

## Article

# Paolo Mantegazza as Didactic Gastronomer: Food, Art, Science and the New Italian Nation

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Academic Editor: Francesca Muccini

Received: 18 February 2016; Accepted: 9 April 2016; Published: 4 May 2016

**Abstract:** It is in Risorgimento Italy that there is an incessant quest for a definition of what it means to be *Italian* amongst a reality of economic paucity and clear social divisiveness. During this tenuous yet crucial epoch, there is a cohesive attempt to define Italian *taste* with an ideological terminology previously absent from sensorial and aesthetic discourse. A fundamental purveyor of this novel approach is the self-defined “poligamo delle scienze,” Paolo Mantegazza. To the plurality of roles attributed to the medic (anthropologist, pathologist, senator, writer, *etc.*), there is one yet to be explored—Mantegazza as didactic gastronomer. In the attempt to combat what he considers the *anti-hygienic* conditions plaguing the nation, the medic inaugurates a pedagogic process that would ideally lead to the formation of the *Italian* citizen. With the goal of creating a stronger and more capable Italian populace, the author goes to great lengths to provide guidelines for maximizing nourishment through the humblest of foods. Ultimately, Mantegazza’s pedagogic gourmandism is integral in the propagation of a social model of comportment that defines the Positivist framework of biological and nationalistic renewal and to a new vision of *taste*.

**Keywords:** Mantegazza; Artusi; Italian taste; food as art; Italian nationalism

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*Nell’amore il prima è spesso un prurito che fa male o un uragano che schianta gli alberi e rovina le messi. Il mentre è dolcissimo, ma ahimé, dura troppo poco. Non dirò coll’epicurea francese, che cela ne dure que le temps d’avaler un œuf, ma dobbiamo pur confessare, che il mentre si misura non a giorni, né a ore; ma coll’orologio a minuti secondi.*

*Il poi, poi, è ora acido, è ora amaro: nei casi più fortunati è un languore, cioè una forma di stanchezza. Nei casi più disgraziati, che pur son frequenti, è un dolore o un pentimento o l’uno e l’altro insieme.*

*Nella gola invece delizioso è il prima, più delizioso il mentre, deliziosissimo il poi. ([1], pp. 78–79).<sup>1</sup>*

(–Paolo Mantegazza)

In recent years, particularly after the 150th anniversary of the Italian unification (2011), there has been a new focus on the role of *cucina* (cuisine) in the creation of *italianità* (Italianess), with keen attention given to the figure of Pellegrino Artusi (1820–1911).<sup>2</sup> Aside from Piero Camporesi’s declarations in the famed 1970 edition of *La scienza in cucina e l’arte di mangiar bene* (Science in the Kitchen and the Art

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<sup>1</sup> *In love the before is often a yearning that does harm or a hurricane that tears up trees and ruins crops. The meanwhile is so sweet, but, alas, it is so fleeting. I will not say as the French epicure that it lasts as long as it takes to swallow an egg, but we must also confess that the meanwhile is measured not by days, nor by hours, but with a clock by minutes and seconds. The afterward is in moments sour and in others bitter: in the most fortunate of cases it is lethargic, that is to say a sort of weariness. Instead with food, the before is delicious, the meanwhile more delicious, and even more delicious is the afterward.*

<sup>2</sup> For an English study done on Pellegrino Artusi, see Helstosky’s “Recipe for the Nation” [2].

of *Eating Well*),<sup>3</sup> which first generated intellectual discourse around the text, the 100th anniversary of Artusi's death<sup>4</sup> coincides with, and is therefore juxtaposed with, the sesquicentennial national anniversary, thereby further solidifying the correlation between the cookbook author and a sense of national unity. The book that Alberto Capatti deems “un opera di impegno civile,” [4]<sup>5</sup> has at this point taken on iconic status, cementing Artusi's place in a gastro-nationalistic discourse. It is Artusi who becomes the Italian cookbook author *par excellence*, credited with unifying a nation that was struggling to come together because of centuries of political, linguistic and cultural fragmentation. However, it is important to note that Artusi is not alone in his venture to use food as nationalizing stimulus. A figure who I contend has been overlooked is a collaborator of Artusi: Paolo Mantegazza. The two are intertwined in the Italian 19th century gastronomical landscape, and this article will ascribe a new role to Mantegazza that has yet to be explored: to the many labels attributed to this man of science (medic, anthropologist, ethnographer, pathologist, neurologist, physiologist, senator, novelist, *etc.*), it is fundamental to add one more, that is *gastronome* or, rather, *didactic gastronome*.

Mantegazza is at the avant-garde of the nascent *self-helpism*<sup>6</sup> in the 19th century and attempts to resolve the prominent uncertainties of the post-unification period, demonstrating that food consciousness equals identity on various levels—from domestic to societal. Hygiene and hygienism, of which Mantegazza is the major 19th-century Italian proponent, become significant inasmuch as they serve as basis for good propriety and good citizenship, and, along with *galatei* (etiquette manuals) that tackle hygiene of various kinds, manuals and periodicals are published in the Italian 19th century with goals to establish a criteria for good health and beauty. This is particularly the case in a post-unificatory Italy, where questions of what it means to be *Italian* among a reality of economic paucity and clear social divisiveness arise. During this tenuous, yet crucial, period, there is also a cohesive attempt to define Italian *taste* with an ideological terminology previously absent from sensorial and aesthetic discourse. A fundamental purveyor of this novel approach is precisely the self-defined *polygamist of the sciences*,<sup>7</sup> Paolo Mantegazza. In the attempt to combat what he considers the anti-hygienic conditions plaguing the nation, the author inaugurates a pedagogic process that would ideally lead to the formation of the *Italian* citizen. Through his numerous manuals on hygiene and physiological studies, Mantegazza the Positivist is determined to actively participate in the edification of his nation.<sup>8</sup> This entails the regeneration of its citizens from the bottom up, denoting the educative intent of imparting a gastronomic, as well as gastrophonic (i.e., a language of food), lesson to those who may

<sup>3</sup> “L'importanza dell'Artusi è notevolissima e bisogna riconoscere che *La Scienza in cucina* ha fatto per l'unificazione nazionale più di quanto non siano riusciti a fare *i Promessi Sposi*. I gustemi artusiani, infatti, sono riusciti a creare un codice di identificazione nazionale là dove fallirono gli stilemi e i fonemi manzoniani.” ([3], p. xvi) (*Artusi's importance is remarkable and it is necessary to recognize that Science in the Kitchen did more for national unification than The Betrothed. Artusi's gustatory features, in fact, were able to create a codified national identity where Manzoni's stylistic features and phonemes failed.*)

<sup>4</sup> To commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Artusi's death in 2011 there was a pilgrimage, which coincided with the annual *Festa Artusiana*, from Forlimpopoli (the author's birthplace and residence of youth) to Florence (where Artusi spends his adult years). There were also simultaneous celebrations held in conjunction with the *Casa Artusi* in the United States to honor Artusi, such as the conference held in The New School in New York on March 31st, 2011: *Culinary Luminaries: Italian Food Historian Pellegrino Artusi*.

