Material reconfiguration(s) of racegender entanglements: the case of Rome's Banglatown

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Introduction

"Setting the (s)tone:" where to begin?

Sunday 15th of February 2015

Today is Sunday. I have agreed with my high-school friend Michele that we will meet and have brunch together somewhere in the center. He lives in Monteverde, right on the opposite side of the city from Tor Pignattara, so it seems wise to meet halfway. I kind of regret leaving the neighborhood, even if it is just for a few hours. I feel that I have to make good use of the little time I have to spend here, and going to the center of Rome does not seem like a good thing to do right now. But Michele is a good friend of mine and we did not meet for years. It is going to be good to catch up and laugh about the old times. And anyways, I can always go back to Tor Pignattara as soon as we finish our brunch and "get back to work."

We are supposed to meet at 12.00pm in this nice little bar-restaurant in Rome's historical center. It feels so far away when you live *n'a borgata* – in the suburbs – and you do not have a bike, car or scooter. I have planned that, in order to be there in time, I have to leave at least one hour before our appointment. But at 11.00am, Elena and Edoardo – my host friends – are still in the middle of their "buddhisms," as they call their daily Buddhist chanting. And today they have a lot of guests; they are holding a Buddhist meeting at their place – in the living room. I feel

trapped in the guest room. In order to leave the flat, I would have to silently sneak out behind their turned backs like a thief in order not to interrupt them. And I do not like the idea. So I wait, patiently, for them to finish, and I text Michele to let him know that I will be half an hour late.

It is 11.30 now. I hear a break in the chanting, people chatting and laughing. I seize the moment: I am already dressed – my brown, comfy boots, grey leggings and a jumper – I take my bag, my grey coat and leave the room, the flat and the chanting crowd after saying goodbye and wishing them a nice day. I walk swiftly towards the bus stop in Piazza della Marranella. I am going to take bus 409 until Piazza Malatesta, and then I am going to jump on bus 810 which will take me to Piazza Navona and the Senate. The journey feels daunting – I am expecting to be locked in a bus for over an hour, if I am lucky – but I have my book with me. As long as I sit, I am going to be just fine.

I am in Piazza della Marranella, finally, leaning against the bus stop signpost. Minutes go by, and no bus is in sight. I am starving already, and, given that the way to my brunch is still very long, I start nibbling on the rice crackers that – luckily – I always carry with me in my bag. More minutes go by, and still no bus is in sight. Well, at least not one going in my direction. In fact, already three or four 409s went by in the opposite direction, the one I DO NOT need. *How is it possible? It is always the same story: three buses in the opposite direction and none in mine. Rome! Nothing has changed! I will be super late, and the damn 409 will be so packed that it will be impossible to even try and get on! You can really see it is Sunday, nothing works*

properly on Sunday! ... I am deep in my own head, my angry, frustrated thoughts keep rambling on and on.

At a certain point, I notice two men walking towards me on the sidewalk. One of them is holding a yellow plastic bag; it looks like it is from a bakery. The other one has a rolled up newspaper in his left hand. They are deep in conversation, and seem not to pay attention to what is around them. They are nothing remarkable, exactly like me. They are just an other apparition in the midst of the suburb's absentmindedness. However, as it turns out, I happen to be more interesting to them – and them to me – than I initially thought. In fact, when they get right next to me, the man holding the rolled up newspaper suddenly points it to my face – without directly looking at or talking to me – and says to his confab companion, in a pronounced Roman accent, "*ecco,* <u>lei</u> *è italiana!*" – there, <u>*she*</u> is Italian! That comment directed-at-me-but-not-really-at-me tossed me out of my absentmindedness. They keep on walking past me, and I follow them with my eyes, not able anymore to make out any more words of their confabulation. I was not their interlocutor, no answer was expected of me. I was just a readily available, empirical proof supporting the-man-with-the-newspaper's theory – whatever that was. My self-evident Italian-ness did not need any check. It was as if the-man-with-the-newspaper said "you see?, that house is red!" and that was sufficient for him to make his point. Italian is Italian; red is red. They are both visible, recognizable, and irrefutable qualities one either is or is not. Either you are Italian/red, either you have Italian/red-ness, or you are/have not. Period. I am right. New line.

> So, I am Italian, they say. *They can see it*. I feel that I stand out as *the* Italian in the midst of a crowd that, apparently, is not. *Who else* is at the same bus stop waiting for the same damn 409 with me for twenty minutes already? I start looking around. A Bangladeshi couple with their young daughter; a Chinese couple; two Bangladeshi men wearing white, Arabic throbes and skull caps; an Asian-looking mother with her teenage son; an Eastern European couple, probably Romanian; two brown-skinned girls with a stroller. Yes, indeed I am Italian. But what about the other people around me? Are they not? According to the two men passing by, they are not. And, judging from my reading of the crowd, neither according to me: Bangladeshi, Chinese, Asian-looking, Eastern European, brown skin, Arabic throbes and skull caps. All these people around me display characteristics that are generally deemed incompatible with Italian-ness. Why is that? Are my skin – white but not too white – my eyes and hair – brown – a marker of "Italian-ness"? Are my rice crackers "Italian"? Is my casual leaning against the bus stop signpost an "Italian" pose? Are my comfy, brown boots and grey coat "Italian" fashion? Does the absence of a stroller – and a child – make me a typical, modern "Italian" woman?

This rather long field diary excerpt from the first phase of my fieldwork in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown in February 2015 has proven to be extremely useful in both setting the tone *and* the first "stone" of this thesis. What exactly is this work aiming to do? What is the reality it tries to intervene in? What are the complexities at work? How to make sense of a disputed and conflicted territory, where invisible albeit concrete

boundaries are constantly built, maintained, fostered, destroyed, moved, negotiated, mocked, revised? In other words, where to begin narrating a restless reality?

The few minutes I recounted in this excerpt emblematically bring about several narratives constituting the "bone structure" of the locale[1] under analysis, namely the notion of the Roman suburb/periphery as a collector of (im)migration, its consequent association with exoticized difference, and the narrative of decay that presents the area as assumedly "run-down" and "destitute". I have decided to introduce these 'grand narratives' (Lyotard 1979) – i.e. those meta-stories that are used to explain other "little stories" within a totalizing schema – at the very opening of this work because, as the excerpt above proves, they inform and structure everyday experience and perception in the locale. These are the "truths" that I was presented with through countless encounters, not only during my fieldwork, but also over the four years in which I worked and lived in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown. (Im)migration is blamed for all the locale's evils – crime, decay, drug dealing, sexual harassment/violence – as well as for its state of cultural, social and infrastructural impoverishment – "(im)migrants do not vote" is a recurring leitmotif to explain the institutional disinterest in the destiny of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown.

In the next section of this Introductory chapter, I will provide a brief overview of the locale and I will try to show in what ways the narratives I was referring to above co-participate in the (re)configurations of racegender 'entanglements' (Barad 2007) that are object of my analysis. I refer the readers to the three case analyses of chapters 2 and 3 for

[1] Throughout the paper, I will refer to Tor Pignattara/Banglatown as a locale following Anthony Giddens' (1986) definition of 'regionalized locales, [i.e.] physical territories structured in time by social rhythms' (in De Landa 2006: 95). In doing so, I want to stress how Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, before and beyond being an official administrative urban zone with clearly marked boundaries on maps, is also and most importantly structured by routinized social practices that contribute to the zoning of spacetime.

a more thorough discussion of the above. The new materialist theoretical framework will instead be thoroughly outlined in Chapter 1. For this introductory part, I will discuss both official data issued by the City of Rome (Statistics Office) and the scholarly literature available on the locale (Casu 2008; Pompeo & Priori 2009; Ficacci 2007; Di Somma 2011; Fioretti 2011). In particular, I will rely on the work of two Italian anthropologists – Francesco Pompeo (2011) and Andrea Priori (2012) of the Observatory on Racism and Diversity "M. G. Favara"[2] – who authored the only two large, and extremely valuable works available on the contemporary complex reality of Rome's southeastern suburb.

Tor Pignattara as Banglatown: the suburb as a feminine racialized spacetime

Banglatown[3] is the pejorative name attached to Tor Pignattara, one of the twelve urban zones constituting the V Municipality of the City of Rome, which is now home to the largest Bangladeshi community of the city (Casu 2008; Bisio 2013). Historian Stefania Ficacci (2007), in her book about fascism and anti-fascist resistance in the area, tells that Tor Pignattara emerged as the first *borgata spontanea* in the Southeastern quadrant of Rome, i.e. a spontaneous suburban settlement realized with low-quality materials, often lacking electricity and basic hygiene infrastructures, and, therefore, barely habitable. The precarity that characterized life in the area was aggravated in the 1930s, following the ravages of the fascist regime.[4] In those years, in fact, thousands of

[2] The Observatory on Racism and Diversity "M. G. Favara" is an initiative of the Third University of Rome, Department of Education Science, aimed at studying and contrasting racism and discrimination through an interdisciplinary approach (http://host.uniroma3.it/laboratori/osservatoriorazzismo/).
[3] In Banglatown, also the street names have been changed; for example, Via della Marranella, the street where the majority of Bangladeshi-owned small businesses are located, is now commonly referred to as Via della Bangladella.
[4] The ravages of fascism – also known as *sventramenti* – invested large parts of the historical center and they were aimed to the destruction of vast areas of the historical center surrounding, for example, St. Peter's Basilica and the Coliseum, to bring back to light the Ancient Romans' splendor and rigor. The monumental Via della Conciliazione and Via dei Fori Imperiali, among others, were built after the destruction of entire, densely populated popular districts. The people pushed out of their homes were not offered an alternative housing solution; on the contrary, they were forced

people were forced out of the central popular neighborhoods to relocate in the area, which, from then on, turned into a labyrinth of shantytowns, big condos and *borghetti* – little enclosed villages – all coexisting in the total absence of centralized town-planning schemes or housing policies. Tor Pignattara, like all the other suburban areas that "anarchically" emerged around the city center in that same fashion, remained for decades in a situation of precarious and discontinuous living (Di Somma 2011).

Even though, since the 1970s, the area has been re-evaluated and included in a more homogeneous urban context thanks to the implementation of new centralized housing policies (Di Somma 2011; Pomepo 2011), Tor Pignattara's suburban-ness has lived on and prospered. In fact, despite its rather central location (cf. Figure 1), the area preserves its "suburban feel" still today: traffic congestion, sketchy public transport services, institutional laxity and a meager cultural milieu render life and mobility in the area rather fatiguing, and convey a feeling of distance that is often more felt than real.[5]

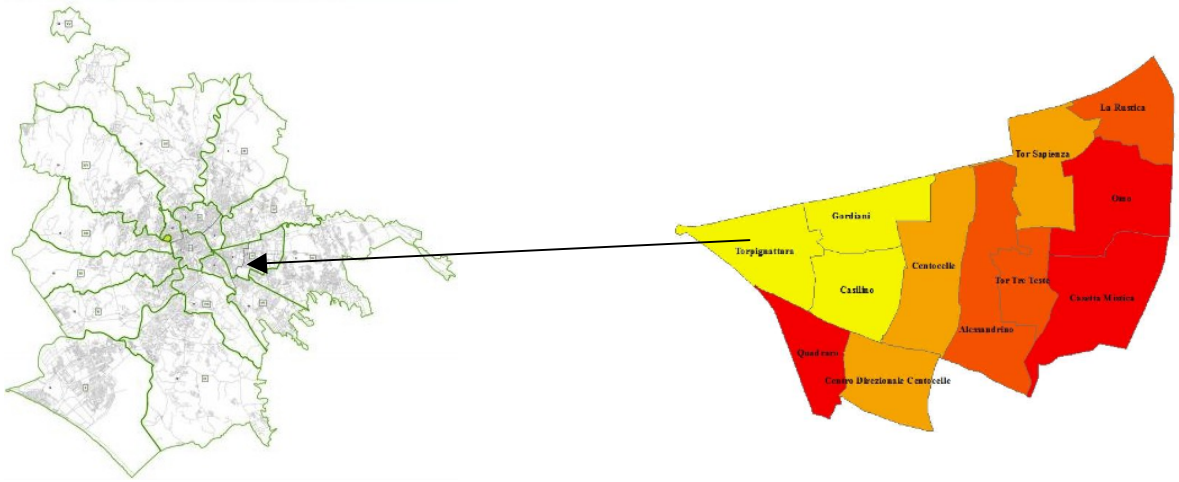

Figure 1: on the left, the map of Rome's municipalities; on the right, the map of the V Municipality.

out of the center into shantytowns of shacks and sheds. These were the origins of the *borgate* (Pompeo 2011; Villani 2012).

[5] In fact, Tor Pignattara is located at approximately the same distance from the city center as other "fancier" areas like Trastevere, one of the main tourist hubs of the city, and Parioli, home to the posh and wealthy. See also figure 1.

