the countryside where book circulation was still in the hands of travelling salesmen. In 1913, the establishment...
of a distribution agency, *Le messaggerie*, represented an important innovation of the development for the cultural industry.

We might say therefore that the Italian culture industry had already developed before the Great War, but it still presented some structural weaknesses that distinguished it from other countries. By the end of the First World War, publishing houses no longer tended to be all-encompassing but rather specialised in one of four market areas: science and education, high culture, a bourgeois narrative consumer sector and a «popular» products area either in the scandal-mongering or the serial story tradition.\(^88\) The development of the Italian culture industry also saw flourishing cultural reviews being published by intellectuals anxious to find a space for themselves on the Italian market and with an approach combining intellectual output and a concern for public life.

5. Cultural Reviews and the Intellectual Problem in Early Twentieth Century

As its influence spread, the culture industry changed the author-publisher relationship. The author would often be forced to diversify or join the daily press round as a writer-journalist, something both D’Annunzio and Verga were forced to do. Again, the burgeoning number of intellectuals created a gap between expectations and employment opportunities. Statistics show that in 1901 there were 2700 «journalists, publicists and authors», and in 1910 over 4000.\(^89\) To this figure one should add university professors who numbered 1100. The intellectual count was lower than in other European countries, but it probably underestimates the real number, as it ignores those who had to work for a living and pursued literary activities on the side.\(^90\) It is thus hardly surprising that the turn of the nineteenth century saw a new bout of complaining about the lack of opportunities for intellectuals and alarm at the birth of an intellectual proletariat. This was countered by socialist cries of «the more who study, the better» since «this mass of misfits» would spawn «those revolutionaries that are a thorn in the flesh of the bourgeoisie: the socialists».\(^91\) Complaints regarding missing opportunities for intellectuals were common in other countries as well.\(^92\) But in Italy’s case, there are reasons for suspecting that this problem had a longer tradition and a unique scope. Although broad-ranging historical research on the topic is not available, scholars of literature have tried to provide an answer. A survey based on a limited sample of *literati* has shown that most lived from jobs outside of literature: teaching, freelance professions, journalism.\(^93\)

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88 Ragone, «L’editoria in Italia», 54.
The rising number of people seeking to enter the field of cultural production corresponded to a shift of direction in the intellectual world and a bid for greater commitment in civil life, often entailing criticism of the establishment and an assertion of the need for a role for intellectuals.

At the close of the nineteenth century, positivist culture was predominant. Although positivism could not be wholly identified with socialism tout court, many positivist intellectuals were undeniably attracted to socialism, e.g. the criminal anthropologist Enrico Ferri who became an influential leader of the Socialist Party, Lombroso who joined the party in 1892 or the elitist theoretician Vilfredo Pareto who wasn’t a socialist but dedicated an entire book to socialism in 1902. Socialism seemed to many intellectuals to be the repository of a new future and a manifestation of a «positive» culture. But in the first fifteen years of the century, an anti-positivist reaction took root in intellectual milieus, often with anti-socialist overtones. Cultural reviews of the early century were attacked for advocating the «massification» of the liberal society. One favourite butt was so-called Giolitti Italy, judged as reflecting only a bureaucratic and provincial culture and lacking broader visions. For the intellectuals of the new generation, especially those located on the right of the political spectrum like the future founders of Associazione Nazionalista Italiana (Italian Nationalist Association), Giolitti was also disliked for the relationships he built with socialists.

As a result of such criticism and, at the same time, as a means of overcoming the precarious social situation of intellectuals at the time, the flourishing cultural reviews of those years tended to subdivide into periodicals which were the mouthpieces of the culture industry and those linked to clear-cut cultural projects. Renato Serra stated this distinction with clarity: «Today there are two possible kinds of reviews: on the one hand, the cinema type magazine, bazaar of unsigned curiosities; on the other hand, the personal review (rivista persona), expressing only and always the views of one man, or one group, a well-defined family of kindred spirits.»