<sup>5</sup> *a work of civil obligation*

<sup>6</sup> *Self-helpism* is a trend in 19th-century writings that begins with the Briton Samuel Smiles who wrote 1859's *Self-Help*, spurring a trend in Victorian England of manuals whereby the goal was the self-education of the working classes. This trend in Italy enters with the Positivist culture, and can be traced in a large part of Mantegazza's production. For a study on the development the Italian brand of *selfhelpismo* see Di Bello, Guetta Sadun and Mannucci's *Modelli e progetti educative nell'Italia liberale* [5].

<sup>7</sup> Mantegazza often references to himself in this fashion. An example is in his final work *La bibbia della speranza* ([6], p. 1).

<sup>8</sup> With the bourgeois expansion in the second half of the century, due in part to the liberal revolutions of 1848, but also to industrialization and capitalization, Positivism becomes the hegemonic culture of Western Europe. With its strong emphasis on scientific progress and technological advancement and its tendencies towards realism, its influence is seen throughout the arts and sciences. With the creation of new pedagogical standards, such as the Coppino Law of 1877 which renders elementary education obligatory, and its general emphasis on the dissemination of knowledge, Positivism disseminates in Italy during a period in which the questions and consequences of nationhood and identity are predominant. For the Positivist discourse on education see Ascenzi's *Tra educazione etico-civile e costruzione dell'identità nazionale* [7] and Marciano's *Alfabeto ed educazione* [8].

seem incapable of partaking in such endeavors due to economic constraints. With the goal of creating a stronger and more capable Italian populace, the author goes to great lengths to provide guidelines for maximizing nourishment through the humblest of foods, in addition to ennobling cuisine as fine art. Ultimately, I contend that Mantegazza's analysis of food as subsistence, as well as an aesthetic subject, can be defined as a unique brand of pedagogic gourmandism,<sup>9</sup> integral to the propagation of a social model of comportment that defines the Positivist framework of biological and nationalistic renewal.

In order to demonstrate the important role that Mantegazza occupies within 19th-century Italian taste theory, I will draw from volumes of his immensely popular *Almanacco igienico popolare*:<sup>10</sup> *Igiene della cucina* (1866), *Igiene di epicuro* (1872), *Igiene dei sensi* (1874), *Piccolo dizionario della cucina* (1882), *L'arte di conservare gli alimenti e le bevande* (1887); as well as the manual *Elementi di Igiene* (1871),<sup>11</sup> and texts of a more physiological and philosophical nature: *La fisiologia del piacere* (1880), *L'arte di essere felici* (1886), and *Epicuro: un saggio di una fisiologia del bello* (1891). With these works I will be able to trace a taste narrative that oscillates with great command from gastronomy (or, rather, the art of cuisine) to *gastrology* (the 19th-century term for "the science of eating"),<sup>12</sup> forming an amalgam that defines Mantegazza's scientific production. I will analyze his food theory from the following interwoven perspectives: (a) the anthropology of cuisine; (b) food as health and hygiene; (c) gastronomy as an art form for all; I will then focus on (d) the artful nature of these eclectic scientific publications. I contend that these themes work in unison within the author's production, with the ultimate goal of creating a stronger and more economically viable Italian nation, while promulgating a *rationalized gluttony* for a new, stronger and more capable Italian citizen. I will lastly examine (e) the social context in which the author writes to better understand how far reaching his message is.

## 1. The Anthropology of Cuisine

To commence the Mantegazzian narrative of taste, it is important to consider cuisine as a subject of anthropology; after all, it is Mantegazza who is famed for founding the first *cattedra di Antropologia* (i.e., the first professorship of Anthropology in Italy), in addition to the *Museo Nazionale di Antropologia ed Etnologia* (the National Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography) and its subsequent periodical and society. These are accomplishments that are possible precisely because of his voyages and subsequent studies that take him through Latin America in 1854 (Paraguay, Chile, Bolivia, and Brazil), Lapland in

<sup>9</sup> The term *gourmand* (i.e., the practitioner of *gourmandism*) has a somewhat negative connotation as it is generally linked to a person who "overeats." It was precisely this implication that the original gourmands attempted to avoid and in fact they prided themselves on the delicacy of their art:

If one were to believe the Dictionary of the Academy, *Gourmand* is a synonym of Glutton and Gobbler, and *Gourmandise* of Gluttony . . . The term Gourmand has in recent years, in polite society, gained a far less unfavorable, and dare we say noble meaning.

The Gourmand is more than just a creature whom Nature has graced with an excellent stomach and vast appetite...he also possesses an enlightened sense of taste...an exceptionally delicate palate, developed through extensive experience. All his senses must work in concert with that of taste, for he must contemplate food before it nears his lips. Suffice it to say that his gaze must be penetrating, his ear alert, his sense of touch keen, and his tongue able. Thus the Gourmand, whom the Academy depicts as a coarse creature, is characterized instead by extreme delicacy; only his health need be robust. ([9], p. 12).

In 19th-century Europe (particularly in France and England) the practice of *gourmandism* is linked to *intelligent knowledge* and, as Anthelme Brillat-Savarin had hoped, gastronomy began to have its "own academicians, its professors, its yearly courses and its contests for scholarship," taking its rightful place among the premier arts and sciences ([10], p. 64). To better understand the development of gourmandism and food philosophy in France and England see, for example, Gigante's *Gusto* [11] and Mennell's *All Manners of Food* [12].

<sup>10</sup> The *Almanacco* was a series of manuals on hygiene that Mantegazza published annually from 1866–1905. Additionally, Mantegazza founded *L'igiea. Giornale di igiene e medicina preventiva* in 1862 in Milan.

<sup>11</sup> The edition that this study will be drawing from is the fifth edition published in 1871. The first edition of the work was published in 1864. The text is not exclusively gastronomic; it deals with various forms of hygiene, from physical (such as skin and muscular hygiene) to mental care (such as hygiene of the intellect and sentiment). However, it is important to note that that nearly half of the work (the first 230 pages) explicitly deals with gastronomy.

<sup>12</sup> See Marchi's *Dizionario Tecnico-Etimologico-Filologico* ([13], vol I, p. 392) and *Supplemento al Dizionario Tecnico-Etimologico-Filologico* ([14], p. 119) and also the anonymous work, *Gastronomy: Or, the School for Good Living* ([15], p. 19).

1879, and India in 1882.<sup>13</sup> Within these works there is, of course, keen attention paid to the gastronomy of the peoples the author encounters. Whether focusing on the use of stimulants such as the coca leaf and liqueurs for manual workers in Peru, the *excellent* coffees or the manners of cookery and consumption of meats such as reindeer in Lapland, or the preparation of millet, fish and the *best* mangos of the world in India, it is evident that the products to which Mantegazza is exposed go far in shaping the way he envisions his nutritional ideals.