The persistent feeling of distance characterizing the area should be read in connection with more recent developments in its "physiognomy," i.e. the arrival of sizeable groups of (im)migrants from Bangladesh starting from the early 1990s (Pompeo & Priori 2009; Pompeo 2011; Fioretti 2011; Priori 2012; Bisio 2013). Bangladeshi (im)migrants – initially mainly young, single, highly educated males searching for fortune and social compensation in Europe – were attracted by Italy's softer and more favorable immigration rules compared to the stricter regulations enforced in Northwestern Europe, which granted broad indemnity to irregular or undocumented people (Casu 2008).[6] The influx was initially directed towards Rome, and in particular in just a few suburban areas such as Pigneto, Tor Pignattara, Centocelle and Esquilino. Scholars (Ambrosini 2005 in Casu 2008; Fioretti 2011; Pompeo 2011; Priori 2012) identified two main causes for such concentration: on the one hand, the so-called "migratory chains," i.e. informal social networks based on kinship, common origin, friendship and clan that produced a situation of migratory concentration in certain areas by tying (im)migrants, previous (im)migrants and locals by way of expectations and reciprocal obligations, and thus favoring a particular housing and work integration; on the other hand, Tor Pignattara's 'mixed-porous territory' (Fioretti 2011: 2), enhanced by the residential, commercial and productive evacuation that took place in the 1980s and 1990s, when the annual depopulation rate soared up to 2%.

Bangladeshi (im)migration in Tor Pignattara started acquiring a stable and steady character over the years. From the early 2000s, in fact, there has been a steady increase in the number of applications for family reunification visas (Casu 2008; Pompeo 2011;

[6] The 39/1990 Law, also known as "Martelli Law." According to the study *Asia-Italia: Scenari Migranti* (2012), commissioned by Caritas Migrantes, the "Martelli Law" allowed the regularization of 4.296 Bangladeshi nationals (331).

Fioretti 2011; Priori 2012; Bisio 2013). Nowadays, according to official data issued by the Statistics Office of the City of Rome, on the 31st of December 2013[7] there were 8.732 registered foreign nationals residing in Tor Pignattara, out of a total population of 47.680 (18%). Of this 18%, 1.838 are of Bangladeshi origin, i.e. 3.9% of the total population and 21% of all foreign nationals.

Even though the Bangladeshi community is not the only large minority[8] living in the locale, Tor Pignattara is today known as the Banglatown of Rome, an area that looks, smells, eats, dresses, prays, speaks and "buzzes" like a foreign, exotic land that has nothing to do with Italy and Italian-ness. The concentration of Bangladeshi nationals, albeit extremely limited, is often labeled as an "invasion" (Bisio 2013), and the widespread feeling of dispossession on the side of local dwellers surfaces in vehement and violent reactions to small incidents, which at times acquire a dramatic character.[9]

I argue that the perceived "invasiveness" and "aggressiveness"[10] of Bangladeshi settlement, with its loud display of difference and unashamed/unapologetic appropriation of space, has engendered over the years a process of gendered racialization that

[7] There is no more recent official statistical data from the City of Rome regarding the registered foreign population per urban zone.

[8] According to official data issued by the City of Rome (Statistics Office) in 2013, the Chinese is the second largest minority with a population of 1.546 (3.2%), followed by the Romanian (1.118 nationals, 2.4%), the Pilipino (757 nationals, 1.6%), the Egyptian (376 nationals, 0.8%) and the Peruvian (349 nationals, 0.7%).

[9] To name a recent incident, on the 18th of September 2014, Muhammad Shahzad Khan, a 28-year-old Pakistani man, was beaten to death in the street by Daniel Balducci, a 17-year-old Italian boy, because he was singing the Koran. (Angeli & Salvatore 2014)

[10] The Bangladeshi community is generally perceived as very "visible" and "vocal." According to several accounts (Casu 2008; Pompeo & Priori 2009; Fioretti 2011; Bisio 2013), it is read as a self-retreated, self-referential group that does not want to mingle with the local dwellers and leads a separate social, cultural and economic existence. The main points of dispute concern: religious difference – the community is predominantly Muslim – and the establishment of two small Mosques in the area that every Friday host hundreds of men who often have to pray on the nearby sidewalks; cultural difference – Bangladeshis are seen as very attached to national celebrations and every year they hold big events in occasion of the Bangladeshi New Year, Eid-ul-Fitr, the International Mother Language Day and cricket tournaments, which take place in local squares, parks and auditoriums and last several days in a row; dietary customs – Bangladeshi traditional food, which is way too oily, spicy and tasty for Italian standards, and whose smell "invades" neighboring homes, stairs and condos, as well as the streets; economic segregation – even though Bangladeshis own a vast majority of small businesses in the area, they are accused of not keeping the wheels of local economy rolling because their stores – mainly wholesales, groceries and phone centers – cater predominantly for Bangladeshi consumers; familial structure – the Bangladeshi community is perceived as extremely patriarchal and suppressing women's autonomy.

simultaneously racialized and feminized Tor Pignattara and the Bangladeshi community residing there, thus producing an alignment of Bangladeshi–ness with exoticized/exoticizing non-whiteness. In fact, on the one hand, racialization marked the area and the Bangladeshi community as non-white and thus externalized them from the Italian space (El-Tayeb 2006, 2013). On the other hand, the neighborhood and the community were also feminized through the deployment of an exoticizing colonial discourse aimed at mapping urban spaces and constituencies into a geography of power and containment by recurring to an analogy between the suburb and the colony that turned the contemporary (white) dweller into a *flâneur* and the (non-white) settler into the exotic "Other" (Mcclintok 1995). Even though the association between "aggressiveness" and "feminization" appears like a contradiction in terms, I argue that feminization is nonetheless intended as an aggressive form of emasculation endangering the integrity/entirety of the area and, thus, its right to be fully part of the city. As a result of this process, the Italian space came to be negatively configured as inherently white, masculine and Christian, thus creating a dichotomous narrative of inherent difference and absolute externality between Bangladeshis and Italians.

The situation just outlined, has engendered, over the years, an opposite process aiming to re-masculinize and re-racialize (as white) the locale as a response to the feelings of dispossession and invasion, as well as abandonment from the side of local institutions that I mentioned above. This process has, as a consequence, that of creating an image of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown as a borderland, where "wars" of colonization and conquest are fought on a daily basis so as to gain back – re-Italianize – a once-lost territory. This dynamic is taking the shape of an aggressive process of gentrification that

features rather paradoxical and contradictory traits, and hence produces a tension between a "do-gooder" kind of narrative that romanticizes the locale, its diversity and multiculturalism, while promoting neoliberal and neocolonial values and ideals that, *de facto*, maintain racialized hierarchies in place. In the following section, I will discuss the issue in more detail.

Gentrification: masculinizing racialization to take over the suburb

Over the last few years, Tor Pignattara/Banglatown has been invested by a process of gentrification, i.e. an embourgeoisement and tertiarization (Pompeo 2011) of the locale through the promotion of a consumption-based sense of community as a tool to revive its "exhausted" sociality. As Pompeo's (2011) analysis proves, this process started out aggressively in particular in its westernmost urban area known as Pigneto, which is today renowned for its buzzing nightlife of small cafes, art galleries, *vernissages*, designers' studios and hipster aesthetics. Around the mid 2000s, in fact, a pervasive media campaign exalting *Pigneto Village* wagered on the romanticized "original" identity of the area as "a village within the city," and turned its popular imaginary into the currency of exchange for middle-class newcomers, small businesses, and the real estate market, which is now taking advantage of the sizeable appreciation of properties in the area. As Pompeo (2011) points out, this passage from a popular to a pop aesthetics has produced a parallel resemanticization of the concept of "popularness," which went from indicating a sociocultural condition connected to a critique of power differentials and neoliberal society, to an empty rhetorical element connected to the commodification of place and consumption of identity (48). Such resemanticization came along with the

destruction of all those elements of popularness that characterized Pigneto as a popular setting, like the stable street market, for example, which has been dismantled to make room for new night bars and their terraces.

According to economic sociologist Alberto Violante (2008 in Pompeo 2011), this kind of re-evaluation politics reinstate, rather than contrast, the center/periphery dualism. In fact, on the one hand, they extend the center to include areas previously excluded from it, thus presenting the center as the "winning model," the one to strive for; whereas on the other hand, they push further out those groups – (im)migrants, elderly people, low-income family units among others – who cannot cope with the increasing economic burden that accompanies those transformations. As a result, the space so vacated is literally taken over by young, middle-class, bohemian newcomers. Over the last ten years, in fact, Pigneto has become home to a large crowd of middle-class university students, artists, free-lancers and proto-activist.

The success of such initiatives, according to Pompeo, relies on a new form of shared governance that sees the participation of both institutional and civil society actors and that engenders a process of so-called social self-promotion aimed to encourage citizens to take ownership and participate in the management of the territory. Through the Comitati di Quartiere[11] – CdQ – local dwellers and most importantly newcomers take up the Municipality's requalification mission and become the main interpreters of a transformation/gentrification process that is deeply changing the social and communal structure of the territory. While pretending to serve as the symbol of a popular counterculture based on relationships, sharing and bottom-up engagement, the CdQs are paradoxically contributing to destroy the same popularness they lay claims to through

[11] Neighborhood committees.

their uncritical support to an exclusive model of commodification of relationships and sociality.

Another problematic feature outlined by Pompeo (2011) with regards to this kind of bottom-up gentrification process has to do with the emergence of disparate civil society groups with opposing interests that turned the area into a battleground for partisan factions. In fact, local authorities, within the framework of the current gentrification, serve as grant-making institutions sending out periodical calls for proposals from the civil society, thus dictating the agenda upon which the proposed interventions should direct their efforts. In this perverse mechanism of social self-promotion, the local population is fractured into a multitude of competing civil society organizations battling each other to get access to funds and, hence, prosper, which is pretty much in contrast with the ideal of popularness previously discussed. Moreover, the public-tender machine through which funds are accessed – based on a complex linguistic, legal, technological and bureaucratic apparatus – serves as a further exclusionary mechanism that cuts out those aforementioned weaker constituencies from the possibility to actively engage with the territory. Finally, it should also be noted that, in a situation of economic crisis characterized by want of funds for culture, education, (im)migration and societal infrastructural support, it is more convenient – both economically and politically – for local authorities to delegate intervention to civil society actors. In fact, compared to the mobilization of both human and economic resources that an active and direct action of the Municipality would require, civil society organizations are much cheaper, less demanding and, most importantly, a good piece of advertisement for the thus "virtuous" local authority (see Chapter 2).

During my fieldwork, I had the chance to see how the "winning recipe" for gentrification exemplified by Pigneto has proven particularly attractive also for that part of Tor Pignattara associated with Banglatown, which was left out of it at least until 2013. I argue that the attractiveness of the formula is producing an extension of the same gentrification dynamics beyond the borders of Pigneto, so much so that it is rapidly taking over the adjacent areas. As it will become clearer in Chapter 2, 3 and 4, this symbolic appropriation of the historical popular imaginary of the area comes along with a violent reappropriation of space – through commissioned street art, deodorization narratives and street festivals – that comes across like a rather problematic re-conquering mission with regards to aforementioned processes of gendered racialization and in/exclusion of (im)migrant communities unfolding in the locale.

In fact, in relation to the feminization process, I argue that the locale is currently invested by a counter-process of masculinizing racialization aimed to turn Tor Pignattara/Banglatown into the symbolic *telos* of the "new Rome" and "future Italy" – as the media (Greison 2013; Petri 2013; Rostelli 2013) commonly refer to it – that is worthy of entrance into the space of the city. By promoting a requalification process that simply expands the center – the masculine, white space of Italian-ness – to the disadvantage of the periphery – the feminine, non-white space of non-Italian-ness – gentrification perpetuates the same racialized hierarchies harking back to imperialist and modernity discourses (see Chapter 1). As a result of gentrification, Tor Pignattara gets separated from Banglatown both spatially and temporally. Through a process of masculinizing racialization, gentrification re-habilitates and re-includes the area into a symbolic *telos* of progress that configures Tor Pignattara as hip, as "*the* place to be in," whereas

Banglatown, as the symbol of the anachronistic space, needs to be left behind – or rather pushed further out – in order for Tor Pignattara to enter modernity. In other words, Pigneto takes over and swallows up Tor Pignattara, while Banglatown is pushed further out. Here, like in Pigneto a few years ago, a mass of young, middle-class, highly-educated, Italian couples/families is slowly taking over the space and starting up their small businesses, activities and "activisms" with aim to leave a mark on the territory and contrast its decay. My friend hosts Elena and Edoardo, my ex-colleagues and friends and I, we all went to swell those ranks over the years.

As it appears, then, the context under analysis is deeply fractured and polarized along the lines of a humanist identity politics rooted in neoliberal, (neo)imperialist discourses of difference. In light of all previous considerations, then, how to make sense of such complex and somewhat contradictory reality? How to do justice to its kaleidoscopic nature without flattening it into a war story between opposed factions? How to go beyond the essentializing rhetoric of the "us vs. them" that inevitably naturalizes and hierarchizes difference? How to move out of the humanist identity politics sphere? In the following section, I will show how a feminist new materialist framework proves to be a vital tool to extricate ourselves from the confines of such rigid understanding of reality and "work our way into" the maze of relations contributing to the materialization of the locale.