While there were magazines pursuing commercial ends – industrial products designed for consumption by a large audience – there were also cultural reviews produced by intellectuals with a precise cultural programme. This split reflected what had been observed in the publishing market: a tendency to subdivide the market and diversify production systems. The intellectual protest niche was filled by small-scale publishing ventures geared to high culture. One such venture was La Voce, a review which also eventually comprised a series of volumes. La Voce joined in the disparagement of the culture industry:

96 Ragone, «L’editoria in Italia», 52.
But you, reader, have you done all you could? If you are familiar with this work you will know that it has not put been together like many an information magazine where so many square centimetres of printed paper may be had for ten cents (the more you get, the better the bargain); nor is it one of those equally numerous pastime magazines, industrial ventures out to have a return on their money as though peddling dried figs or medical remedies. You will have noticed, gentle reader, that La Voce contains deep-seated beliefs and a sense of commitment.\(^{97}\)

Periodicals from the second category promoted by a group were not developed at a broad national level. Following the model of La Voce, many local reviews were published in small towns during this period. Promoters of these periodicals were often provincial intellectuals. They were perhaps high-profile names like Arrigo Boine or backwater intellectuals whose sphere of influence was confined to their own town. In parallel with the professionalising of intellectuals within the university or culture industry milieus, a figure emerged who was bound up with mass society in the making: an intellectual working at a local level, far from success or fame.\(^ {98} \)

A second point in common among such publications as La Voce, Leonardo, Hermes or Il Regno was that their editorial boards were mostly staffed by young writers well under thirty. Inside these reviews the outlines of a sort of organised juvenile rebellion against bureaucracy and generational narrow-mindedness started to emerge, which, as previously mentioned, has continued to surface in the cultural and political debate up to the present day. It comes as no surprise that the generational issue often took on a caustic note, as indicated here by Emilio Bodrero, future senator of fascist Italy and dean of Turin University: «We who were and are young during the gerontocracy of the Patriots are used to being considered the sacrificed generation. Our eldest have not trusted us and will leave their power in the hands of the next generation. […] Meanwhile we have grown unfortunate, destitute; we learn that we are nothing, we don’t count, we are the experimental generation.»\(^ {99} \)

The third common trait of these cultural reviews was their criticism of cultural cosmopolitanism in the name of Italian culture and a dislike of consumer literature. In nationalist reviews the outcry against foreign influence began to sound like an assertion of identity, combined with considerable anti-modernism. The argument against importing foreign models did not stop foreign culture from being utilised and drawn upon for anti-positivist stimuli. It should be noted that the criticism of cosmopolitanism was not unanimous. Reviews such as La Voce did present ideas from other European countries. The controversy we have described here, however,

\(^{97}\) G. pr. [= G. Prezzolini], «Al lettore», in: La Voce 1 (1909) 9, 94.

\(^{98}\) On this subject, see S. Cavazza, Piccole Patrie, Bologna 2003, 29–44.

had two levels. The first level consisted in criticism of Italian institutions at the time of Giolitti and of culture industries, which were accused of being closed off to outsiders or at least overly dependent on international culture. This faction shows a tendency to question the legitimacy of higher culture’s mechanisms of recruitment and co-option, while equally criticising those of the culture industry milieu. The former were accused of lacking transparency and putting bureaucracy before true art. The latter were taken to task for the room they allotted to low culture and for excessive subordination to the influences of foreign culture.

The fourth common trait of these cultural reviews was the polemic against positivism and socialism, which could be adopted in the individual’s criticism of the masses, and an attack on the manufacturing bourgeoisie accused of sharing their ideal of materialistic values: «But to our eyes, the worst stains that they, the bourgeoisie and socialists, have in common are anti-intellectualism and anti-individualism. The free and exclusive activity of the intellect is not for them, and when they see it in others they treat it with irony or indifference. They are utilitarians and positivists and are not ashamed of appreciating patents for pistons more than a poem of the unreal or a theory of knowledge.»

Giovanni Papini’s standpoint would not have been defended in these terms by the intellectuals of Il Regno, who were supporters of the power of the nation and therefore defenders of the manufacturers against every other class. Both standpoints shared a clear position, however, that was against mass society and its values as embodied in socialism. Nationalist intellectuals in particular tried to redefine reactionary ideology, separating it from the old conception. These intellectuals took up a position against the masses. On the one hand, they were disgusted by the masses as conceived by the socialists, i.e. the masses equals the lower classes. They held an elitist point of view, re-appraising the role of intellectuals and the leading role of the bourgeoisie, despite accusing the liberal bourgeoisie of betraying its own interests and favouring the socialist masses. On the other hand, nationalist intellectuals tried to mobilise the middle and upper classes against socialism. Enrico Corradini spoke of a new aristocracy embodied in a renewed bourgeoisie that should be aware of its role. But in contrast with the former reactionary ideology, these nationalist intellectuals were increasingly ready to use mass culture in order to attain their goals, even though they maintained an elitist distance from the masses. Fascism, for many of them, thus marked a political as well as social opportunity.