It is through this optic that the author establishes a very modern premise, one that is the subject of such recent texts as Massimo Montanari's *Food is Culture* [20] and Richard Wrangham's *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made Us Human* [21]: that is, cuisine as civilizer. Referencing his *La fisiologia del piacere* (*The Physiology of Pleasure*), it becomes clear that for Mantegazza food preparation and consumption serve as an anthropological marker for the distinction between man and brute. The key differentiator lies in the refinement of the pleasures of taste and the development of gastronomy, which defers to reason for regulation and distribution ([22], p. 73). In the early centuries of human evolution, hunger rules consumption (*l'appetito supplì all'arte*); however, with rational development, comes *intelligence and art*, as Mantegazza indicates, which drives man to search to multiply flavors, and to refine his gustatory capabilities. The brute, conversely, consumes with irregularity and with consideration for neither time nor measure, allowing his primordial impulse to govern, with no propensity for rationing or conservation. Mantegazza, in fact, dedicates an entire volume of his popular *Almanacco igienico popolare* in 1887 to *L'arte di conservare gli alimenti e le bevande* ("The Art of Preserving Foods and Beverages"), accentuating evolved man's conscious effort to preserve food, as well as divulging all of the techniques that the modern sciences have afforded him.

## 2. The Medic in the Kitchen

It is within *L'arte di conservare gli alimenti e le bevande*, that Mantegazza (a medic himself) proclaims: "Se i medici conoscessero un po' più gli alimenti, le loro diverse virtù e i diversi vizii . . . potrebbe far guarire chi è malato e . . . impedire che i sani si ammalino!" ([23], p. 62).<sup>14</sup> This theme of cuisine as panacea is prevalent throughout the author's food writings, and, in *Igiene della cucina* (*Hygiene in the Kitchen*), the author insists that a medic is more effective in the kitchen than he could ever be in the pharmacy. Cuisine can "prevenire molte malattie e curarne molte altre . . . [può] trasformare uno scrofoloso in un uomo robusto . . . la cucina può guarire un'indigestione, una febbre, una tisi" ([24], p. 63).<sup>15</sup> This ideal of the "medic in the kitchen" serves as an archetype to which anyone can aspire, for the manuals are not destined for colleagues, but for the *mater familias*, who, in adopting the author's advice, become, in essence, *medicus familias*.<sup>16</sup> Mantegazza's work represents the first conscious endeavor in Italy to promulgate the means by which this ideal can be realized.<sup>17</sup>

Domestic health and hygiene are, for the author, issues that transcend the family unit. As Comoy Fusaro demonstrates, Mantegazza is determined to partake in the construction of Italy ([27], p. 194);

<sup>13</sup> See: *Rio de la Plata e Tenerife viaggi e studj di Paolo Mantegazza* [16], *Un viaggio in Lapponia con l'amico Sommier* [17], *India* [18]. For a study on these works see: Puccini's "I viaggi di Paolo Mantegazza" [19]. He also founds the *Archivio per l'antropologia e la etnologia* in 1871.

<sup>14</sup> *If doctors knew a little more about foodstuffs, their varying virtues and vices . . . he could cure whoever is sick, and, prevent the sick from becoming ill.*

<sup>15</sup> . . . prevent many illnesses and cure many others . . . [it can] transform a scrofulous man into a robust one . . . cooking can cure an indigestion, a fever, a phthisis. Both scrofula (also known as king's evil) and phthisis were forms of tuberculosis common throughout the 19th century. The former is a tuberculosis of the lymph glands of the neck, the latter is a pulmonary tuberculosis. See Firth's "History of Tuberculosis" [25].

<sup>16</sup> Of interest is the economic connotation with the "medic in the kitchen." For example, Mantegazza asserts that those who are able to take away from his texts a profound understanding of the science of nutrition and apply it with consistency to their daily lives will notice "alla fin d'anno troverebbe di aver dato ben pochi quattrini al medico e allo speziale" [at the end of the year he/she would find that they have given very few pennies to the doctor and the pharmacist] ([24], p. 63).

<sup>17</sup> Interesting to note is that others who attempted such endeavors, such as the author of *La cucina degli stomaci deboli, ossia piatti non comuni, semplici, economici e di facile digestione. On alcune norme relative al buon governo delle vie digerenti* [26], did so anonymously because of the perception that such a topic may be an undignified undertaking for a man of medicine.

hence, the scope of his alimentary message can also be interpreted as chiefly nationalistic. The construction of an Italian nation leads Mantegazza to disseminate the message of cuisine as nutrition for all sectors of Italian society, from the proletarian to the aristocrat to the peasant, and, for the lower classes, he sees in the humblest of foods the possibility for regeneration. Throughout his manuals of nutritional hygiene, as well as his texts of a more gastronomic inclination, the author goes to great lengths to provide guidelines for maximizing nourishment to create a stronger Italian citizen. For the lower classes,<sup>18</sup> there is an insistence on techniques that may ensure suitable nutrition. Such is the case when he writes of the benefits of salt; the medic states, “Un pizzico di sale di più nella pentola del povero, vuol dire tanti globuli rossi di più nel suo sangue, e quindi tanto di forza nelle vene di tutto il popolo italiano” ([28], p. 100).<sup>19</sup> In the instance of polenta, Mantegazza identifies a foodstuff that transcends class; however, he is quick to note that the pale, poorly cooked, and salted polenta consumed by rural citizens, which had led to pellagra, is a far cry from the one enjoyed by the elite. With this realization, the medic calls for action: “Tocca a noi, tocca all’economia sociale, all’igiene fare che la polenta sia per tutti una benedizione e non un veleno” ([28], p. 89).<sup>20</sup> It is this social conscience that is exemplified in Mantegazza’s gastronomic writings, prompting him to divulge methods through which the nutritional gap between the social classes can be bridged.<sup>21</sup>

As stated by Gabriella Armenise, Mantegazza’s concept of hygiene is identified with the *art of physiology* ([31], p. 90) and, therefore, the majority of Mantegazza’s food studies are physiological in structure and content. Food types, appetites, aromas, ingredients, scales of digestibility, and nutritive capability, as well as a superfluity of other alimentary subject matter, are categorized in an attempt to diffuse knowledge that would allow the reader to become a more informed consumer.<sup>22</sup> Within his physiological tendency, Mantegazza utilizes a largely plurilateral and international model to convey his pedagogic gourmandism. The medic becomes an advocate for a rationally governed gluttony that includes the enjoyment of a myriad of ingredients from all the corners of the globe. Science has a fundamental role in this mode of consumption, as it is the ancient art of alimentary preservation that permits foods to travel, and the advancements of Mantegazza’s epoch lead him to claim its perfected

<sup>18</sup> If there were any doubt that Mantegazza was striving to reach the lower classes with his texts, he addresses that specific audience in many occasions. For example: “Leggete questo libro e vedete come senza esser ricchi si possa mangiar meglio di quel che si faccia di solito dai contadini e dagli operai” ([24], p. 9). (*Read this book and see how one can eat better than the common peasant and worker without being rich.*)