A new materialist approach to analyze identity politics and the "ideology of f(r)actions"

The decisive change in the imaginary of the locale becomes apparent when analyzing news stories and media representation over the last twelve months. If, only in August 2014, the locale was generally referred to as a 'ticking time bomb,' 'a far west,' 'a cold fusion laboratory of racist hate, crime, decay and neglect' (Roma Today; Roma Notizie; my translation) following the tragic events mentioned in footnote 9, not even ten months later Tor Pignattara/Banglatown was on national media as 'Rome's XXI Century Renaissance,' and the 'Sistine Chapel of the suburbs' (Facebook event "Pedali e Murales – in Bici alla Scoperta della Nuova Roma;" Facebook page *I Love Torpignart*). I read such polarized representation as a proof of the dynamics described in the previous sections of this introduction, aiming to re-habilitate this area of the city and make it worthy of its entrance into the Center – with a capital c. This is one of the reasons that pushed me to steer away from a kind of ethnographic research still too preoccupied with the issue of representation – such as, for example, (semi)structured interviews – and thus still too enmeshed in those same identity politics dynamics that are fracturing the locale, essentializing constituencies and reinstating the status quo.

Being interested in observing how race and gender are mobilized and co-participate in shaping everyday experience in the locale, I observed that, in order to do something different and do justice to the bustling and constantly shifting reality of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown I had to choose a different entry point into my matter of study. What if, instead of interviewing people and, thus, vocalizing and reinstating once more the f(r)actions at work in there, I "conversed" with those things and bodies that are

generally seen as inert when it comes to social issues, like race and gender are generally thought to be? What if I started to conceive race and gender as not exclusively human businesses, but rather as more-than-human assemblages given by the 'intra-action' (Barad 2007) of all different manner of (human and nonhuman) actors? What would this shift towards a posthumanist understanding of agency and reality entail? Such a methodology may help me to look past identity politics issues and reveal the complexities of identity structurations within the locale.

To paraphrase what feminist philosopher Iris van der Tuin (2014) wrote in her book *Generational Feminism: New Materialist Introduction to a Generative Approach*, my interest does not lie in solving the age-old dispute between competing empiricist and postmodernist epistemologies attempting to either giving voice or undoing certain categories. In order to move beyond this epistemological identity politics, if I may say so – which in the case of empiricism would result in a kind of engagement with Tor Pignattara/Banglatown directed towards describing its objective truth, whereas postmodernism would focus eminently on discoursive strategies of power and knowledge – feminist new materialism as

> a practice of negotiating matter, materials, materiality, and materialism forges a breakthrough of feminist empiricism and feminist postmodernism that works towards "more promising interference patterns" (Haraway 1997: 16). […] When the non-human object of knowledge is conversed or corresponded with, we step out of the frame of humanist identity politics while the identity political framework – the primary location of the horizontalization program – is expanded. (33)

In other words, only by working with and negotiating the so-called '4Ms' (Lehmann 2012 in van der Tuin 2014), it is possible to move away from a hierarchizing and verticalizing identity politics, to embrace a diverse, wider and thus horizontal politics of agency/identity focusing on relations and patterns of relations. Such theoretical-methodological shift, as it will be thoroughly explained in Chapter 1, will operate a decentering of the human subject as the sole holder of agency, through which the enactment of the nonhuman will eventually be accounted for. Feminist new materialism, through its (re)conceptualization of agency, will allow us to understand how bodies and meanings come to matter rather than doing away with them (Haraway 1988). It will enable a historicization of boundaries and separations to see how they sediment, materialize, persist, and contradict each other. Finally, it will enable the production of accountable knowledge that places the relationship between knower and know, subject and object at the center of the knowledge produced, thus operating a reworking of the notion of ethics from human attribute to a politics of possibilities, that is 'ways of responsibly imagining and intervening in the configurations of power' (Barad 2007: 246). For my project on Tor Pignattara/Banglatown this means quite simply accounting for our implicatedness in the iterative materialization of what there is, and distribute value more generously by embracing a diverse politics of agency.

Chapter 1

Theory and Methodology Section

On Race, Gender, New Materialism and (Auto)Ethnography

On the importance of talking about race in discussions of difference in Europe

The long excerpt I used to open my introduction to this thesis, taken from the field diary I kept during the first part of my fieldwork in February 2015, is the perfect starting point for a discussion of racialized visual regimes and the scopic politics that identifies race as a marker of unbelonging in the European space – be it social, cultural, historical, political or economic.

According to cultural critic Fatima El-Tayeb (2011; 2013), one of the main characteristics of racialization processes is that they generally pretend to name natural, unchanging, self-evident facts. This appears even more evident if one considers the history of the term race itself and the shifts in its meaning and usage over the centuries. This is precisely what British anthropologist Peter Wade (1997) does in his book *Race and Ethnicity in Latin America*. His exemplary work is extremely important for my thesis, as it provides the conceptual framework underlying my political choice to speak about race (and racialization) rather than ethnicity in relation to the context of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown. As it is exemplified by other studies (Casu 2008; Pompeo & Priori 2009; Fioretti 2011; Pompeo 2011; Priori 2012), the words race and racialization never emerge in the discussion of the dynamics unfolding in the locale, a sign that race is today a rather taboo topic amongst Italian academics, politicians, institutions and the

general public. However, I argue that race, racialization and racism form part of everyday experience in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown; hence it is of paramount importance to problematize such dynamics rather than "sweep them under the carpet" and pretend they do not exist. In this, I find Wade's work as a great support in sustaining my argument, and I summarize it here as background to my discussion of the concept of race and its origins.

Having identified the appearance of the term race in European languages in the early Sixteenth Century with the main acceptation of lineage, Wade observes how, in the Eighteenth Century, thanks to the work of Linnaeus and his classification of things into species and genera, race started to indicate a naturalization of difference, i.e. cultural and physical features were presented together and often confounded. Far from being a "cold" and "objective" classification, divisions based on race were soon hierarchized and charged with connotations of superiority and inferiority, properness and improperness, civilization and primitiveness. Christendom and the encounter with colonized peoples – Africans and native Americans – played a vital role in the proliferation of images and narratives of the savage man and the infidel against which Europe and modernity came to be defined. At the end of the Eighteenth Century, '[h]uman identity and personhood became increasingly defined by discourses of race, certain races became defined as non-rational or aesthetically inferior […] and race could define certain people as fit for slavery' (9).

In the Nineteenth Century, a new understanding of race came about as an incontrovertible fact, thanks to the surge in popularity of polygenism and scientific racism. In this period, the basis for the hierarchization of difference was biology;

assumedly "natural" differences were now seen as specifically "biological" differences. According to Wade, the reasons for this conceptual shift have to be found on the one hand in the fights for the abolition of slavery, and on the other hand in the rise of Imperialism. In fact, it should not come as a surprise that racist theories emerged that could maintain the *status quo* and preserve Europe's domination over non-white and non-European peoples, in a time where this supremacy was put into question.

The Twentieth Century was probably the most contradictory period in the conceptualization of race, as it saw both the apogee of scientific racism and eugenics, and also their dismantling. Wade finds in the atrocities of World War II and the Holocaust the main push for the overcoming of the conceptualization of race as a biological fact. Many natural scientists and the vast majority of social scientists now agree on the social constructedness of race. In the words of Wade,

> The idea of race is just that – an idea. The notion that races exist with definable physical characteristics and, even more so, that some races are superior to others is the result of particular historical processes which, many would agree, have their roots in the colonization by European peoples of other areas of the world. (14)

However, even though race is now – in the Twenty-First Century – almost unanimously considered as a social construct, its entwinement with biology is still very strong. According to Wade's analysis, in fact, many social scientists identify phenotype and its variations as the "brute fact" upon which the notion of race is constructed. Nonetheless, phenotype and disparities in physical appearances are much less "brute facts" than they are generally thought to be. In fact, as Wade argues,

> the concept of race is even more surely linked into a European history of thinking about difference, rather than a concept describing an objective reality that is independent of a social context. [… Therefore,] what has to *count* as the study of race is not to be circumscribed by some objective definition about phenotypical variation but can change in time and is, ultimately, up for grabs. (15; original emphasis)

Given its charged and problematic history, race has nowadays given way to an equally problematic narrative of colorblindness (Puwar 2004; El-Tayeb 2011, 2013) according to which "we are all equal, we are all human beings, we do not see colors." Within this narrative, a "new" term gained in popularity and is now commonly used to discuss issues of difference in the European context and beyond, i.e. ethnicity. In what comes, I will give an in-depth discussion of the term drawing again from Peter Wade's work, this time in connection with the works by cultural critic Rey Chow (2002), sociologist Rogers Brubaker (2005; 2009) and feminist theorist Shannon Winnubst (2006).

If the term race is currently extremely disputed due to its charged and problematic history, another term has gained in visibility and usage over the last century. Ethnicity, in fact, has come to be often used as a substitute for race given that its history is less morally loaded and, hence, it is assumed to be a more "politically correct" way to address issues of difference. Dictionaries inform that its etymological origin is the Ancient Greek *ethnos*, meaning people or nation, and since the Eighteenth Century it is used to indicate groups of people that are seen as minorities within a nation-state (Wade 1997; Chow 2002). In its general acceptation, ethnicity refers to cultural differences but it does so by

> using the language of *place* […]. Cultural difference is spread over geographical space by virtue of the fact that social relations become concrete in spatialized form. This creates a cultural geography, or […] a moral topography. People thus use location, or rather, people's putative origin in certain places, to talk about difference and sameness. (Wade 1997: 18; original emphasis)

In this respect, ethnicity's implicatedness with issues of nationhood and nationalism is rather apparent, and its gain in popularity nowadays should be read in relation to the recent and current context of international mass migrations and displacements that is bringing different and distant groups – both geographically and culturally – into contact. Cultural critic Rey Chow (2002) explains how the late use of the term ethnicity is assumed to designate a kind of cultural condition that is descriptive of all human beings, thus shifting from its earlier boundary-drawing significance.

> The modern usage of the term thus seeks to undo the clear, aggressive binarism that legitimates the separation between "us" and "them," between the inside and outside of a community. White cultural groups and persons, it would have us believe, are henceforth to be considered just as ethnic as nonwhites, with the emphasis on the crucial equality marker "just as." (25-26)

However, this universalizing of ethnicity creates a situation in which, if everyone is ethnic, then no one is. Also, the pacific view of ethnicity is definitely not the case in practice, given that way too many wars are fought in its name. In fact, rather than all encompassing, 'ethnicity seems to have brought about new, immutable frontiers leading to disaffinities and expulsions hitherto unimaginable. In addition, far from being regarded

as a universalism characterizing white as well as nonwhite groups, "ethnicity" is used customarily […] to refer to nonwhite groups' (27).

For these reasons, as Peter Wade (1997), Rey Chow (2002) and Rogers Brubaker (2005; 2009) argue, race, ethnicity and nation, despite being distinct concepts, greatly overlap both analytically and in practice. In fact, they all involve a discourse about origins and physical variations; they all talk of in- and exclusions; they all refer to intergenerationality and transmissibility. As Brubaker (2009) puts it,

> race, ethnicity, nationhood are not precise analytical concepts; they are vague vernacular terms whose meaning varies considerably over place and time. Rather than seek to demarcate precisely their respective spheres, it may be more productive to focus on identifying and explaining patterns of variation on these and other dimensions, without worrying too much about where exactly race stops and ethnicity begins. (27-28)

Also Chow writes along the same lines that 'it may actually be more productive not to insist on an absolute distinction between the two terms at all times, for the simple reason that they are, more often than not, mutually implicated' (23).

In other words, the dichotomous thinking that aims to oppose racialization and ethnicization in the same way that it does oppose biology and culture, appears to be fraught with danger and rather problematic. As feminist philosopher Shannon Winnubst (2006) argues in her book *Queering Freedom*,

> the biology/culture framework also allows for an essentializing of culture that is nonetheless racializing, thereby grounding emergent strands of ultranationalism that parade under the banner of "ethnicity". […] Either side of the dichotomy, biology or culture, is easily susceptible to

> essentialism: the move from race to ethnicity, a move that can be framed along the lines of the sex/gender distinction, does not ensure a move to liberatory, anti-racist politics or epistemologies. (10)

Feeding into the nature/culture divide that lies at the foundation of late western modernity[12], the dismissal of race as a problematic heritage of past ignorance, barbarism and backwardness harks back into a somatophobic narrative of colorblindness that leaves the body – as the site of race – behind in order to assert "we are all human beings." However, as several feminist authors (Haraway [1985] 1991, 1988, 1997; Latour 1991; Puwar 2004; Puar 2007, 2012; Winnubst 2006; Barad 2007) have argued, the trope of the disembodied modern subject as the 'modest witness' (Haraway 1997) of scientific objective knowledge, or the 'neutered, neutral and colorless' (Puwar 2004) universal human form of modern humanism still remain the undeclared corporeal norm against which other bodies are measured. Far from being an innocent move, the move to culture – or, in this case, the move to ethnicity – can be seen as downgrading some marked bodies into nature, while upgrading others – assummedly unmarked – to (dis)embody the universal subject.