100 E. Corradini, «Per coloro che risorgono», in: Il Regno 1 (29 November 1903) 1, 1. On nationalist intellectuals, see also Mangoni, «Gli intellettuali», 479–480.

6. Mass Culture and Fascism

Fascism coincided with a strengthening of the culture industry and the mass culture that had established itself before the war. Regarding publishing in the period between the two World Wars, several important changes occurred. In 1927, there were 620 publishing houses in Italy, which employed 7717 people. There was a stronger presence in the north with 369 houses. The number of printing presses exceeded 8000.\(^{102}\) Book sales had declined since the start of the First World War, and it was not until 1927 that any real improvement was reported. This took place in a changing production framework. First of all, the role of family-owned firms was becoming marginal and replaced by joint-stock companies. Secondly, the role of the state and the regime in the publishing sector grew significantly.\(^{103}\) Even before the consolidation of the censorship machine was complete, an alignment to fascism by many publishers had already taken place. The publisher Nerbini, who had at first favoured socialist ideas, already shifted closer to Mussolini during the war as, for example, some large publishing houses opened their boards of directors to fascist sympathisers, or were either supported by them directly or indirectly (with the granting of loans).\(^{104}\) Fascism incorporated the distributive channels of popular libraries, which accounted for 3198 establishments in 1932, and further expanded their number, thus generating a keen demand for publishers.\(^{105}\) It has been calculated that the purchase commission of the Ministry of Education bought 100,000 books in six years with purchases mainly split among large publishers enjoying good relations with the regime.\(^{106}\) The school market saw unprecedented interventionism by the state, with the introduction of a primer for all elementary schools.\(^{107}\) The relationship between fascism and the publishers was also marked by a certain degree of ambiguity, as highlighted by historiography. Important publishers, like Mondadori, succeeded in exploiting their support for the regime to secure leeway for themselves in their publishing decisions.\(^{108}\) A certain freedom of action was also possible owing to ongoing contradictions within the cultural milieus and the regime itself – tension persisted between the need for modernisation and a fear of modern values.

The efforts to produce books responding to fascist culture and ideals did not halt the penetration of foreign cultural products, in particular in new sectors like comics.\(^{109}\) In publishing, the diverse political cultures present in the pre-fascist

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\(^{105}\) Forgacs, *Industrializzazione*, 89.

\(^{106}\) Scoto di Luzio, «Editoria», 457.


\(^{108}\) Forgacs, *Industrializzazione*, 89.

\(^{109}\) Forgacs / Gundle, *Cultura di massa*, 160–162.
period did not survive as they had before. Nonetheless, although the socialists had to disappear from the scene, Catholic publishing not only managed to survive, but also gained ground with the establishment of new publishing houses like Morcelliana. This was partly because its existence was separate from political Catholicism, and partly because of the effect of the Concordat between the regime and the Vatican. Non-aligned voices generally did not survive. One of the few exceptions was Benedetto Croce who continued his cultural activities thanks to the international renown of his works. As for the Einaudi publishing house, founded in 1934, many young intellectuals had their first experiences as anti-fascist intellectuals in this group.\textsuperscript{110}