<sup>19</sup> A pinch of salt more in the pot of a poor person, means that many more red blood cells in his blood, and therefore that much more strength in the veins of the entire Italian people. Another example that reflects this message is the author’s instance on the basic necessity of clean, potable water: “Noi senza di essa [acqua] non possiamo nutrirci, non possiamo muoverci, non possiamo pensare” ([24], p. 55). (*Without this [water], we cannot nourish ourselves, we cannot move, we cannot think.*) Mantegazza goes as far as categorizing different types of water, such as well water and river water, denoting their benefits and disadvantages ([29], pp. 67–89). With this in mind it becomes evident that Mantegazza concentrates on the needs of the workforce, and that he is conscious of the direct affect that insufficient alimentation has on it; for example; “Ora io so questo di sicuro, che se l’alimentazione del popolo fosse più nutriente, le braccia dell’operario e del contadino lavorerebbero con doppia energia, e procurando alla borsa più quattrini, darebbero anche al ventricolo cibi migliori” ([5], p. 10). (*Now I am sure of this, that if the diet of the populace were to be more nutritious, the arms of the worker and of the peasant would work with double the energy, and earning more pennies would also provide better foods for the stomach.*)

<sup>20</sup> It is our responsibility, the responsibility of the social economy, of hygiene to make sure that polenta is a benediction for all and not poison.

<sup>21</sup> The medic demonstrates this social conscience in other instances as well; for example: “Sicuramente un terzo degli abitanti d’Europa mangia meno di quanto dovrebbe; né il superfluo della lauta mensa del ricco basterebbe a ristabilire un giusto equilibrio” ([29], p. 208). (*Surely a third of the inhabitants of Europe eats less than they should; not even the excesses of the lavish tables of the rich would be enough to reestablish a just equilibrium.*) He understands that whereas the lower classes need to strive to include a more varied array of nutritive foodstuffs to their meals, simplicity and moderation are key to the upper echelons, because, ultimately, excesses of taste can lead to adverse reactions, as “l’uomo che ha voluto . . . gustar troppo, finisce poi per non poter . . . assaporar nulla” ([30], p. 19). (*The man who wanted to . . . taste too much, ends up then not able . . . to taste anything at all.*) Other examples of this trend in Mantegazza’s work are: He claims that moderation and simplicity “convengono alla salute e alla longevità” ([30], p. 43) (*are suitable to health and longevity*); when discussing meat as the presumed perfect food, and its excess in the English model of consumption, he advises “Ai ricchi . . . non troppa carne, non sempre carne, distinguete, misurate, pesate” ([28], p. 33). (*To the rich . . . not too much meat, not always meat, discern, measure and weigh*).

<sup>22</sup> For an example see the categories of different types of hunger and the families of *alimenti* listed in *Igiene della cucina* (3–28); *Elementi di Igiene, Parte Prima* 15–230.



status ([23], p. 39).<sup>23</sup> The author is a proud advocate of the splendor that modern progress has afforded gastronomy: “È in questa maniera, che seduti in una comoda poltrona e circondati da tutte le leccornie del lusso europeo, possiamo in un solo pranzo mangiare del bove ucciso nei matadores di Buenos Ayres o in Australia, del salmone pescato in Lapponia e delle aragoste cresciute nei mari dell’America del nord” ([23], p. 39).<sup>24</sup>

This transnational, physiological *modus operandi* is indicative of Mantegazza’s pertinence to the greater Positivist culture that comes into fashion in the second half of the century. His framework has precedents in Italy in other authors, many doctors and pathologists in their own right, who attempt to convey a similar ideal of food nutrition. Salvatore Tommasi, for example, dedicates numerous pages to the topic of consumption, because “[si] frutterebbe senza fine alla pubblica ed alla privata igiene” ([32], p. 105).<sup>25</sup> Angelo Camillo De Meis goes as far as envisioning a world in which Positivist ideals come fully to fruition and chemistry capable of fabricating *materiale alimentare*, i.e., food matter, that would satisfy all the nourishment requirements of the masses—specifically speaking of a “cibo saporoso, odoroso, squisitissimo” and a “vino chimico eccellente . . . da digradarne il Chianti” ([33], p. 43).<sup>26</sup> In short, Mantegazza represents the trend of food science that is mirrored in Italian contemporaries. They show how the progressive ideals of disseminating education and a heightened faith in the possibilities of science and technology can be espoused in matters of food and taste. However, it is Mantegazza who, more than any other, prolifically reshapes this discourse for the masses, while ennobling the art of cookery to the sphere of aesthetics.<sup>27</sup>

### 3. Gastronomy as an Art form for All

In addition to a nutritional gap between the classes, the artistic qualities of gastronomy seem to be exclusively for the upper strata, while the lower classes are relegated to subsist on inadequate provisions. Yet, Mantegazza seeks, in many instances, to create fare out of the most meager of ingredients. A germane example is the medic’s ennobling of the humble egg, which he claims to be the most democratic and aristocratic of foodstuffs, offering “i suoi tesori di forza e di salubrità al povero proletario, come al più Cresco dei Re . . . e rimane sempre al disopra di ogni più complicato intingolo gastronomico” ([28], pp. 113–15).<sup>28</sup> This attempt to bridge the gap of artistic intent between aristocratic fare and the scant rations of the majority of the peninsula is significant, because it denotes the

<sup>23</sup> Mantegazza individuates some of these progresses. For example, Nicolas Appert’s food preservation in sealed bottles, which Mantegazza deems a true triumph of science—“io ho mangiato al mezzo del oceano lepri e tordi . . . come se fossero venuti allora dal mercato” ([29], p. 103). (*I ate in the middle of the ocean hares and thrushes . . . as if they had just come from the market*). He also lists the advancements of countless others such as Gamgee, Boillot, Voigt, Schub, Castelhag, Laignel, Malyepyre, etc. . . . The medic’s ultimate goal is to provide a documentative discourse that allows the reader to fully understand what methods are available and how to benefit from them.

<sup>24</sup> *It is in this manner that seated in a comfortable armchair and surrounded by all the delicacies of European luxury, we can in only one dinner eat steer from the slaughterhouses of Buenos Aires or in Australia, salmon fished in Lapland and lobsters grown in the North American seas.*

<sup>25</sup> *It would be endlessly fruitful for public and private hygiene.*

<sup>26</sup> *[A] tasty, scented, extremely exquisite food . . . excellent chemical vine . . . that would declass Chianti.* This is an ideal that anticipates the Italian Futurists, who envisioned a world where government-subsidized pills are distributed for nourishment, therefore stripping gastronomy of any bodily necessity, allowing it to become a form of art (see Marinetti’s *The Futurist Cookbook* [34]). Mario Morasso is another author who continues this ideal of a gastropia at the turn of the century. He envisions a *Metropolis* that offers the bounty of the banquets of imperial tables, and of Lucullo’s and Trimalcione’s famous dinners daily in its streets [35]. Describing his ideal he states: “Non si ha un’idea delle frutta perfette, quasi che non la natura ma un artista amoroso le abbia modellate con un soffio, della selvaggina rara, del polame stupendo, dei pesci, dei dolci, dei pasticci, dei vini, delle carni di ogni specie in quantità stragrande, che sempre si possono trovare in qualsiasi di questi ricchi depositi di cibi” ([35], p. 363). (*One cannot have an idea of the perfect fruit, almost as if it was not nature but a loving artist that created it with a breath, of the rare game, of the stupendous poultry, of the fish, of the sweets, of the pasticcios, of the wines, of the extravagant quantities of every type of meat, that can always be found in any of these rich food deposits*).