In consideration of ethnicity's implicatedness in processes of racialization occurring in "our" modern western democracies, I explicitly choose to refer to the events and incidents discussed in this work in terms of race, racism and racialization. It is a

[12] In my work, I refer to the present historical temporality interchangeably as "late western modernity" or simply "western modernity." These phrasings are a shorthand that I elaborated starting from the works of several authors – such as Jean François Lyotard (1979), Bruno Latour (1991), Donna Haraway (1988, [1985] 1991, 1997), Shannon Winnubst (2006), Karen Barad (2007) and Jasbir Puar (2007, 2012) – to describe the "now" as characterized by a dichotomous thinking that separates nature from culture, devaluates matter and the body as a-historical and self-evident referents, appreciates individualism and sees the world as composed by discrete, preexisting entities, professes the separation between subject and object as the prerequisite for the production of objective scientific knowledge, purports time as linear and located along an endless linear arrow of progress and space as an "empty" container or neutral backdrop for the unfolding of human events. All these characteristics will be object of further analysis and discussion within this chapter.

precise political stance I am taking, which rests on the will to counter the widespread fear of pulling the "race/racism card" when discussing issues of difference in Europe due to the widespread idea that Europe is a space free of race – and hence racism. As El-Tayeb (2011) argues, '[t]he continental European case represents a form of racialization that receives relatively little academic attention both because it diverges from models traditionally dominating the discourse around race and because its strategy of denial is particularly hard to challenge' (XVII). References to racism are often taken as imports from other contexts, namely the U.S., where race and racism are "actually a problem." However, I believe that refusing to talk about race and racism with reference to the European context will perpetuate a situation in which race and racism are removed from our present temporality, to be relegated to a far-gone past of slavery, colonialism, exploitation, looting and horrible violence. On the contrary, race and racism are as much a thing of today's European reality as they were in the past. Slavery might have been abolished, and Europe's empires long demolished. But racist epistemic, structural and material violence are still very much in place, and not only abroad, but also precisely "at home," where, just to give two examples, thousands of migrants every year die in the Mediterranean or, if they make it to the Italian shores, are locked away in detention centers for trying to enter Fortress Europe, and Roma communities – especially in Italy – are constantly deported and made object of daily institutional, media and personal racist attacks for the sole fact of (assumedly) being Roma. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to discuss race, in order to engender a critical discussion of the racist structures that regulate our world and daily realities, and understand our implicatedness in their persistence. My use of the terms race and racialization has to be seen as a willful

attempt to bring race to the fore in discussions of difference in Europe. It is also a way to move out of the safe harbor offered by the concept of ethnicity and social constructivism that, as Winnubst (2006) recounts, tend to shut down the conversation rather than opening it up, and evacuate us all of agency and responsibility.[13]

The way one looks: on phallicized whiteness, racialized visual regimes and externalization of racialized embodiments

I find particularly fruitful now to introduce more at length Shannon Winnubst's (2006) critical analysis of race and whiteness, especially in connection with her onto-epistemology of vision.

As several authors have argued (Lyotard 1979; Bataille 1988; Haraway 1988, 1996; Latour 1991; Winnubst 2006; Barad 2007), "our" western modernity is anchored on the concept of separateness as the fundamental requirement for objectivity. In order for things to be observed, and for the observer to observe those things, it is paramount that the two are perfectly separate, discrete and discernible. Similarly, the things observed

[13] I am aware that, in the 1990s in The Netherlands, the use of the term ethnicity as a substitute for race gained in popularity amongst intersectionality theorists, who saw in its social constructivist stance a strong critical impetus for discussing issues of difference in the Dutch context. Gloria Wekker and Helma Lutz (2001), for example, write that the shift to gender and ethnicity enabled the transition from a 'monolithic' (18) understanding of sex and race focused on disadvantage and determinism, to a 'broader and more dynamic' (17) understanding of categories as socially constructed and offering possibilities for change and social variation. However, as it will be further discussed in this work, the disconnect between nature and culture that sees nature as passive, fixed and self-evident – it is commonly understood that sex is in the genitals, race is in the skin – and culture as creative, dynamic and changing not only brings about a devaluation of matter and its participation in the world's becoming, but also leaves the co-constitutive nature of matter and culture unattended (Grosz 1994; Barad 2007). This tendency is perfectly understandable in light of modernity's phobic tendency to biologize the body. As feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grosz argues in *Volatile Bodies* (1994), "[w]hen patriarchs have used a fixed concept of the body to contain women, it is understandable that feminists would resist such conceptions and attempt to define themselves in non- or extracorporeal terms, seeking an equality on intellectual grounds or in terms of abstract universalism or humanism" (14). This can equally be said with regards to race, given that centuries of scientific racism have contributed to promoting the idea that race is a biological attribute of certain bodies. The shift from sex to gender, and from race to ethnicity, draws a distinction between the "real" biological body and the body as object of representation, and advocates for a redefinition of the meanings and values attributed to it, while uncritically assuming the body as the unproblematic natural base or the raw material of culture's elaborations (cfr. Grosz 1994; Haraway 1988). This way, sex or race are considered as fixed categories upon which it is impossible – or inconvenient – to act. It appears, then, that intersectional thinking is more concerned with issues of representation of the intersection rather than with what *happens* at the intersection. Within the new materialist framework I propose, the agency of matter and the event of difference are nodal points of my work.

also need to be perfectly bounded and discrete in order for them to be classified, arranged and organized. Shannon Winnubst (2006) defines modern thought's fixation with listing as 'the logic of the limit' (8), i.e. 'the space in which thinking realizes the arbitrariness of the cultural codes into which it is habituated, and simultaneously cannot expunge the need for order itself. […] Order is that without which thinking cannot think' (ibid). Moving away from a situation identified as pre-modernity where thought proceeded by way of interwoven stories (Latour 1991) and general economies (Bataille 1988-91), modernity established a regime of closed economies based on separateness, in which categories must be delimited in order for us to grasp their different ontological workings in the world.

Cultural critic Rey Chow (2002), in her book *The Protestant Ethnic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, draws from Michel Foucault's work *The Order of Things* (1970) and proposes that his 'discussion of biopower can be seen as his approach, albeit oblique, to the question of the ascendancy of whiteness in the modern world' (3). This increasing objectification of the world – or disanimation of matter, as Bruno Latour[14] would put it – aimed at making it perfectly knowable and observable, can be historicized

> as part of an ongoing imperialist agenda for transforming the world into observable and hence manageable units, and the intensification of abstract theoretical processes, likewise, must be seen as inseparable from the historical conditions that repeatedly return the material benefits of such processes to European subjectivities. (2)

[14] Quote taken from Bruno Latour's lecture at the Stadsschouwburg Theater in Utrecht, on Saturday 18th of April 2015. The disanimation of matter that Latour mentioned has to do with the Weberian notion of 'disenchantment' as the defining trait of modernity, i.e. the belief that 'there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted' (Weber 1948 in Sojak 2006: 239). This is consistent also with Jean François Lyotard's (1979) groundbreaking text *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, where he postulates the repudiation of narrative knowledge – a form of superstitious knowledge prevalent in pre-modern societies – as the prerequisite for western modernity's objectivity and science.

To put it in different terms, an epistemic line was drawn between Man and the world, which rendered the knowing subject as a disembodied 'Man in space' (Haraway 1991: 150), absolutely external to the world and, by virtue of His externality, also absolutely objective (see also Barad 2007). However, as it turned out, the imperialist agenda underlying the world's fragmentation into knowable and discrete units also engendered a situation in which

> "Man" is epistemologically as well as practically divided into subject and object on grounds of racial and ethnic difference (the most prominent instance of this division being "white" and "nonwhite"). If Man is a historical invention, it is because he is a Western invention, which relies for its inventiveness – its originality, so to speak – on the debasement and exclusion of others. (2-3)

Feminist theorist Rosi Braidotti (2013), in her work *The Posthuman*, also talks at length about the historical invention of Man as a western invention,[15] which developed into a civilizational model, where a certain idea of Europe coincided with the universalizing powers of self-reflexive reason. And Donna Haraway (1997) in her book *Modest_Witness@Second_Millennium. FemaleMan©_Meets_Oncomouse™. Feminism and Technoscience*, dedicates a whole chapter to the discussion of the 'modest witness,'

[15] 'Taking a relatively short chronological sample within a restricted geographical area - European culture since the sixteenth century - one can be certain that man is a recent invention within it. [...] that appearance was not the liberation of an old anxiety, the transition into luminous consciousness of an age-old concern, the entry into objectivity of something that had long remained trapped within beliefs and philosophies: it was the effect of a change in the fundamental arrangements of knowledge. As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end.
If those arrangements were to disappear as they appeared, if some event of which we can at the moment do no more than sense the possibility - without knowing either what its form will be or what it promises - were to cause them to crumble, as the ground of Classical thought did, at the end of the eighteenth century, then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea.' (Foucault [1970] 2005: 421-422)

i.e. what she identifies – in a reference to the important book by Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer (1985) *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life* – as the universal ideal of unmarked self-invisibility that is specifically modern, masculine, European and scientific and that caused the epistemological exclusion of all marked subjectivities 'in the grounding of centuries of race, sex, and class discourses as objective scientific reports' (32).

Winnubst (2006) developed the shorthand 'phallicized whiteness' (10) precisely to describe the functioning of racialized epistemological and political systems of domination within late western modernity. In this framework, "whiteness" is read as phallicized, which means that it

> becomes both the structuring element and the effect of a set of cultural practices and discourses that historically confer disproportionate, and often abusive, power on some persons over and in excess of others. As the structuring element, "whiteness" functions much as the phallus does in Lacan's diagnosis: it is the dominant or "master" signifier around which all other signifiers and practices are oriented. […] As an affect of these cultural practices and discourses, "whiteness" is sedimented by repetition into a pattern that *appears* as solid, as "natural," posing as a prediscursive, ahistorical, ontological given. (14; original emphasis)

In other words, "whiteness," as well as all the other signifiers that are constituted and organized around it, come to be conceived as solid, natural, ahistorical, givens and internally consistent entities. This tendency to fix difference into solid categories has been defined by Brubaker (2005; 2009) as 'groupism,' which, according to the author, arises in those instances where 'boundary maintenance and distinctive identity are emphasized' (2005: 11), and is

> the tendency to treat various categories of people as if they were internally homogeneous, externally bounded groups, even unitary collective actors with common purposes; and to take ethnic and racial groups and nations as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis. (2009: 28)

By maintaining 'the metaphysics of "community" and "identity"' in place (2005: 11), groupism claims the existence of "an identity" that, even when it is deterritorialized and stretched in space to cross national boundaries, still remains on some levels fundamentally stable, selfsame and predetermined. Also feminist scholars Gabriele Griffin and Rosi Braidotti (2012), among others, refer to homogenization as a racialized strategy serving to maintain an "us/them" mentality that, in fact, fails to sufficiently address intra-group differences and interferences.

Another interesting aspect of Winnubst's argument is that, if "whiteness" is the dominant signifier in the present discourse of race, and if, as was mentioned in the previous section, discourses of race are centered on disparities in physical appearances, then embodiment and the racialized visual regimes in which it happens need to be interrogated. Winnubst's reliance on psychoanalysis is justified by the fact that the 'lenses of psychoanalysis have much to tell us about white inhabitants of these cultural symbolics of phallicized whiteness and, more particularly, some of the silent assumptions about space and embodiment which constitute that whiteness' (58-59). The cultural symbolic under exam is that process that produces particular bodies as more powerful and more entitled than others to spaces of epistemological, political and economic power – i.e. those white, male, heterosexual, middle-class, Christian, able propertied bodies that

oversee the Ivory Tower of what today counts as knowledge (Winnubst 2006; Haraway 1988; 1994; 1996).

Given that, according to Jacques Lacan's theory of ego-formation, our relation with vision and optics is framed as an ontological one[16], then one's significance within a cultural symbolic dominated by visual cues will inevitably be shaped and informed by the way one looks – that is, both the way one appears and the way one beholds other's appearances. In a cultural symbolic of phallicized whiteness, the bodies that simply appear are the ones that are properly bounded and contained – featuring the right combinations of bodily appearances and cultural properties. Most bodies, however, 'have to locate themselves somewhere in the spectrum from invisibility to hyper-visibility. These are those out-of-control bodies, the ones that cannot contain themselves and must heed the proper limits and boundaries set for them' (71). This idea that bodies can be divided into proper and unruly has to do, on the one hand, with the modern myth of original unity (Haraway 1991; Winnubst 2006) that reinstates the modern credo in the fragmentation of the world into understandable, bounded units; and on the other hand, with the reduction to nature/the body of those racialized and sexed bodies that feeds into a conception of embodiment as independent from the cultural symbolic in which it happens.[17]

In the current white supremacist, neoliberal political world order, dominated by mass migrations from the world's South to the rich economies of the West, the encounter

[16] I am referring here to Lacan's mirror stage (1953-54).

