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The Lost Food in the Orthorexic Society
(Communication Strategies in Southern Europe)
Food, Nature and Culture

- Nutrition is not a merely biological fact;
- *Aliments*: natural elements culturally *elaborated* and consumed within the framework of social codified practices (Poulain, 2002).
It was the affirmation of the practice of cooking food by fire (*culinary action*) that marked the real phylogenetic rupture between Man and animal (Perlès, 1979).
Food and Communication

- Feeding as a social action: division of labor, exchange and reciprocity;
- A fundamental practice of community integration;
- In the hominization process food takes on a privileged function of medium of communication (Nicolosi, 2008)

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The Bones of the Dead
Food and Meaning

- Universal meaning?
- Ambivalence
- Contradictions
- Differences
- Situated meanings
Between Matter and Spirit

- Food is substance for biological maintenance, pharmacological remedy and cultural « object »

- Two fundamental spheres:
  a) material (life, health, energy, etc.);
  b) immaterial (symbolic projection).
we will never understand the widespread fears and consequent resistance to innovations in the biotechnological field if not by starting off from a serious reflection on the symbolic importance of the food.
Public Perception
Attitudes About Biotech in Italy

- Ambivalence;
- “Utilitarian” attitude (Cerroni et al., 2002);
- Positive for medical applications;
- Negative for agriculture and food;
“Mad Cow crisis”, 10 years later in Italy (source: Coldiretti)

- Certified quality products: 7,5 billions of €;
- Organic: 1,4 billions of € (5% of Italian market)
- + 650 % consumption of Dop/Igp products;
- Doubled the number of Dop/Igp products;
- 221 Dop/IGP products, leader in Europe;
- Organic food (Italians spending): + 11,6% per year;
- Italy is leader in Europe (5° in the world) for organic production (number of farmers and acreage);
- Mainly in the South: Sicily (15,8%), Calabria (13,3%) and Puglia (11,9%);
- Problems of trust and prices for organic food.
Labelling

- 61% of those interviewed stated they were “favourable to the introduction on the market of biotechnological products if information were indicated on the label “ (Cerroni et al. 2002);
- Not informative but psychological role?
Doctors and scientists are often vexed by the broad spread of alimentary fears; and they make irony of the behaviour of consumers which is defined ‘irrational’
The Principle of Incorporation (Fischler, 2001)

- the banal fact that eating means incorporating within the external world, making him break the barrier between the interior and exterior.
Paradox of the Omnivore (Fischler, 2001)
Orthorexia Nervosa

*Orthorexia nervosa* is a psycho-cultural syndrome, whose definition is the work of Steve Bratman, that may summarily be described as the obsession for healthy (opportune) feeding.
Orthorexic Society (Nicolosi, 2007)

New obsession for the ‘right’ and the ‘wrong’ food;

It takes the shape of an hyper-reflexivity and hyper-communicative attention paid to food by individuals, groups, and media.
Orthorexic Society

- ethical (critical consumption);
- esthetical (food design);
- dietetic (fitness);
- psycho-pathological (eating disorders);
- symbolical (slow food);
- anxiogenous (alimentary fears).
Orthorexic Society

Three processes:

a) erosion of the constraining aspect of norms regulating a correct-diet (the culinary Order);
b) the distancing, in the food production sector, of the producer from the consumer (“opacity” of food);
c) the closure in an individualist frame of the human body.
From gastronomy to gastro-anomy

- Modernity activated a process of erosion of the "culinary order";
- Today alimentary habits are less and less socially shared and increasingly left to the mercy of an interpretative pluralism, often contradictory and, consequently, of an individual choice;
- Fischler (1979) speaks of a mosaic or a "cacophony" of discordant alimentary criteria: moral, scientific, dietetic, identitary discourses etc.
Disembedding processes

- Alimentary modernity and the affirmation of the long globalized chains of production create a process of *uprooting* of the alimentary act from the local and specific ‘eco-bio-cultural’ context.
- Through the *taylorization* of production, transformation and distribution food ‘takes off’ from the territory; and it become ‘indifferent’ to the characterizations that in the past, rendered it unique.
- In this way, an *abstract* alimentary system is created.
For Falk (1994) and Müller (2005), in simple societies, the body is a collective entity and the community is an ‘eating community’;

- Eating as an act of *sharing*, reinforcing the principles of social *cohesion* and *reciprocity*;
- Today we have an individualised and closed body (Le Breton, 1990);
- Valorisation of the organ-mouth as the privileged site of taste and judgment.
The Body

Today the human body, particularly that of women, seems to be the ground of a dramatic fight. Eating is a quite important part of this fight.
Between Conservation and Innovation

- Protect the body (physical identity) or the Self (symbolic identity) or innovate both.
- Such fundamental ambivalence is traceable to the so-called *paradox of the omnivore* (*Fischler*)
Insecurity and alimentary uncertainty represent an ever more decisive aspect of contemporary society;

Through *narration*, the communication world is giving back an identity to "objects" that in time have become opaque and unrecognisable owing to cultural and social uprooting (Nicolosi and Korthals, 2008).
Crossing Objective/Subjective and Absolute/Relative (Ferraro, 1998)
Four Quadrants Model (Ferraro)

- Causal
- Positional
- Multiperspectival
- Perspectival
# Quadrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Causal</th>
<th>Positional</th>
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## Italy – Narrative Regimes

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Italy – Narrative Regimes

Narrative Regime

- Positional
- Causal
- Perspectival
- Multi-Perspectival

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Grana Padano

TUTTA LA QUALITÀ DEL MIGLIORE LATTE ITALIANO.
Parmigiano Reggiano
## Spain – Narrative Regimes

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Spain – Narrative Regimes

Narrative Regimes

- Positional
- Causal
- Perspectival
- Multi-perspectival

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## Variation Spanish Magazines

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References

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