<sup>27</sup> Roberto Ardigo, the prominent Italian Positivist, also makes reference to a refined food aesthetic. Although he does not enter into the lofty discourses in which Mantegazza partakes, he does speak of the cook as emblem for the aesthetic fantasy needed for an artist: see ([36], pp. 162–63).

<sup>28</sup> . . . its treasures of strength and of healthiness to the poor proletarian, as well as to the most Croesus [wealthy] of kings . . . and it remains above the most complex of sauces.

pedagogic intent of imparting a gastronomic lesson to those who may seem incapable of participating in such endeavors because of social status. It is an effort, as demonstrated by the gourmards and gastronomes who preceded Mantegazza (such as Anthemme Brillat-Savarin), to introduce the middle classes to a world that previously excluded them: that of food as art. Mantegazza, however, goes even farther; it is evident that part of his audience is incapable of relishing such undertakings, since their condition is far from opulent. Yet, the medic is keen on conveying the strategies necessary to optimize available foodstuffs and render them *arte culinaria*. In addition, he also provides a foodway towards intellectual/artistic production.

Mantegazza sustains the importance of gastronomic literacy for mental stimulation; he refers to a category of foodstuffs, which are of particular benefit as *alimenti nervosi*. The idea that consumption directly affects our thought is not new; Ludwig Feuerbach and Jacob Moleschott, for example, advanced similar theories.<sup>29</sup> However, Mantegazza's application is wholly different. For the author, *nervine foods* "hanno una storia molto simile a quella delle nuove scuole di pittura, della nuova musica, dei nuovi stili architettonici!" ([40], p. 162).<sup>30</sup> They are among the most noble of foodstuffs, allowing man to have a heightened control over his intellect and sensibility. If foods are the vapor that moves the locomotive, as Mantegazza indicates, then the *nervine foodstuff* is the vehicle through which we can govern its movement ([41], pp. 13–14). The author categorizes more than a hundred of these stimulants throughout his works; when balanced and used in moderation, "L'uomo incivilito . . . nel brillante sviluppo della sua intelligenza [consume] in un sol giorno i succhi fermentati delle vigne del Vesuvio, la birra nebbiosa dell'Inghilterra, il cacao dell'America, e il té dell'estrema China" ([29], p. 60).<sup>31</sup> The introduction of such substances into the body and, as a result, into the bloodstream, awakens the intellect, causing new sensorial and cerebral activity that is most advantageous for the mind.<sup>32</sup>

The aesthetic nature of gastronomy becomes paramount to Mantegazza's theory of taste ennoblement. Once again, in the *Fisiologia del piacere*, the author delves into a theoretical discourse that analyzes how the pleasures of taste are brought about, elevating the traditionally mundane act of consumption while rendering food an analog of music. The pleasures of taste are divided into two key elements: *harmony* and *melody*, which together forge a paragon that allows the medic to assert the *sublimity* of gastronomy. It is a sublimity that finds expression in the concatenation of dishes and pairings that encompass a *pranzo*, which the author describes as "un concerto d'armonia e di melodia del gusto . . . che viene poi portato alla massima perfezione dal genio dell'artista" ([3], p. 65).<sup>33</sup> A meal, for Mantegazza, is to become a plurisensorial event: "Una festa ai piaceri del gusto, ai quali si associano quelli dell'odorato, dell'udito, della vista . . . elevati a un certo grado dalla perfezione dell'arte e dal sentimento del bello" ([22], p. 76).<sup>34</sup> A *pranzo*, therefore, is not just the mere satisfaction of hunger, but, rather, as indicated in *Elementi di Igiene*, a feast in which the superior joys of *sentiment*

<sup>29</sup> Jacob Moleschott's *Lehre der Nahrungsmittel* [37] (*The Chemistry of Food*) represents the first foray into naturalist dietetics, providing the *people* with a text that is an amalgam of scientific interests, physiological study, as well as a foundation for a materialist-humanist discourse. As such, the work's intent is to diffuse appropriate modes of consumption while demonstrating the effects of different foods on the body. *Lehre* is a self-help book in every sense, with the goal to aid in the development of a stronger, more educated populace. For more on the political nature of the text see Gregory's *Scientific Materialism in 19th-Century Germany* ([38], pp. 35–39). These ideals are then supported and expanded by Ludwig Feuerbach to include food as a means towards political revolution [39].

<sup>30</sup> . . . have a very similar history to those of the new schools of painting, of new music, of the new architectural styles!

<sup>31</sup> Civilized man in development of his brilliant intelligence [consumes] in only one single day the fermented juices from the vines of the Vesuvius, hazy beer from England, cocoa from America, and tea from far China.

<sup>32</sup> Despite the fact that he can live without them, he makes a conscious choice to stimulate his mind through their use instead of living "without enthusiasm," as Mantegazza puts it. Within various pages ([24], pp. 29–48; [29], pp. 59–63; [40], pp. 11–19) Mantegazza delineates the various benefits of moderate use of these foodstuffs: "Le fatiche dell'intelletto sono più presto ristorate da una tazza del caffè, mentre gli alcolici dispongono meglio il lavoro dei muscoli, etc . . ." ([29], p. 62). (*The exertions of the intellect are quickly restored by a cup of coffee, while alcoholic beverages put the workings of the muscles in better order . . .*)

<sup>33</sup> . . . a concert of the harmony and the melody of taste . . . that is brought to maximum perfection by the genius of the artist.

<sup>34</sup> A celebration of the pleasures of taste, to which are associated those of smell, hearing, vision . . . elevated to a certain level by the perfection of art and by the sentiment of beauty.

and *intellect* participate, transforming a simple primordial urge into one of the most fruitful, sociable, and educational sources of merriment ([29], p. 214).