[17] Winnubst (2006) dedicates one chapter of her book to the analysis of Lacan's theory of ego-formation in relation to racialized embodiments. In that chapter, the author argues that Lacan leaves the issue of the child's image in the mirror unproblematized, i.e. context-independent, unaffected by the cultural symbolic the child inhabits. Through the chapter, Winnubst wittily shows how embodiment – and racialized embodiments – should be seen as happening in the tangle of 'thorny relations between the visible and language – or, in Lacanian terminology, between the imaginary and the symbolic' (Winnubst 2006: 16), in other words, as a material-discursive phenomenon (Haraway 1988; Barad 2007) happening in the 'intra-action' (Barad 2007) between nature and culture.

between contained and unruly bodies happens on a daily basis in the streets of our neighborhoods, and sometimes even inside our homes. In Europe in particular, there is an inarguable investment in asserting "whiteness" as the norm against which racialization is taken as a marker establishing the boundary between insiders and outsiders (El-Tayeb 2011). The racialized visual regime that visibilizes – i.e. racializes – only particular (allegedly) marked embodiments produces a division not only between contained and unruly bodies, but also between properly-placed and misplaced bodies. As a result, marked embodiments are expelled from Europe's cultural imaginary and symbolic. As El-Tayeb (2011) argues,

> [t]he continued inability or rather unwillingness to confront, let alone overcome, the glaring whiteness underlying Europe's self-image has rather drastic consequences for migrants and minority communities routinely ignored, marginalized, and defined as a threat to the very Europe they are part of, their presence usually only acknowledged as a sign of crisis and forgotten again in the ongoing construction of a new European identity. (XXV)

She defines the coexistence of a racialized visual regime that produces non-whiteness as non-European and an ideology of colorblindness that claims "not to see racialized differences" as 'invisible racialization' (XXIV). In fact,

> "[P]olitical racelessness" does not equate experiential or social racelessness, that is, the absence of racial thinking, rather, it creates a form of racialization that can be defined as specifically European both in its enforced silence and in its implicit categorization as not European of all those who violate Europe's implicit, but normative whiteness, allowing to forever consider the "race question" as externally (and by implication temporarily) imposed. (XXVIII)

This creates a situation of 'static foreignness' (El-Tayeb 2011: XXV) that traps people displaying the visual markers of Otherness in a condition of constant transience.

Such transience is accompanied and aggravated by another kind of foreignness that is both institutionalized and enforced by the law. In fact, one emblematic way in which the silent externalization of nonwhite citizens is put to work is national citizenship laws. According to sources (Somers 2008), none of the European countries[18] grants unconditional citizenship rights to anyone born on the territory of the state - *ius soli*. The dominant citizenship rule in the European context is, in fact, the so called *ius sanguinis*, which mandates that only children born from one or both parents who already have state citizenship are considered full citizens of the state. In Italy, for example, citizenship is regulated by Law no. 91 – 5th of February 1992, which states that only those born from Italian citizens or stateless/anonymous parents will be granted full citizen rights from the state. The child who is born from parents with another citizenship will be considered as foreigner and, hence, hold a temporary residence permit that has to be renewed periodically by the parents and that does not allow traveling abroad. Only upon turning eighteen, the child will be allowed to apply for citizenship.

As it appears, citizenship in Europe is not determined on the basis of place of birth, but rather on "blood," i.e. on the metaphysical sense of community and identity that allegedly binds and predetermines all the people who share it (Linke 2003). By privileging *ius sanguinis* over *ius solis*, European countries are basically saying that physical presence on the territory is not a sufficient requirement to determine belonging, and produce a paradoxical situation in which constant transience of racialized subjects

[18] Only France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Ireland provide birthright citizenship, but with restrictions.

coexists with an extreme restriction of their mobility while on temporary visas. As postcolonial scholar Moustafa Bayoumi (2006) states, 'racism must also be understood as a careful ideology that is, unfortunately, politically useful, particularly in circumstances where one is called upon to define oneself against another. It determines the other, and it does so through various institutions, the law being a primary one among them' (276). In other words, citizenship laws become a legal method of racial formation.

In the following section, I will analyze another way in which the racialized visual regime that constitutes Europe's cultural symbolic contributes to the externalization of particular constituencies on the basis of a different set of visual markers that have to do not so much with phenotype and physical appearances, but with dress. I will focus on the convergence of race and religion, to observe how especially Muslim minorities on the European territories are removed from the cultural, social and political space.

The converging of race and religion: the racialization of Muslim populations

Afro-Caribbean psychoanalyst Frantz Fanon (1959), in his article 'Algeria Unveiled' on the role of women and the veil in the Algerian War, writes that '[t]he way people clothe themselves, together with the traditions of dress and finery that custom implies, constitutes the most distinctive form of a society's uniqueness, that is to say the one that is the most immediately perceptible' (161). Dress and clothing customs, together with disparities in physical appearances, constitute one of the markers of difference that are often source of racialization. As previously mentioned, even though these could be considered as pertaining exclusively the realm of cultural difference and differentiation – i.e. ethnicity, nonetheless cultural traits such as dress customs engender generalizations

that end up essentializing and naturalizing social formations in a way that is still racializing. In fact, as Bayoumi (2006) writes in his article 'Racing Religion,' '[a]s the explanatory power of scientific theories of race has declined in our contemporary world, culture has again assumed a prominent role in determining and describing racial difference' (276). Also philosopher Étienne Balibar (1991) talks about the same issue in his article 'Is There a Neo-Racism?.' There he states that 'culture can also function like nature, and it can in particular function as a way of locking individuals and groups a priori into a genealogy, into a determination that is immutable and intangible in origin' (22).

One of the cultural symbols that, over the last decades, has become a trigger for fierce cultural – and sometimes even actual – wars is the *hijab*, the Muslim veil. As already Fanon in 1959 brilliantly argued, the *hijab* became one of the most strenuously contested and stigmatized symbols of religious and cultural difference. In his analysis of the French colonization of Algeria, the veil 'very clearly demarcates the Algerian colonized society' (163), the one that is precluded to the European colonizer and that charges the colonized space with an erotic, scopophilic desire. In order to win the Algerian War, the French colonizer adopted as a strategy that of going to find the women behind their veils, in the assumption that, once the feminine space had been conquered, the colonized nation also would be.[19]

The veil, as a cultural and religious symbol, produces a double conflation: on the one hand, ethnicity and religion are collapsed into race; on the other hand, gender,[20]

[19] For a thorough analysis that problematizes Algerian women's participation in the Algerian War and complicates Fanon's straightforward reading of their involvement in the struggles for liberation, I would like to refer the readers to Sandra Ponzanesi's (2014) work *Gender, Globalization and Violence: Postcolonial Conflict Zones*.

[20] It is important to highlight here the naturalizing trend, both in academia and outside, that tends to reduce the notion of gender to designate women, especially within discussions/analyses of the politics of dress. Fanon's article itself is

sexuality and race also become inextricable[21]. In this sense, with regards to Muslim minorities in Europe, it seems safe to state that they are often target of a double process of racialization and gendering, or, as I will refer to it from now on, of gendered racialization. In fact, as El-Tayeb (2011) argues, in the discourse around Muslim difference,

> seemingly paradoxically, gender and sexuality take center positions, while religion remains comparatively marginal. That is, the claim for "incompatibility" of Islam and Europe is not framed as a conflict between a Christian majority and a Muslim minority […] but between European humanism, committed to the protection of human rights, namely those of gender equality and sexual freedom, and a hostile, intolerant, foreign culture. (81)

Today, like in 1959 Algeria, the veil has come to signify generalized and widespread women's oppression in the Muslim world/communities, as well as Muslim archaism vis-à-vis Europe's modernity.

The case of Tor Pignattara appears emblematic in this respect. Even though generally Bangladeshi women wear their traditional colorful *shalwar kameez* and *dupatta*[22], in more recent years both scholars (Casu 2008; Bisio 2013) and local organizations (Asinitas Onlus) have alarmedly reported an increase in the number of

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evidently imbued in the assumption that Algerian women's politics of dress served to define the ontological boundaries of the colonized society, as previously stated. However, I would like to specify here that, in my work, I intend gender as pertaining to women, men and all other genders.

[21] I would argue that there are at least two more ways in which gender, sexuality religion and race are conflated in the discourse of Muslim difference. One is the post 9/11 phobia of the Muslim terrorist, who is rigorously male; the second is the homonationalist alliance with neoliberal imperialism. However, these aspects lie beyond the scope of this research, also because they concern more stringently the American context rather than the European. For an in-depth analysis of the matter, see Jasbir Puar's work on *Terrorist Assemblages*, and aforementioned Bayoumi's (2006) *Racing Religion* on the special registration law issued in the U.S. one year after the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers.

[22] The *shalwar kameez* is a traditional outfit made of two separate garments, the *shalwar*, i.e. loose pants, very wide on top and narrow at the ankles, and the *kameez*, i.e. a long shirt or tunic. The *dupatta* is a large colored cloth made of thin fabric and loosely hanging to cover the head and shoulders, while revealing most of the woman's hair.

women wearing a more restrictive kind of clothing, such as *niqab*, *hijab* and *chador*.[23] Also, the teachers of the primary school "Carlo Pisacane" have recently reported that very young girls, at five or six years of age, already wear the *hijab* when they start going to school. This felt inflation in more restrictive dress practices is generally taken as a tangible sign of Bangladeshi women's oppression. El-Tayeb (2011) defines this phenomenon as the 'emotive politics of dress' that has, as a result, that of presenting 'Muslim minorities as the most serious threat to Europe's modern identity' (93). In fact, not only Muslim culture is construed as diametrically different from "European culture," but also as fundamentally divided along gender lines. According to this account, 'Muslim identity is shaped exclusively by men, according to their own interests, which are directly opposed to the interests of Muslim women who are disenfranchised in every possible way, violated, immobilized and in need of being saved from the outside, that is, Europe' (ibid). In other words, the victimizing account of Muslim women produces a situation in which they are taken as the shameful proof of Islam's barbarism, while Muslim men are held up to public contempt as fierce, archaic oppressors.

This narrative resonates strongly with the accounts proposed by Italian anthropologists Maria Giovanna Casu (2008), Francesco Pompeo and Andrea Priori (2009) and Noemi Bisio (2013). Casu talks at length of the lacking autonomy of Bangladeshi women in Tor Pignattara, who are not allowed to navigate the public space of the locale and are forced into a domestic routine of nostalgic self-retreat. Pompeo and Priori also stress the seclusion of women from the public space of the street. In their account, women are generally not allowed to work and lead a life of solitude and sadness

[23] The *niqab* is the piece of cloth that covers the woman's face as a part of sartorial *hijab*. The *hijab* is the veil that covers that head and chest of the woman wearing it. The chador is a full-body-length piece of fabric

(260) in order to preserve the honor of the family. Finally, Bisio also focuses on the issue of seclusion, and stresses how it is generally a situation imposed by the head of the family – that is, the man – as in Islamic countries women are expected to educate and take care of their children themselves, without entrusting them to other people or institutions (56).

In light of the previous considerations, I argue that the convergence of race and religion produces a situation in which racialized Muslim groups are externalized not only from the European and Italian space (El-Tayeb 2011), but also from the European (modern) temporality by being relegated into an archaic, primitive past that Europe – and, in this case, Italy - have (assumedly) long left behind since their entry into Modernity. I argue that this second kind of exclusion is accomplished through the gendering of Muslim communities, taken as the symbol of gendered segregation and heterosexist patriarchy. Moreover, it is interesting to point out here how women are often taken as the symbolic bearers of national identity, 'where they mark the boundaries between different groups, and their bodies become the territories on and through which different groups seek to signal their identity' (Griffin & Braidotti 2012). Women's bodies are thus domesticated to the use of identity politics and practices aimed at maintaining essentialized/ing difference in place.

Becoming-Intersectional[24]: assemblages and feminist new materialist theories to analyze racializations of minority groups in Europe

In light of all previous considerations, in particular regarding the convergence of race and gender in establishing non-Europeanness, in this research project I will propose a feminist new materialist investigation of the material (re)configurations of racegender entanglements in Rome's *Banglatown*. In order to depart from the dichotomous thinking that derives from the legacies of imperialism and structures life in "our" late western modernity, the project aims to show how race and gender, rather than being preexisting, fixed attributes of certain (marked) bodies, should be understood as 'material social practices […] constituting "bodies-in-the-making and contingent spatiotemporalities"' (Haraway in Barad 2007: 224). The previous quote is intended to stress the context-dependent and changing nature of identity, as opposed to a deterministic notion of it that sees categories of identity as discrete, extra-discursive, non-historical referents located in the biology of the body, and thus traps subjects into a bounded spatiality and futural teleology that become the normative framework in which meaning is forged (Winnubst 2006). Therefore, my work is configured as a feminist intervention aimed to better understand the entangled relationship between identity categories and those spatio-temporal practices and frameworks that feed the systems of domination of late modernity. By questioning the given-ness of such frameworks, I aim, along with Winnubst (2006), to 'query systems of domination through the registers of temporality and spatiality, while framing them through the identity categories (race, gender, sexuality, class, religion) that are their most explicit historical tools' (4). I allude to Winnubst here because I see her

[24] The title has been inspired by Puar's (2012) article 'I Would Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess: Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory.'

work of historicizing identity categories – i.e. making them contingent and situated – through their entanglement with spatio-temporality as consistent with a new materialist effort to conceive of space, time and matter as active agents of change, as it will be argued further in this section. By reading these categories as material social practices, in fact, feminist materialism challenges their assumed discreteness and poses them as co-constitutive, dynamic and overlapping historical formations, thus avoiding their reification.

