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Editors Frank Jacob and Francesco Mangiapane

Dining out

Editorial by
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Texts by
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EDITORIAL

Frank Jacob and Francesco Mangiapane

This issue of *Global Humanities* comes as an experiment.

We have been asking our community of scholars to engage in sketching a theory out of their own eventual predilection for a specific place where to dine out. More precisely, we were calling them to articulate an analysis of the complex configuration that constitutes the fascination of their “beloved” spot, by questioning the features and criteria that reveal relevant to their endorsement.

By indicating this route, we were aware of how difficult such a mission may have proven, since this predilection is very easily caught at work but quite hard to write down, requiring to heighten the awareness for volatile, elusive and unseizable assets. Such volatile means intersect in various ways, up to form a *je ne sais quoi*, a proper “atmosphere” whose formal mechanisms are difficult to describe but yet full of consequences.

By inviting our authors to give an account of what is “so special” on a specific spot we therefore aimed at revealing the general issue of how atmospheres get constituted and how they assume importance on a Semiotic of daily life.

It is already acknowledged how dining out – be it for a lunch break, a business dinner, a romantic meeting, or a solitary resolution – stands as a social daily life ritual filled with significance. Its celebration emerges as a moment of self-exposure where the social limen between public and private, individual and collective

identity gets constantly negotiated. Such a socializing practice of daily life reveals its power through aesthetic means: endorsing a determined regime of good manners by choosing who to eat with, how to behave and dress, when and what to eat, and where to dine out results in a sensitive and intrinsically political asset, outcome of specific choices at the hand of the individual.

It’s not a case that huge social challenges such as sustainability, ecologism, social justice, cultural heritage, and many others pass by the preference we might or might not accord to an actual dining venue. By showing ourselves eating in public, more generally, we take a position in respect of essential dichotomies such as the already mentioned Individual *vs* Collective, Public *vs* Private, and, henceforth, Identity *vs* Alterity, *Gemeinschaft* (community) *vs* *Gesellschaft* (society), Cosmopolitanism *vs* Localism, Social Commitment *vs* Disengagement, Fast *vs* Slow and many others.

Although the attempt that this issue will make may be considered successful only partially, as we have just received a limited response to our atypical call, we are very proud to present three very accurate analyses of different contexts and spots (Uruguay, Sardinia, New York). The quality and relevance of these works encourage us to insist on continuing to cultivate the field of a proper Semiotics of dining out.

Bodø, Norway and Palermo, Italy
May 2024