The highly intellectualized, sensorial communion proposed corroborates Mantegazza's modernity and anticipates the Futurist paradigm by more than fifty years.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the physio-aesthetic narrative constructed by the medic is wholly unique and certainly worthy of praise. It is an ideal that is continued in the *Piccolo dizionario della cucina*, a work based on Alexandre Dumas's *Grand Dictionnaire de cuisine*.<sup>36</sup> Here, Mantegazza invokes conviviality as prerequisite for the realization of this gustatory symphony. Therefore, the communal setting, with its psychological value becomes premise to a meal that can be classified as fine art, distinguishing it from an act of mere satiation. The author indicates that *the perfect man* makes it his goal to attain *perfect joy* in the convivial setting, by invoking *the angel of poetry and the archangel of affection* ([28], p. 9). Using a language tinted with clear spiritual connotations, Mantegazza makes of the dinner table a sort of laic altar that can be created from the "desco dell'operario e del contadino, come alla mensa dorata del milionario e del re" ([28], p. 8).<sup>37</sup>

#### 4. The Art of Mantegazza's Science

Mantegazza's goal is to ameliorate the stagnant Italian dietetic circumstances. This leads the author to conceive of texts that have success within the Italian context, not only because they fill a void and help answer questions both of a pragmatic<sup>38</sup> and sumptuous nature, but also because they exude an innate literariness. Due to the various digressions into which the author delves, it is this literary quality that Nicoletta Pireddu points to as protagonist of *Fisiologia del piacere* ([43], p. 140).<sup>39</sup> This notion can easily be extended to a vast majority of Mantegazza's texts, particularly those utilized within our narrative of taste. In Mantegazza, even the most scientific of material is presented with anecdotes and literary references that make his works palatable for a large portion of his audience: the numerous anecdotes, such as the account of the comical events of a masquerade ball where a host concocts a boisterous ruse ([28], p.107); or the innumerable aphorisms that lace the pages of his texts, such as "conviene che ogni effetto abbia il suo pane, e che ogni ambizione legittima abbia il suo vino" ([44], p. 36);<sup>40</sup> or the multitude of literary and philosophical references, such as those to Dante and Parini ([30], p. 33; [24], p. 31).

It is important to frame Mantegazza's success within his contemporary society. According to the author, man "abbraccia quanto può e quanto sa dell'universo che lo circonda, e dice: *tutto questo è mio*" ([16], p. 13).<sup>41</sup> It is this moral that the author intends to diffuse; advocate of Darwin in

<sup>35</sup> Futurism is an artistic and literary avant-garde movement that develops in early 20th-century Italy. It is centered on the violent abolishment of the Italian tradition for new artistic forms that would modernize the new Italian nation. Among these touted art forms is *la cucina* (cuisine). For a collection of its founder's manifestos and critical writings see Berghaus's *F.T. Marinetti: Critical Writings* [42].

<sup>36</sup> Mantegazza's work is proliferate with references and citations to various gastronomes and thinkers who have in some form written about food and taste throughout the centuries. It has a heavy reliance on classical and French cultures, aside from his contemporary Italy. Of all the sources indicated, none are cited to the extent that Dumas is, explicitly named in 12 occasions. Throughout the work it is apparent that the Italian relies heavily upon the *Grand Dictionnaire* as inspiration for his text in structure and in content, seeing in the work a fruitful and supple tool to mimic for the Italian masses. However, it is of interest to note that Dumas publishes in 1882, the same year of Mantegazza's *Piccolo dizionario*, a condensed version of his work—the *Petit dictionnaire de cuisine*.

<sup>37</sup> ... the table of the worker and peasant, as well as to the gilded dining hall of the millionaire and of the king.

<sup>38</sup> The practical aspect to Mantegazza's gastronomic writings are found also in the many domestic topics that he covers. Whether it is the proper mode of maintaining cookware ([24], chapter 6), or the how to factor water when choosing a home ([24], p. 58), or the references to a cuisine for weak stomachs ([29], p. 229), it becomes rather evident that Mantegazza considers even the mundane aspects of domesticity.

<sup>39</sup> "L'appassionato uso della letterarietà che permea il testo mantegazziano diviene protagonista incontrastato nelle frequenti digressioni in cui l'autore concede libera espressione alla sue meditazioni estatiche ([43], p. 140)." (*The passionate use of literariness that permeates Mantegazza's texts becomes an uncontrasted protagonist in the frequent digressions in which the author concedes free expression to his ecstatic meditations*).

<sup>40</sup> It is suitable that every effect has its bread, and that every legitimate ambition has its vine.

<sup>41</sup> ... embraces as much as he can and as much of the universe that surrounds him, and says 'this is all mine.'



Italy,<sup>42</sup> Mantegazza promotes and practices the nascent sciences that biological Darwinism generates, particularly those of anthropology and sociology, in addition to being a medic and a literary writer. This philosophy of embracing all as man's capital is what defines Mantegazza's interests and production; from literary novel to scientific treatise, from manual of hygiene to philosophical text, from almanac to dictionary, the medic's works are as varied as can be found from a single author. And it is because of this eclecticism that the author's production has been defined as *schizophrenic*—marked by a continuous flux between *artistic* and *scientific* production. This eclecticism, that justly denotes the medic's work, is, I believe, the reason for his success. He becomes one of the few figures of the period to engage his audience in an open dialog, making this *priest of science* an *apostle through the street and the piazzas*.<sup>43</sup> With his ability to shift from societal to domestic issues, and from first person to dialogic narratives with ease, the author creates accessible pedagogical texts that are meant for immediate application. However Mantegazza's work may be defined, it is evident that its hybrid artistic/scientific nature, and its intent to educate, articulates a trend that is already present in the century—a trend that will bring to the development of the most widely famed gastronomic Italian text of the 1800s: Pellegrino Artusi's *La scienza in cucina e l'arte di mangiar bene*.

Notwithstanding the variety of approaches from which Mantegazza postulates his theories, food and taste are analyzed by Mantegazza from a Positivist standpoint—they are seen as a fundamental instrument to man's progress and advancement, because ultimately “si deve mangiar bene per viver bene” ([24], p. 8).<sup>44</sup> This idea of eating well is particularly salient in a Darwinist epoch given that, “La metà dei viventi vive, divorando l'altra metà. I grandi mangiano i mezzani e i mezzani mangiano i piccoli; e i piccolissimi poi, più forti di tutti, mangiano grandi, mezzani, e piccoli . . . A noi non resta che a mangiar bene, con scienza e coscienza, tutto il mangiabile” ([23], p. 37).<sup>45</sup> Therefore, the author preaches throughout much of his hygienic production that the manner and mode of alimentation directly affects mental processes, or rather our way of thinking, acting, and being—appropriating cuisine as an intellectual affair despite the biases confronted, because “L'arte di preparare i cibi non solo li rende più saporiti, ma anche più digeribili e più nutritivi, e la cucina in tutta la perfezione della civiltà moderna è altamente igienica” ([29], p. 211).<sup>46</sup> From *the poetry of cuisine* that can be achieved ([24], p. 29), to the *pleasures of sentiment and the intellect* satisfied ([22], p. 66), Mantegazza propagates an ideal of culinary art that needs to attain three essential goals: first, it needs to supply a maximum variety of foods and flavors; second, it must facilitate the digestibility of foods without diminishing their nutritive value; finally, it must educate both the sense of taste as well as the sentiment of *beauty* ([29], p. 211). With these prerequisites, it is clear that the medic's conceptualization of taste consists of both lofty aesthetic ideals and a more pragmatic, Positivist framework of biological necessity and nationalistic renewal. As Armenise indicates, the author partakes in a process of *cultural* and *hygienic literacy* ([47], p. 99). If this is the case, then it is evident that the divulgation of a gastronomic ideal of regeneration, moderation, and beauty is fundamental. It is with this in mind that Mantegazza reminds his reader, “Studiate a fondo la vostra cucina, occupandovi assai di ciò che mangiate e del come mangiate,” adding, with the zeal that characterizes much of his prose, “Non vergognatevi mai di essere saviamente golosi!” ([29], p. 214).<sup>47</sup>

Encapsulating the author's role as didactic gastronome is a quote that helps define Mantegazza's witty and direct approach; as he has done on various occasions, he ennobles simple foods, in this case

<sup>42</sup> See Landucci's *Darwinismo a Firenze* [45].