In light of previous considerations, rather than treating identity categories as a problem of epistemology – i.e. exclusively discursive – I seek to defend an ontology of categories that shows them to be embodied and material events, or 'machine assemblages' with a different spatio-temporality than the self/other scheme of Hegel (cfr. Saldanha 2006; Puar 2012). The philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1807), in his book *Phenomenology of Spirit*, wrote about the notion of 'self-consciousness' as an independent subject defining itself against an other equally independent subject, both neatly separate from each other. In the author's words, when '[o]pposed to an other, the "I" is its own self, and at the same time it overarches this other which, for the "I," is equally only the "I" itself' (104). Even though Hegel stresses the relational nature in the mutual definition of self and other – 'the action [the movement of self-consciousness] has a double significance not only because it is directed against itself as well as against the other, but also because it is indivisibly the action of one as well as the other' (112) – he still understands them as two polar opposites, one the negation of the other, and thus asserts that identity is mediated through difference – 'each is for itself, and for the other, an immediate being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through this

mediation' (ibid). The other-from-the-self – or the object as opposed to the subject – is defined by Hegel as objective in itself, self-evident – '[t]he thing of perception is sense-given, but its sensousness is universal, i.e. it appears in the form of a property' (510) – i.e. it is seen as a conglomerate of universal, separate qualities/attributes, bound together within a clearly delimited space-time region/location. Such conception is evidently informed by an understanding of the world resting upon representationalism and individualism, i.e. the idea that the world can be divided into representations and entities to be represented, and that these entities are separate, bounded and provided with intrinsic characteristics. In my work, however, I aim to challenge 'the logic of the limit' (Winnubst 2006: 8) upon which western modern identity rests, through a 'non-representational, non-subject-oriented politics' (Puar 2012: 50) that conceives 'bodies [as] unstable entities that cannot be seamlessly disaggregated into identity formations' (56), and questions the normativity of the construct of the modern subject as inherently bounded.

Such project calls for a different kind of thinking, one that functions differently from the closed economies thinking of our western modernity. As previously argued, both French philosopher George Bataille (1988-91) and Bruno Latour (1991) denounce the severance from a more general perspective as contributing to the perpetuation of systems of dominations through a persistent future temporality – i.e. a narrative of progress – and a geometrical conception of space – also referred to as Euclidian space by feminist new materialist scholar Karen Barad (2007). They send out a call to think in 'general economies' (Bataille in Winnubst 2006: 3), to retie the 'Gordian knot' (Latour 1991: 3) that keeps the world together in order to resist modern politics of domination.

Therefore, my work is intended as a feminist contribution to question current geometries of power that constrain identities/constituencies into rigid, pre-constituted spatio-temporal-material molds. Moreover, the materialist ontology of categories I advocate for aims to query the division between matter and discourse, nature and culture as the starting point for deconstructive critique. By queering the modern notion of identity (cfr. Barad 2012; Winnubst 2006, Puar 2007), this work will focus on indeterminacy, event-ness and inventive-ness – rather than on causality, location and normativity – as the defining traits of the 'enfolded reiteratively materializing promiscuously inventive spatiotemporality' (Barad 2012: 29).

Generally, feminist research into the converging workings of race and gender employs intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989) as a theoretical-methodological framework. The notion of intersectionality is attributed to Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and her groundbreaking piece 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics.' Crenshaw's analysis of systemic legal exclusion in the U.S has consecrated intersectionality to feminism-of-colour arenas as the privileged tool to alleviate the othering of women of colour and to denounce the interactive workings of racist and sexist systems of oppression. In this article Crenshaw uses her famous traffic metaphor to describe the workings of discrimination and the accidental nature of identity within the framework of intersectionality.

> Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any

> number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination (Crenshaw 1989: 149)

Interestingly, the intersection metaphor translates identity/difference into spatial terms by pinning a specific identity/difference – resulting from the interaction, or inter-crossing of discrete, pre-existing roads/trajectories – to a geometrical, gridded map of (social) space (Geerts & van der Tuin 2013). This idea is consistent with modernity's assumption that, in order to "exist," a subject needs to be in place – in other words bounded or contained. As previously argued with regards to Hegel's self/other dialectics, if subjecthood is contingent on the quality of being contained, then it is also contingent on what is outside.

This rigid conception of identity/difference as spatially bounded and ordered often emerges in common everyday expressions such as *knowing one's place*, *taking one's place*, *having no place*, *feeling out of place*, *staying put*, which clearly show how social identities/categories are intended in spatial terms, i.e. as social locations. They also show how such locations are assumed to be geometrical and clearly delimited by stable boundaries. This suggests, as sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1985) has argued, that '[k]nowledge of the position occupied in this [social] space contains information as to the agents' intrinsic properties (their condition) and their relational properties (their position)' (725). In other words, the social space is by definition relational and topological, i.e. concerned with boundary-drawing practices and the possible locations made available through those practices based on power contests. In order to exist,

subjects need to be assigned a location within this space; as a result, spatiality becomes existential, and existence becomes spatial.

This idea of identity/difference as (social) positioning on a grid comes across as rather constrictive and deterministic, insofar as the axes of difference along which identity/difference is placed/ordered are presented as fixed, geometrical, preexisting and unproblematized. As feminist philosophers Eveline Geerts and Iris van der Tuin (2013) point out in their article 'From Intersectionality to Interference: Feminist Onto-Epistemological Reflections on the Politics of Representation,' this is a problematic feature of intersectionality, which then 'turns out to be a form of representationalism' (172). In fact, its trust in the ontological distinction between representations and entities to be represented (Barad 2007), and the assumed precedence of epistemology over ontology (Geerts & van der Tuin 2103) contribute to further matter's – bodies – disanimation and exclusion from processes of 'worlding' (Barad 2007). As a result, intersectional thinking does not manage to break free from modern dichotomous thinking, and re-naturalizes marked – racialized and gendered – embodiments while paradoxically trying to de-essentialize them. Intersectionality, in other words, produces another kind of identity politics that rests upon a false universalism: by claiming that certain (marked) subjects are restricted by the hegemonic discourse from reaching the universal human ideal, intersectionality is subscribing to the same racialized/ing and gendered/ing fiction of humanism and the humanist subject – Man as a western invention, as previously discussed.

If we should be wary of identity politics as a tool for resistance for the reasons just outlined, I argue that we should also avoid falling down the slippery slope of the

romanticization of narratives of liberation from and transgression of boundaries. As Winnubst (2006) shows, the language of liberation and freedom is imbued with the heritage of imperialism and colonial histories of domination. The fact that freedom has become the mantra of modernity, the value that no one can argue against, is a confirmation that liberation through the elimination/erasure of boundaries is what cultural critic Zoe Sofoulis defines 'the cannibaleye of masculinist extra-terrestrial projects for excremental second birthing' (Sofoulis in Haraway 1988: 581). The 'unregulated gluttony' (ibid) of the narrative of liberation and democracy inevitably swallows up all "others" – marked subjects – into its project of white western modernity.

Therefore, rather than reproducing a dualist narrative that conceives of identity/difference as *either* a grid *or* total flux, I believe that putting intersectionality in conversation with feminist new materialist theories (Saldanha 2006; Puar 2007; Barad 2007; Barad 2012; Puar 2012) that propose an idea of difference and identity as the indeterminate entanglement of space, time and matter would be a more fruitful kind of approach. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, I do not intend to dwell, as also Puar (2012) summons, on sterile debates concerning intersectionality's alleged limitations in the face of assemblage, as this would inevitably produce a narrative of progress and futurity – intersectionality is the past of feminist analysis whereas assemblage theory is its future – that would reinstate modernity's temporal diktat. Secondly, by thinking intersectionality and assemblage through one another, it will be possible to account for the world – reality and existence – precisely as fixity-in-flow, capture-in-movement. As it will be explained in more detail in the following section, by shifting the focus from individual, separate entities to relationality and 'phenomena' (Barad 2007), and including

the enactment of the nonhuman in what comes to matter, a shift from "mere" epistemology – the human mind knowing nature/the world – to 'ethico-onto-epistemology' (Barad 2007) will be operated, which implies an appreciation of how ethics, knowing and being are interweaved and co-participating with/in the making of the world. Determinism – and with it relativism, individualism and representationalism – will have to make way for an indeterminate, iteratively dynamic reality depending on the enactment of each ad every phenomenal entity – be it human or nonhuman.

Assemblage as "prior to, beyond, or past the grid:"[25] identity as event

Probably the most famous example of assemblage is Haraway's cyborg, 'a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction' (Haraway [1985] 1991: 291). This figure has to be conceived as 'an argument for *pleasure* in the confusion of boundaries and for *responsibility* in their construction' (292; original emphasis). Another famous example of assemblage is offered by Latour (1991) to demonstrate that *We Have Never Been Modern*. In order to do so, he uses the notions of 'quasi-objects' and 'quasi-subjects,' which he defines as hybrid entities located at the nexus between nature and society, i.e. 'between and below the two poles, at the very place around which dualism and dialectics had turned endlessly without being able to come to terms with them' (55). The proliferation of such hybrids constitutes the proof, in his line of arguing, that modernity – i.e. the neat separation between nature and society – has, in fact, never taken place.

[25] Puar 2012: 50

From what has been argued so far, the first characteristic of assemblage is that it shifts focus from the level of the contained – i.e. the bounded subject – to that of the relation(s). In particular, assemblage appears to be operating at the juncture of nature and culture, that is in that naturalcultural (Haraway 2003) domain that a self-proclaimed western modernity has always failed to acknowledge and engage with, as Latour (1991) points out.

The second defining feature of assemblage is remarked by queer theorist Jasbir Puar (2012) in her article 'I Would Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess: Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory.' There, she refers back to the original notion of assemblage as conceived of by Deleuze and Guattari, to note that

> "[a]ssemblage" is actually an awkward translation of the French term *agencement*. The original term in Deleuze and Guattari's work is not the French word *assemblage*, but *agencement*, a term that means design, layout, organization, arrangement, and relations – the focus being not on content but on relations, relations of patterns. (Puar 2012, 57; original italics)

This remark by Puar is extremely interesting, because it unveils a deliberate word-play concealed within the term itself. In fact, on the one hand, *agencement* has to do with arrangement and layout, precisely like Puar points out. This confirms the idea that an assemblage is indeed a "conglomerate" of elements related to one another. The second part of the word-play, however, brings about an even more interesting concept that does not emerge in the English rendering of the term, i.e. *agency*. Agency, in this context, should not be read as a conscious, wilful decision, but rather as the capacity to act within an assemblage. In other words, the constituting parts of an assemblage do not have

intrinsic qualities, are not independent from one another, and cannot "decide" at what pace or in which direction to move; on the contrary, their characteristics are defined by the nature of the arrangement. Agency, or power, should be then seen as a combination of both *potestas* and *potentia* (Fucault in Braidotti [1994] 2011), i.e. enabling while constricting. As a result, an assemblage is constituted by co-constitutive actors contributing to the process of reconfiguration of the assemblage.

Feminist new materialist theorist Karen Barad (2007) in particular picks up on the agential nature of assemblage, and uses the figuration of the differential gear assemblage – 'an assemblage in which the gear operations literally work through one another and in which an uneven distribution of forces results in, and is the enabling condition for, different potentials and performances among the gears' (239) – to explain the dynamic nature of identity, and in particular of processes of inclusion and exclusion. Throughout her book *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*, she thoroughly elaborates her ethico-onto-epistemological framework of agential realism. Here Barad introduces the notion of 'entanglement,' which she defines as not 'just any old kind of connection, interweaving, or enmeshment in a complicated situation' (160), but rather a situation of 'ontological inseparability of intra-acting "agencies"' (139), entailing consequent reworkings of causality, materiality, agency and topological – boundary-related – reconfigurings. Her notion of entanglement implies that entities emerge *through* their relating and 'are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement' (33). As a result, boundaries are agentially cut and they never 'sit still' (171). Through agential realism, Barad calls for a different understanding of identity not as mediated through difference as in Hegelian terms ([1807] 1997), but rather as

‘difference itself’ (Dolphijn & van der Tuin 2013: 141), or ‘an event in the Deleuzian sense, privileging lines of flight, an assemblage of spatial and temporal intensities, coming together, dispersing, reconverging’ (Puar 2007: XVIII). In other words, the material ontology of a body/subject is converted into an event defined as the folding of dimensions of time into each other and the conversion of surface distance into intensity (Massumi in Puar 2012). Assemblages appear then to be inherently nonrepresentational and non-subject-oriented.

This idea of intensity and friction, of intensification of relations, can be traced also in the work of Arun Saldanha’s (2006) article ‘Reontologizing Race.’ Here, Saldanha attempts to reconceptualize race as a machine assemblage, and to do so, he introduces the notion of “viscosity” (10) to describe the spatiality of race as different from one made up of grids and fixed boundaries/locations. In his account, viscosity appears as follows.

> Neither perfectly fluid nor solid, the viscous invokes surface tension and resistance to perturbation and mixing. Viscosity means that the physical characteristics of a substance explain its unique movements. There are local and temporary thickenings of interacting bodies, which then collectively become sticky, capable of capturing more bodies like them: an emergent slime mold (18).