Regarding the role of intellectuals, criticism concerning the narrow-mindedness of cultural circles and complaints about the hardships of men of culture had accompanied the rise to power of the fascist movement. The regime dealt cautiously with intellectuals from its own camp and avoided taking sides, even while initially supporting the notion that fascist art would spring forth naturally once the building of fascist society was complete. It should be recalled that, within the regime, criticism of intellectuals continued as an expression of the anti-intellectual feeling that pervaded fascism and its inability to accept the individualistic role of the intellectual at an ideological level. The interest of fascism in intellectual work manifested itself clearly in its early attempts to organise this category of cultural production. In 1920, the Italian Confederation for Intellectual Work was established in order to defend the interests of the intellectual class against the Russian fate of intellectual subservience.\textsuperscript{111} In 1922, the association of intellectual professions was established within the Fascist Trade Union Confederation.\textsuperscript{112} The attention paid to intellectual work was a sign of fascism's interest in the middle class, and the cultural policy of the regime was also useful in guaranteeing work and employment for the intellectual classes. It commissioned works of architecture, financed the theatre and promoted the Italian cinema industry. Some of this intervention stemmed from transformations in the cultural industry across the country and would no doubt have been similarly implemented by liberal governments. Yet the regime undeniably paid special attention to the world of culture. By controlling it, the regime hoped to mould the arts to fascist ideals and make a clean break with the liberal tradition. Its various operations also sought to satisfy its own supporters’ ambitions wherever possible. Funded by the regime, fascist newspapers and fascist cultural reviews provided a platform for regime-serving intellectuals to win acclaim. Apart from shaping national policy in this manner, the use Mussolini made of his direct link to culture as a way of bolstering his own role within the regime is significant. Archival

\textsuperscript{110} L. Mangoni, 	extit{Pensare i libri. La casa editrice Einaudi dagli anni trenta agli anni sessanta}, Turin 1999, 3–5.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 116.
sources show that among the many making appeals to the Duce every day were intellectuals in search of funds and backing for their enterprises. In practice, the regime worked to support intellectuals’ activities, and in the late 1930s it intensified this action by creating awards and organising the Littoriali of culture for its militants in the Fascist University Organisation. Fascism promised to promote intellectual work and not just the figure of the intellectual as a man of culture.113 Young intellectuals were particularly supported by the regime because the exaltation of youth played an important part in fascist ideology.114

Fascism made a move to govern mass society and its contradictions. In order to do so, the regime mobilised youth and distributed culture within the framework of a totalitarian project. This mobilisation, which was imposed on the population, triggered expectations on the side of the intellectuals in terms of career opportunities that could not be fully satisfied. But several dynamics were undeniably set into motion in the 1930s which would only be realised in the post-war period. This raises the question of the modernising impact of the fascist regime which has received wide attention within the historiographic debate.115 In reality, the regime found itself in quite a contradictory position: on the one hand, it supported modernisation drives – if only because they were instrumental for pursuing consensus-building political objectives – while, on the other hand, it attempted to stop elements of modernisation that appeared to conflict with its ideological framework. A good example of this was the intellectual perception of America. If anti-Americanism, seen as anti-modernism, was widespread in fascist Italy, there were also intellectuals fascinated by American culture, while considering it unsuitable for Italy. In general, in their description of America Italian intellectuals emphasised the lack of morality and the «primitiveness» of the country.116 Yet one can hardly deny that groups did exist within fascism that had a clear modernist leaning, such as the futurists. In the 1920s, conflict within the regime came to a head in the celebrated split between cosmopolitan intellectuals and the defenders of local culture. The former included the writer Massimo Bontempelli and his review Novecento. In the second camp were those in favour of a national culture based on the re-discovery of local roots. In this case, the militant review Il Selvaggio – directed by the refined etcher, Mino Maccari – was a touchstone for the most radical fascist culture, which railed against the French «Tabarin» and city culture.117 Maccari’s journal inveighed against the milieu

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116 Ben-Ghiat, La cultura fascista, , 67–69.
of culture industry and attacked the highly successful, erotic scandal-mongering literature typified by Guido Da Verona, who would himself soon fall victim to fascist censorship.\footnote{L. Benadusi, *Il nemico dell'uomo nuovo: l'omo-sessualità nell'esperimento totalitario fascista*, Milan, 2005, 293.}

### 7. Conclusion

Taking into account the three axes of our analysis – popular reception, political cultures and the situation of the intellectuals – we can conclude the following. First, while beginning from a worse starting point than other European countries, Italy's course resembled theirs. The reading public may have been limited, but that did not prevent a publishing industry from developing or a market from diversifying into various levels, including a consumer literature sector destined for the broader public. Although the book market remained small up until the post-war years – even in the 1950s only seven per cent of Italians read books\footnote{Vittoria, «Editoria», 281.} – the pool of recipients swelled undeniably over the years due to the various levels of the culture industry. In the absence of wide-ranging studies covering the evolution of reading in the various social strata, it is hard to gauge the size of this public, which has often somehow been seen as a natural by-product of the proliferating genres – as happened, for instance, with certain types of consumption in the late nineteenth century.\footnote{Chemello, «La letteratura popolare», 168–169.} These are well-founded opinions which may be shared, yet they bring us back to the difficulty of estimating the real composition of this readership, which does seem to have been largely urban.