<sup>43</sup> From *Igiene del sangue* (1868) in Marciano's *Alfabeto ed Educazione* ([46], p. 84).

<sup>44</sup> One needs to eat well to live well.

<sup>45</sup> Half of the living live devouring the other half. The big eat the medium sized and the medium sized eat the small; the very small then, stronger than them all, eat the big, the medium sized and the small . . . The only thing left for us is to eat well, with science and awareness, everything that is edible.

<sup>46</sup> The art of preparing foods not only renders them tastier, but also more digestible and more nutritious, and cuisine in all its perfection of the modern civilization is highly hygienic.

<sup>47</sup> Profoundly study your cuisine, be very involved in what you eat and how you eat it . . . Do not ever be ashamed to be wisely gluttonous.

squash, by playing with the bisemic meaning of *zucca*.<sup>48</sup> “Anche le zucche più vuote di questo mondo poi possono elevarsi a pretesa di aristocrazia culinaria, quando si faccia loro un ripieno.”<sup>49</sup> Leaving the author to question, “Non è forse tutta quanta la pedagogia un’arte di mettere un buon ripieno nelle zucche umane?” ([28], p. 119).<sup>50</sup>

## 5. Truly an Art for All?

It is evident that there was an attempt to construct an Italian cultural unity by preaching an ennobled national taste, but to what extent was this endeavor successful? We must first define the parameters within which we will be judging success. If we look at book sales, then we can almost certainly say that the message is well received, at least among the Italian middle classes of the late 19th century. Mantegazza was immensely popular, and, therefore, his writings certainly did reach a literate audience. However, it remains to be said that his success can be considered relative.

In *Igiene dei sensi* (*Hygiene of the Senses*), Mantegazza lauds a philosophy immersed in a sensorial acquisition of knowledge: “Tutto quello che sappiamo, tutto quel che possiamo, tutto quel che facciamo ci viene dall’umile scaturigine dei sensi” ([30], p. 15).<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, the author encourages the banishment of the traditional sensory hierarchy, suggesting: “Tutti i sensi riuniti si aiutano, si correggono l’un l’altro e a guisa dei molti tentacoli d’un polipo, ci permettono di mettere in intimo contatto della natura delle cose i nostri organi nervosi centrali, così avidi di sentire e di imparare” ([30], p. 15).<sup>52</sup> It is precisely in this work that Mantegazza promotes a sensory communion no longer defined exclusively by intellectual faculties. Knowledge is acquired through all the senses and therefore the Platonic/Kantian aesthetic tradition is eradicated. No longer are the *intelligent senses* (i.e., vision and hearing) held in position of prominence, since they function in *harmony* with the *lower senses* (i.e., smell, touch and taste). However, it is noteworthy that it is within this very text, where the author continues to promulgate these lofty aesthetic ideals, that he is forced to defend himself:

I miei almanacchi, perché popolari, son creduti da alcuni critici destinati soltanto al contadino o all’operario e son quindi accusato di occuparmi dei ricchi e son quindi maltrattato, perché insegno al popolo precetti igienici, che possono sembrare una crudele ironia per chi non abbia molti quattrini in tasca.

Ma c’è dunque bisogno ancora di ripetere per la millesima volta a questi aristarchi, che il popolo non è fatto di soli operai e di soli contadini, ma è composto di tutti noi; e che quando si scrive un libro *popolare*, convien farsi un’idea empirica e *media* di un popolo *medio*, a cui non appartengono né i dottissimi, né gli analfabeti? Ma vi è dunque bisogno di ripetere fino alla noia, che un libro popolare ha per natura propria il difetto congenito di riuscire troppo elevato per gli uni, troppo volgare per gli altri? Perché sia utile, basta che si attagli alla statura media dei cervelli umani e che tutti, l’altissimo come il piccolissimo, vi possan beccare qualche granello di cibo . . . ([30], pp. 26–27).<sup>53</sup>

<sup>48</sup> *Zucca* (squash), colloquially, is used as metaphor for the human head. The *Dizionario generale de’sinonimi italiani* [48] indicates that “secondo, la Crusca, nel proprio, è una piante erbacea, che produce pampani e frutti maggiori di qualsivoglia altra pianta, presentando sovente una forma simile alla testa degli animali; e fu talvolta impiegata, per similtudine, per *Testa*” ([48], p. 372). (According to *la Crusca*, it is an herbaceous plant that produces vine leaves and more fruits than any other plant, often similar to the shape of animals’ heads; and was sometimes employed, as a simile, for a head).

<sup>49</sup> Even the emptiest squash of this world can then be elevated to the pretense of aristocratic cuisine, when stuffing is made for them.

<sup>50</sup> Is not all pedagogy an art of putting a good stuffing in the human squash (head)?

<sup>51</sup> All that we know, all that we can, all that we do, comes from the humble wellspring of the senses.

<sup>52</sup> All the senses united help each other, they correct one another, and in the manner of the many tentacles of an octopus, they allow the nature of things to be put in intimate contact with our central nervous organs, so avid to feel and learn.

<sup>53</sup> My almanacs, because popular, are believed by some critics to be intended for only the peasant or the worker, and I am then accused of taking care of the rich. I am therefore mistreated, because I teach the populace hygienic precepts, which can seem a cruel irony for those who do not have many pennies in their pocket. But is it therefore necessary to repeat for the thousandth time to these Aristarchs that the people are not made up of only workers and peasants, but we are all the people? When one writes a popular book, it is appropriate to have a practical understanding of what is the middle-class, to which neither the scholarly nor the illiterate belong. It is then necessary to

This juxtaposition between the extremely modern premise of an aesthetic reordering of the senses and Mantegazza's defense, sheds light on the author's difficulties in an epoch where hunger is much more prevalent than opulence.