Race, in Saldanha’s conceptualization, is a fluid but viscous structure that, while constraining movement, also contingently allows unforeseen emergences and thickenings that belie the Cartesian axiometric structuring – i.e. the idea of a griddedd space. Through the notion of viscosity and emergence, Saldanha shows how blackness and phenotype, far

from being objective realities, are activated through a racialized visual regime. In his analysis of Fanon's ([1952] 1986) famous train passage, the author argues that the phenotypical dimension of race emerges in the nexus between nature and culture, matter and discourse, thus showing that the visible dimension of race is culturally embedded and thus eminently nonessentialist. Phenotype, as we will see in the following chapters, connects in infinite ways; thus, it is important to understand how racialization emerges and how such racialized bodies become viscous, sticky, and get into certain habits and collectivities.

Intensities, local attractions, foldings, viscosity, entanglement, intra-action. By putting emphasis on the relation, all these concepts foster the aforementioned shift towards a thinking that proceeds through general economies. Through this shift, all the 'small occurrences, wrongly supposed to be insignificant' (Bataille in Winnubst 2006: 3) – like a TV in a heterosexual home (Massumi in Puar 2012), a cheap cigar in a physics laboratory in Nazi Germany (Barad 2007), a seat on a French train (Fanon [1952] 2008), or a bench in the management office of an Indian jute mill (Fernandes 2007) – contribute to the unfolding of a particular event and the contingent emergence of identities according to systems of domination such as gender, race and class. Karen Barad (2007) defines such materials as 'a "condensation" […] of the workings of other apparatuses' (167), i.e. other systems of dominations.

However, a question emerges: even though intersectional theory and assemblages appear to be opposed by virtue of the different investment with – or disinvestment from – the modern body/subject and discourse, how can we affirmatively read them through one another and focus on friction and resonance rather than on distance and oppositions? As

argued in closing the previous section, this kind of approach appears more fruitful as well as more consistent with the underlying intent of this project, i.e. that of challenging the givenness of current narratives of separateness, substance dualism and hierarchization of difference.

Calling for a becoming-intersectional

In the concluding remarks of her article 'I Would Rather Be a Cyborg Than a Goddess,' Puar (2012) resorts to the work of Foucault and Deleuze – respectively on discipline and control – to illustrate one of the advantages resulting from an affirmative conversation between intersectionality and assemblage with regards to the structuring of the contemporary body/subject. There she argues that '[w]hile discipline works at the level of identity, control works at the level of intensity; identity is a process involving an intensification of habituation, thus discipline and control are mutually entwined, though not necessarily compatible, with each other' (62). As previously illustrated, identity (politics) is the recognized focus of intersectional analysis, whereas intensity is the main concern of assemblage theory. By underlining the entangled nature of disciplinary and control mechanisms, Puar is asserting the equal entanglement of intersectionality and assemblages. It would be impossible to get rid all at once of either the body/subject or the relation, as it would precipitate us either in a world of separate entities or, on the contrary, in a world where nothing is distinguishable anymore. By working intersectionality and assemblages through one another, it is possible, instead, to convey the interplay between movement and capture, matter and meaning, nature and culture in the structuring of the body/subject.

Adopting this vision of an interplay between intersectionality and assemblages might contribute to deal with the fear of losing the separation between (allegedly) separate realms. By conceiving the boundary as contingent and agential, it allows for separation through relatedness. As a result, we can give up both narratives of unaccountable, unlimited freedom/liberation from constraints and identity politics as political strategies, so as to make way for a different kind of politics based on a queer idea of freedom (cfr. Winnubst 2006), i.e. one that can 'deepen our grasp of the historicity of […] categories,' and how they feed/are fed by systems of domination. This idea of queer freedom has at its core an accountable body/subject – distinct from the modern notion of bounded, individualistic body/subject. Through its historicization and implicatedness in the world's becoming, the body/subject itself becomes accountable for what comes to matter. To aspire to a queer ideal of freedom means, rather than following geometrical conceptions of power aimed at mapping out bodies in space and time containers, aspiring to a 'politics of possibilities (Gilmore): ways of responsibly imagining and intervening in the configurations of power, that is, intra-actively reconfigurings of spacetimematter' (Barad 2007: 246). By giving up the belief that the world is made of individual and discrete entities, we can retie the Gordian knot in 'the delicate tissue of ethicality that runs through the marrow of beings' (Barad 2007: 396). Queer freedom and politics of possibilities, like Haraway's cyborg, call for desire and responsibility in the (re)structuring of the body/subject and its role in the world's differential becoming. As Puar (2012) wonders at the end of her article 'why disaggregate the two [the goddess, the bounded, naturalized body/subject of intersectionality, and the cyborg, the entangled, unbounded body/subject of assemblages] when there surely must

be cyborgian goddesses in our midst? Now that is a becoming-intersectional assemblage that I could really appreciate' (63). In this thesis, indeed, I intend to put relationality at the center of the knowledge produced, so as to interrogate how inclusions and exclusions come to matter, and keep an eye out for f(r)ictions rather than for f(r)actions.

Feminist new materialism: on advocating for a more-than-human approach

As it appears from the analysis proposed in the part of this chapter dedicated to race, racism, gendered racialization and their instantiations within Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, most accounts dealing with issues of difference tend to focus solely on the human dimension of it. Identity, subjecthood and agency are generally framed as exclusively-human attributes and characteristics. In fact, the epistemological cut between the subject/knower and the object/known – culture and nature – produces the disanimation of matter that is deemed vital in order to acquire absolute objectivity. Also, the social-constructedness of race, as well as other social constructivist approaches, place the human as the willful author that constructs/writes the structure/story of the world with the pre-existing building bricks/signifiers at "his" disposal. By de-naturalizing social differences, social constructivism posits the human as both the cause and the solution, and sees in human intervention the key to the resolution of the world's inequalities.

However, the much-celebrated human is far from self-evident and is actually way more problematic than it is generally assumed. So much so that, as Braidotti (2013) writes in the introduction to *The Posthuman*, despite its widespread familiarity of commonsense, '[a]fter the postmodern, the post-colonial, the post-industrial, the post-communist and even the much contested post-feminist conditions, we seem to have

entered the post-human predicament' (1). According to Braidotti, the posthuman condition locates itself in a non-dualistic understanding of nature-culture interaction that 'is associated and supported by a monistic philosophy, which rejects dualism, especially the opposition nature-culture and stresses instead the self-organizing (or auto-poietic) force of living matter' (3). Braidotti's definition of the posthuman is very much in line with the previously mentioned notion of 'natureculture(s)' proposed by feminist scholar Donna Haraway (2000) in her 'Companion Species Manifesto.' In this groundbreaking piece, the author uses the figuration of the companion species – and in particular her relationship with her dog – to explore the 'inescapable, contradictory story of relationships – co-constitutive relationships in which none of the partners pre-exist the relating, and the relating is never done once and for all' (12). By placing these relationships in the nexus between language and nature – 'It is in the syntax; it is in the flesh' (ibid) – Haraway presents a naturalcultural world where separateness and predetermination need make way for 'historical specificity and contingent mutability' (ibid). In natureculture(s), there is no Other, but only 'significant otherness' (3), i.e. an ethical and accountable way of relating and, thus, coming to matter.

Given that, as Braidotti states, the posthuman condition is a defining trait of our historical present that is also, unfortunately, reaching incredible heights of aberrations and abuses of power, I believe that feminist scholarship that is committed to critically look at our present temporality cannot be exempt from actively engaging with and lingering in the posthuman. The aim, of course, should not be some form of blunt or nihilist antihumanism, but rather a serious commitment to re-evaluate the boundaries of what we commonsensically call the human and bring "him" back from outer space and

make "him" '*of* the world' again (Barad 2007). As feminist physicist-philosopher Karen Barad (2007) writes in her groundbreaking work in the field of feminist new materialism titled *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*,

> *posthumanism* marks the practice of accounting for the boundary-making practices by which the "human" and its others are differentially delineated and defined. […] Posthumanism […] is about taking issue with human exceptionalism while being accountable for the role we play in the differential constitution and differential positioning of the human among other creatures (both living and nonliving). […] Posthumanism […] refuses the idea of a natural (or, for that matter, purely cultural) division between nature and culture, calling for an accounting of how this boundary is actively configured and reconfigured. (136; original emphasis)

I am introducing the posthuman and posthumanism here because I think that, as a theoretical-methodological framework, it brings about interesting new shifts in the analysis of the gendered racialization processes under exam in this research. In fact, as Renolds and Ivinson (2014) state,

> [f]eminist and queer scholarship on neo-materialism is useful here in encouraging social scientists to think with new ontologies of the decentered and posthuman subject. This is a subject that is formed through shared worlds via a series of encounters which it does not author or control […]. This scholarship pushes us to think critically about post anthropocentric relations and the intra-action (Barad) of more than human worlds (e.g. animal worlds, environmental worlds, material worlds, etc.).' (364)

Given that the human has finally been deposed from its position as author and controller of the world, I believe it is necessary to understand the events unfolding in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown as a 'situated set of more-than-human relations' (Renold & Ivinson 2015 [in press]). In other words, this work aims to move away from an all-too-human approach to issues of difference and to account for both human and nonhuman actors in the enfolding (re)configurations of racegender[26] entanglements in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown.

Assemblages, as argued in the previous section, speak by definition of relation(s) and shift their focus from the modern notion of the disembodied, bounded subject to a fleshy, becoming-subject emerging with/in the constant folding of time, space and matter – i.e. histories, positionalities and bodies. So much so that 'the sedimenting marks of time do not correspond to the history of any individual gear but rather are integrally tied to the genealogy of the assemblage and its changing topology, that is to the process of inclusion and exclusion in the reworking of the boundaries of the assemblage' (Barad 2007: 239).

[26] I would like to elucidate the reason why in this thesis I will refer to gender rather than sex with regards to the material social practices taking place in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown. I refer once again to the words of Winnubst (2006), as I believe she manages to capture an element of tension that has been vital for me in making this choice. As she writes, 'the sex/gender distinction has […] always been implicated in perpetuating a perverse competition between sexism and racism. It institutionalized a strict separation of gender from race, which turns on the prior separation of biology from culture. In so doing, the sex/gender distinction became a pawn in larger social dynamics that effectively raced gender and gendered race: the anti-sexist movement became a "white problem" and the anti-racist movement became a "male problem," a dynamic that still haunts feminism and anti-racist theorizing and politics' (11). In light of this consideration, working through the race/gender dualism allows me to work also through the nature/culture dualism, which is one of the main red threads in this thesis. In fact, by trying to read race and gender as *entangled material social practices*, I aim to draw attention to their co-constitutive relationship, which is also the co-constitutive relationship between nature and culture that has been discussed at length in this and previous sections of this chapter. I would also like to point out that, in my view, it would have been a conceptual flaw that of deciding to work with race and sex. That way, in fact, I would have positioned my analysis only on the nature pole of the dualism, thus reinstating the nature/culture divide and the assumed naturalness of both sex and race. What is more, I would have also reiterated the social constructivist assumption proposed by intersectional thinking that the "trouble" lies in representations and that nature/matter is mute, passive and fixed.

This has important consequences on two main fronts, i.e. for the concepts of agency and difference.

Firstly, given that assemblages can be made up of all different manner of matter that continuously (re)assembles, the concept of agency gets reworked and loses its exclusively-human connotation to include actors that are generally placed outside the humanist orbit. Already thirty years ago, in her landmark article 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,' feminist scholar Donna Haraway (1988) first spoke about objects (of knowledge) as agents and co-authors in the production of "objective" knowledge, and introduced the shorthand 'material-semiotic actors' to define objects 'as an active, meaning-generating part of apparatus of bodily production,' (595) i.e. of the assemblages through which the world is generated. When placed with/in an apparatus of bodily production,

> bodies [and objects] can enhance their power, their agency or what we would theorize as "becomings" in or as a heterogeneous assemblage and agency becomes distributed across an ontological heterogeneous field. We see their capacity to affect and be affected, to create change, emerge in the intra-action of elements in assemblages. (Renold & Ivinson 2014: 364)

Within this framework, then, objects and their boundaries materialize through the intra-action with all other elements in the assemblage and do not preexist as such. As Karen Barad (2007) puts it, 'cuts [boundaries] are agentially enacted not by willful individuals but by the larger material arrangement of which "we" are part. The cuts that we participate in enacting matter. […] Intra-actions cut "things" together apart. Cuts are not enacted from outside, nor are they enacted once and for all' (178-179). Nonetheless,

Barad's agential realist framework operates an historicization of existence, i.e. it considers how the world came to matter and the history of determination/sedimentation of boundaries.