The second point is the role of political cultures (seen as sets of values and practices appertaining to a political movement) in fostering reading. Here again, the socialists’ promotion of popular libraries and their need for political propaganda seem to have contributed to widening the practice of reading, albeit with results that differed from the movement’s expectations. Likewise, the broad output of reading matter designed for Catholics based on healthy values undoubtedly played a no less important role in fostering reading.

The third point regards the emerging figure of the intellectual as a producer of culture, and the gap between the intellectual’s expectations and the real scope for employment. Since sociologist Marzio Barbagli’s studies, the gap between the demand for intellectual work and its supply has been taken as characteristic of the development of cultural industry in Italy. Studies on intellectual groups and journals have revealed their continual discontent with the changing face of the establishment. The link between this phenomenon and the advent of a mass culture and society is evident. The very dynamics of mass society make it possible for intellectual work to expand in the field of culture. This, however, creates expectations that
often collide with the culture industry and its patterns of development. At issue here is not just a conflict between the intellectual’s ideal of a person of high culture and the sectors in which opportunities for using his or her talent materialise, often in sectors branded as consumer literature. One must equally remember the above-mentioned gap between candidates and real sources of employment, including the problem of how cultural circles were accessed. On this last score, the recurring complaints about outsiders being debarred are definitely a sign that such co-option processes had little legitimacy, while the presence of actual obstacles in the structure of the culture industry milieu still need to be verified. Studies on intellectuals tend above all to focus on their intellectual output, although scholars of literature have provided interesting surveys of the material conditions. On the whole, however, such research has concentrated on groups of national and / or cultural renown precisely because they left their mark on politics and culture. By contrast, the so-called provincial intellectuals of the twentieth century have been studied for their cultural profile by scholars like Mario Isnenghi, but further analysis is required to gauge their degree of access to the culture industry. This would already be a far from simple undertaking, even in terms of building up a significant and representative sample, but it would provide some important answers to the real dynamics of mass society in Italy.

Twisted Roots. 
Intellectuals, Mass Culture and Political Culture in Italy

The article examines the rise of mass culture in Italy from the mid-nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. It particularly analyses the literary production, politically organised cultural offering as well as the role of the intellectuals. Despite the high illiteracy rate (until the beginning of the twentieth century higher than in other countries), different mass-cultural spheres developed throughout Western Europe. The socialist and Catholic communities decisively contributed to this development. With the help of their own publications and distribution channels as well as libraries, they encouraged the population to read. Simultaneously, intellectuals and writers with precarious social situations hoped for new fields of activity in the emerging cultural industries. The gap between these expectations and modern reality led many of these observers to criticise mass culture. In some cases, it even led to political radicalisation and rapprochement with the fascist movement.
Gewundene Wurzeln.
Intellektuelle, Massenkultur und politische Kultur in Italien

Les racines enchevêtrées.
intellectuels, la culture de masse et la culture politique en Italie
L'article examine la montée de la culture de masse en Italie du milieu du XIXe siècle au début du XXe siècle. L'analyse met l'accent sur la production littéraire, les offres culturelles organisées par la politique ainsi que le rôle des intellectuels. Malgré un taux élevé d'analphabétisme (plus important que dans d'autres pays jusqu'au début du XXe siècle), les différentes sphères de la culture de masse se développèrent à l'instar de ce que connut presque toute l'Europe occidentale. Les milieux socialistes et catholiques contribuèrent décisivement à ce développement. A l'aide de leurs propres publications, canaux de distribution et de bibliothèques, ils encouragèrent la population à lire. Parallèlement, les intellectuels et écrivains connaissant une situation sociale précaire espérèrent trouver de nouveaux champs d'activité dans les industries culturelles émergentes. Les écarts entre ces attentes et la réalité moderne amenèrent beaucoup de ces observateurs à critiquer la culture de masse et les menèrent, dans certains cas, à la radicalisation politique et au rapprochement avec le mouvement fasciste.

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