Paolo Sorcinelli, the Italian social historian, refers to a *malessere alimentare* (nutritional malaise) that becomes a defining factor of the post-Risorgimento period ([49], p. 52). Statistics support his argument. A summary of historical data compiled in 1968 by ISTAT (The National Institute for Statistics) [50] reveals details of a diet in which the art of food is seemingly all but unattainable. In the first years of unification (1861–1870), the Italian diet is made predominantly of grains (nearly 55%) and produce (42%). Meat consumption constitutes a small fraction of the diet, comparatively (a little over 3%).<sup>54</sup> Government-sponsored surveys also paint a clear picture. Perhaps the most famed example was the large-scale inquest initiated by Senator Stefano Jacini, which produces 15 volumes of studies and recommendations (1878–1883). From Jacini's inquiry (which is considered the most complete analysis of agricultural Italy) we learn much about the rural population's diet and hygiene,<sup>55</sup> as he concluded: "Lo stato generale non è soddisfacente; l'aria è cattiva, cattiva l'alimentazione e il vestito, le abitazioni poco salubri" ([52], p. 56).<sup>56</sup>

It is evident that with large portions of the nation poorly nourished, parts of Mantegazza's message of a pedagogic gourmandism is unattainable for many new Italians. The author's ideal of regenerating the nation by educating its citizens about food and cuisine is problematic, and the medic himself addresses this notion in *Elementi di igiene* (*Elements of Hygiene*) by stating:

So pur troppo che per molti e molti il pranzo si reduce a polenta, a sola minestra condita col lardo o a patate; ma che potrebbe contro queste miserie un libro d'igiene? Tutt'al più consigliare che nella minestra si mettano più fagioli, più ceci, più piselli che riso; che si preferisca il pane di segale a quello di frumentone. L'igiene del povero è questione di economia politica. ([29], p. 228).<sup>57</sup>

Mantegazza insists that his texts are to be of aid even to the poor, despite the reality in which they find themselves. However, they cannot solve the issues of poverty that plague the new nation. His goal is simply to diffuse the knowledge that would allow even the poorest towards better nourishment, but he realizes that his message is limited. It cannot put more pennies in the pockets or food in the mouths' of its citizens.

The intended audience of his gastro-hygienic ideals, however, remains largely the middle classes (as stated by the author), which also can be considered problematic. There is no question that Mantegazza's works sell well; nevertheless, we must say that even this is relative. The reality is that

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repeat until tedium, that a popular book has by its very nature the congenital defect of being too elevated for some and too vulgar for others? For it to be useful, suffice that it suits the average human intellect and that all, from the highest to the smallest, can take away some crumbs of food.

<sup>54</sup> Cereali (grains) divided into *wheats, mais, rice, rye and barley* equaled 205.5 kilograms per half year. *Prodotti ortofrutticoli* (produce) divided into *potatoes, dried legumes, fresh legumes, vegetables, fresh fruit, citrus, and dried fruit* were consumed at a rate of 156.6 kilograms. *Carni* (meats) divided into *bovine, pork and goat*, and *other* was consumed at a rate of 14.8 kilograms ([50], p. 136).

<sup>55</sup> For example: "il cibo del contadino è, se non scarso affatto, per lo meno, poco sostanzioso . . . La carne di bue o di vacca raramente si mangia, I polli non servono che le grandi occasioni; . . . le uova; il latte; il formaggio scadente. Ma fondamento dell'alimentazione sono i vegetali: patate, cavoli, fagioli, fave, olio delle qualità più inferiori per condire, . . . prevalente a tutte le altre prese insieme, è la farina di granturco mangiata sotto forma di pane o di polenta" ([51], pp. 204–5). *The food of the peasants is, if not absolutely inadequate, [it is] at very least insubstantial . . . Rarely are beef (ox and cow) eaten. Chickens are only served on special occasions . . . eggs, milk and cheese are of poor quality. The foundation of their diet is vegetables; potatoes, cabbages, fava, oil of the worst quality to dress . . . more prevalent than all these put together is cornmeal eaten as bread or polenta.*

<sup>56</sup> *The general state is not satisfactory; their air is bad, poor is their nutrition and their clothing, their homes unhealthy.*

<sup>57</sup> *I unfortunately know that for many a meal is reduced to polenta, a lone soup dressed with lard or potatoes; but what could a book of hygiene do to combat this misery? At most it can advise that more beans, chickpeas, or peas than rice are put in a soup; that one should prefer rye bread to that of wheat. The hygiene of the poor is a problem of the political economy.*

the bourgeoisie only encompasses 6.7% of the population during this period.<sup>58</sup> Additionally, 78% of the nation is illiterate at the time of unification (with certain regions seeing rates as high as 91%).<sup>59</sup>

## 6. Conclusions

With a blend of science and art, Mantegazza promotes an Italianness that is ahead of its time. However, Italy in many ways is not ready for his modernity. While his *rational gluttony* and his guidelines for better nourishment are novel and sound, the message could not feasibly reach enough of the population to have an immediate widespread effect. The task of nourishing the malnourished is far too great to be solved by food literature. Moreover, I believe that Mantegazza's ideal of an aestheticized cuisine, of a dinner that reaches perfection when it demonstrates a symphonic harmony, is beyond the reach of too many during his period. Yet, the formation of an Italian taste, for the author, is also the formation of the sense of what it means to eat in conviviality and as well as possible. Whether the gastrosophic theories forwarded directly enter in the vocabulary of the masses is almost insignificant, because these theories draw attention to the art of food in a wholly unique way. As a result, we see the trickle down of certain paragons from the middle classes: as poor as a dish may be, even from the table of the peasant or the worker, it is shared with the utmost dignity and respect for what it represents and from where it comes. What the medic ultimately transmits is an art that everyone can afford at any epoch: the *sentimento del bello* (sentiment of beauty), as Mantegazza reminds us, is what makes a meal truly artful ([22], p. 76).

I contend that taste does ultimately find prominence in Italian culture, and although it cannot be said that intellectuals in the 20th century espouse an eradicated sensorial hierarchy (with exceptions being the Futurists and authors such as Mario Soldati); it can however be said that the layman do. If we were to construct a philosophy of our everyday experiences, as Nicola Perullo suggests [55], I believe we can trace taste as a driving factor of the Italian quotidian. This is precisely what Mantegazza preaches: an everyday world where taste reigns, and where a trip to the market “[far] crescere la salute e il buon umore” ([29], p. 229).<sup>60</sup> The attention and care put into daily food rituals has been a defining characteristic of so many generations of Italians, who see in their foods a way of sustenance, yet so much more. Here gastrosophers such as Mantegazza are fundamental. He is at least in part reflective of this mentality that makes food central to daily life, transforming the quotidian into a philosophy through his Positivist ideals, while solidifying the dinner table as a *laic altar* for all sects of society ([28], p. 8). His initial limited influence notwithstanding, Mantegazza as philosopher of food exemplifies what Carlo Petrini says: *he who sows utopia ultimately may reap reality* [56].

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<sup>58</sup> This statistic reflects an 1881 census that factors in both *la borghesia* and *la piccola borghesia*. See Lyttelton’s “The middle classes in Liberal Italy” [53].

<sup>59</sup> See Chistolini’s *Comparazione e Sperimentazione in Pedagogia* ([54], p. 46).

<sup>60</sup> ... make our health and state of mind grow

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