Secondly and consequently, given their focus on relation and indeterminacy, feminist new materialist approaches appear to be the adequate theoretical-methodological tool to move away from essentializing discourses of difference resting on notions of boundedness and identity. I resort once again to the words of Karen Barad (2007), when she writes that 'ethics cannot be about responding to the other as if the other is the radical outside of the self. Ethics is not a geometrical calculation; "others" are never very far from "us"; "they" and "we" are co-constituted and entangled through the very cuts "we" help to enact' (179). The ethical implications of choosing to work with feminist new materialist approaches are remarkable, insofar as they call for accountability and response-ability[27] for what exists. Nothing happens outside of "us" or independently from "us," in such a way that "we" are not exempt from anything that happens with/to "others." "Our" implicatedness in the world's iterative reconfigurings, as previously stated, should not be seen as some kind of willful authorship, but rather as a co-participation in the co-constitutive creation of what there is, even when it seems too far from "us" to be depending on "our" doing. Our response-ability and accountability transcend the here-and-now we are accustomed to think in: histories (pasts) and futures are constantly enfolded in the world's differential becoming, as well as localities and distances are reworked into intensities through the material (re)configurations of

[27] The term response-ability is a reworking of the concept of responsibility proposed by Donna Haraway (2008) in her book *When Species Meet*. There she states that 'responsibility is a relationship crafted in intra-action through which entities, subjects and objects, come into being' (71). Such reworking builds upon French philosopher Jacques Derrida's (2003) notion of response-ability – the ability to respond to the Other – as the founding possibility of subjectivity.

boundaries. This is what Barad defines as spacetimematter manifold, which involves iterative topological reconfigurings rather than changes in the abstract delimitations of a bounded domain.

In light of these considerations, the present research takes great pains to put to use the principles of feminist new materialism in the belief that it can bring interesting theoretical shifts in discussions of difference, in particular when it comes to (im)migration and racialized minorities in Europe. This seems particularly urgent in light of the introductory discussion on the all-too-human, essentializing and dichotomous nature of current conceptualizations of race, Europe's assumed colorblindness, and the convergence of race, gender and religion in the othering of Muslim minorities in Europe. In the following section I will demonstrate how I envision embodied (auto)ethnographic research as a tool to study the contingent materialization of relations of difference in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, where question of political economy and cultural identity are at play.

On embodied (auto)ethnography: advocating for a more-than-human methodology

It appears clear, by now, how space plays an important role in the issues studied in this research. Firstly, as it has been previously argued, space plays a vital role in the definition of identity, given that subjecthood is dependent on the notion of boundedness and containment. Secondly, space is fundamental in creating in/exclusions, in particular with regards to (im)migration and d(m)isplacement. (Un)belonging, as we have seen, is often translated in the language of place, even when identity gets deterritorialized and scattered across state boundaries. Finally, space is considered as the empty container

within which things are placed and humans move. In fact, containment, as a prerequisite for existence, is also that which allows for locomotion through space and, hence, engenders subjecthood. Nonetheless, the excessive restriction of (geographical and social) mobility of specific marked bodies within a discursive regime that concomitantly conceptualizes them as excessively mobile – and, hence, unbelonging – contributes to the objectification of those embodiments. For these reasons, this research stresses the practiced dimension of space, as (social) positionality and location are informed by topological concerns such as those of connectivity, boundary formation and exclusion resting on acts of resistance and power contests.

Michel Foucault (1986), in his work *Of Other Spaces*, writes that 'we do not live in a kind of void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, [but rather] we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another' (23). By taking start from conceptualizations of space that envision it as a 'never-ending, power-laced process engaged by a motley array of beings' (Haraway 1997 in Barad 2007: 224), as 'an ongoing process of the material (re)configuring of boundaries' (Barad 2007: 181), this research aims to account for the 'existential territories' – i.e. 'those transversal flashes of affective space, created by experience in assemblage' (Deleuze 1995 in Renold & Ivinson 2014: 364) – of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown that can call us into being.

Given that '[e]ntanglements of intra-acting phenomena are always located in time, history and place' (Renold & Ivinson 2014: 364), the everyday practices and events unfolding in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown come to be conceived as carrying the affective traces of the past. Therefore, rather than giving a full historical overview of the area as if

it simply was a crystallized, bounded setting, a theater backdrop for the (human) actors on stage, I will try to make agential cuts (Renold & Ivinson 2015 [in press]), and take rhizomatic[28] detours (Ivinson & Renold 2013) into the multiple and contradictory associations that constitute Tor Pignattara/Banglatown as a more-than-human assemblage.

This specific project is configured as a 'multi-sensory microethnography' (Renold & Mellor in Coleman & Ringrose 2013: 23) exploring the ways in which race and gender work on, in and across bodies and things in the neighborhood, to see how subjectivity extends 'beyond the individual and towards a collective and connected affective assemblage of other bodies and things' (25). In order to do so, the starting point of each chapter will be nonhuman materiality: a set of murals, food smells. This is not to say that agency should be equally granted to objects as well humans,[29] but rather to show how matter is vibrant (Bennett 2009) and intra-acts in the reconfigurations of the neighborhood. In particular, this decision is motivated by the will to destitute the human from its role of sole author to that of co-author of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown in intra-action with other nonhuman agents. The aim is to get to a situation in which 'the social world is becoming all the more earthy, where stuff is not just the adornments of selves

[28] Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press.

[29] Barad (2012), in an interview with Dolphijn and van der Tuin, stated that 'I want to say that I try to stay away from using that "agent," or even "actant," because these terms work against the relational ontology I am proposing. Also the notion that there are agents who have agency, or who grant agency, say, to non-humans (the granting of agency is an ironic notion, no?), pulls us back into the same old humanist orbits over and over again. And it is not easy to resist the gravitational force of humanism, especially when it comes to the question of "agency." But agency for me is not something that someone or something has to varying degrees, since I am trying to displace the very notion of independently existing individuals. This is not, however, to deny agency in its importance, but on the contrary, to rework the notion of agency in ways that are appropriate to relational ontologies. Agency is not held, it is not a property of persons or things; rather, agency is an enactment, a matter of possibilities for reconfiguring entanglements. So agency is not about choice in any liberal humanist sense; rather, it is about the possibilities and accountability entailed in reconfiguring material-discursive apparatuses of bodily production, including the boundary articulations and exclusions that are marked by those practices' (54).

but the very constituent parts of subjectivities' (Renold & Mellor in Coleman & Ringrose 2013: 26).

Another important reason underlying the decision to start from materiality is that in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown there are often situations where there are no or, anyways, very few words. Given the linguistic barriers that constrict verbal communication and exchange, resorting to what philosopher Gilles Deleuze (2002 in Coleman and Ringrose 2013) defines as 'transcendental empiricism' appears vital. Transcendental empiricism, in fact, allows the departure from an idea of the world as a realization of the abstract, and proposes to start from the states of things so that 'non-pre-existent concepts can be extracted from them' (10). This way, human language as we know it takes a back-seat position, whereas the multiplicity – relationality – of a thing "talks" of the relationship between the actual and the virtual – i.e. the potential. Transcendental empiricism, in other words, allows to start from the singularity of what there is to then open up 'the leakages and lines of flight that are already there, but often missed, lost, silenced, or blocked' (Renold & Mellor in Coleman & Ringrose 2013: 23) in the researching of racegender entanglements and power in the context of (im)migration.

With regards to the aforementioned lack of words, feminist scholar Vicki Kirby (2011) and science studies scholar Amade M'Charek (2008) carried out some very interesting work on the "mute language" of bodily remains, if I may say so. Kirby dedicates one chapter of her book *Quantum Anthropologies* to the question of language, which she approaches through the pretext of a TV show recounting the recovery of a human skull and the whole process of facial reconstruction aimed to discover the remains' identity. The author focuses on the technologies used by scientists and reads

them as a form of conversation between them and their material in the actual impossibility of verbal (human-like) communication. Numbers, measurements, statistical elaborations, algorithms, marks or thickenings on the bones all become elements of a more-than-human conversation engaging the researcher and the skull, as well as various technologies and apparatuses. These considerations led Kirby to assert that

> 'the forensic scene gives witness to a communicative intimacy, a peculiar correspondence between radically different materials, information, and events. […] In other words, there is no simple presence versus absence, […] no individuated atomic identity that does not, in some way, refer to, or resonate through, a larger context. It is as if the context is somehow within these individual signs, as if they are quantum "entities" that have a specific, delimited locality, as well as global presence or efficacy. (27)

M'Charek (2008) gets to a very similar conclusion in her work on DNA profiling as a forensic technique to generate a suspect where there is none, in particular to infer their visible traits (phenotype). Here, M'Charek shows that, in order to make this technology work, a lot of actors have to be mobilized, which indicates that DNA, rather than a 'silent witness' – an individual, self-evident entity to which science will give a voice – should be seen as an 'articulate collective' – 'a heterogeneous network of relations' that is not 'neutral and docile,' but rather 'normative and active' (521). This definition is consistent with the notion of assemblage that has been employed so far. In other words, both Kirby (2011) and M'Charek (2008) use forensics and its technologies to rethink our current understanding of language as a human attribute and shift focus onto the consubstantial relationship existing between language and the world, nature and

culture, in such a way that "Man"'s authorship on the world gets deeply questioned. Both authors suggest that if we really are to commit to a horizon of possibilities and change, we should do it by engaging in conversation with 'the blabber' (Kirby 2011: 45) of nature. "Conversation," here, should be intended as 'a power-charged social relation' (Haraway 1988: 593) that is responsible for the reality we live in.

Finally, I believe that starting from the 'states of things' is extremely useful to try and move away, on the one hand, from the victimizing, passivizing attitude that so often characterizes discourses around (im)migrant communities and that tends to silence hidden power contests and instances of resistance that fall outside of their traditional understanding. On the other hand, I similarly want to counter those accounts of (im)migration that tend to romanticize the nomadic condition and the current multi-culturalism of western societies insofar as, following Chow's (2006) argument, they are instrumental to maintain the present neoliberal arrangement without questioning the *status quo*. On the contrary, starting from the multiplicity of a thing looks at the ways in which 'the virtual is actualized, and may be actualized differently' (Coleman & Ringrose 2013: 11). This produces a shift from a politics of location to a politics of possibilities, i.e. 'ways of responsibly imagining and intervening in the configurations of power, that is, intra-actively reconfiguring spacetimematter' (Barad 2007: 246).

Given all previous considerations about space and transcendental empiricism, the research methodology that seems to best fit the context under analysis and its structuring conditions is a kind of mobile ethnography that Cheng Yi'En (2013) defines as walking ethnography. As he states in his article 'Telling Stories of the City: Walking Ethnography, Affective Materialities, and Mobile Encounters,' by 'viewing that act of

walking as a mobile and embodied practice, I argue that "walking" is inherently a rhythmic experience and potentially offer insights to the multiple splices of time-space narratives' (2). However, given that walking ethnography is not only constituted through "walking" per se but also through the sensorial aspects of our bodies, walking ethnography mobilizes two aspects of urban life such as 'urban materialities as affective materials for organizing mundane experience and urban mobilities as heterogeneous and rhythmic' (ibid).

Anna Hickey-Moody (in Coleman & Ringrose 2013), by building on Deleuze's Spinozist notion of affectus, defines affect as that which

> moves us. It's a hunch. A visceral prompt. Affect is a starting place from which we can develop methods that have an awareness of the politics of aesthetics: methods that respond with sensitivity to aesthetic influences on human emotions and understand how they change bodily capacities. […] Taking affect as a method also shows the impact that everyday aesthetics have on our subjectivities. (79)

Considering urban materialities as affective materials capable to organize everyday experience constitutes one way of accounting for matter's vibrant nature and agency, and its co-participation in the structuring of everyday (urban) experience. As Haraway (1988) puts it, 'accounts of a "real" world do not, then, depend on a logic of "discovery", but on a power-charged social relation of "conversation"' (593), as previously stated, that, I would add, need include both human and nonhuman actors. For this reason, walking ethnography can be defined as 'discursive walking,' i.e. as a 'participatory mode of walking, during which we half consciously explore the landscape

while sensorially experiencing it passing by' (Wunderlich 2008 in Yi'En 2013: 3). In other words, through affect, urban materialities have the capacity to influence the capacities of a body – intended here as a given assemblage – to act, and thus orient and reorient this embodied, mobile conversation through attractions and distractions. Therefore, walking ethnography will always happen in conversation with other bodies and things. This ethnographic method allows 'to explore affects associated with the micro-intensities of everyday life,' and 'enable[s] to explore the multisensory dimensions of place, including [my] "gut reaction"' (Renolds & Ivinson 2014: 365).

Also the rhythmic nature of walking is strictly connected with the agency of urban materialities. Cultural critic Michel De Certeau (1984), in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, defines the city as a poem, as a 'manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other' (94). Within this story, the act of walking is likened to a speech act, where walking becomes 'a space for enunciation' (98).

> At the most elementary level, it has a triple "enunciative" function: it is a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language); it is a spatial acting-out of the place (just as the speech act is an acoustic acting-out of language); and it implies relations among differentiated positions, that is, among pragmatic "contracts" in the form of movements (just as verbal enunciation is an "allocution," "posits another opposite" the speaker and puts con-tracts between interlocutors into action). (ibid)

Through the city-poem metaphor that brings the city and language, the walker and the speaker to overlap, De Certeau, like, only a few years later, also Donna Haraway

(1988) did, interrogates the modern dichotomous thinking that opposes matter and language. In fact, this comparison between urban materialities and (language) signifiers re-establishes the relationality between matter and discourse, Nature and Culture, and foregrounds urban materialities as material-semiotic actors. In other words, through the entanglement of material and discursive, urban (nonhuman) materialities and (human) walkers are co-constitutively participating in the differential becoming of the world (Barad 2007). Matter, like language, becomes a complex apparatus of bodily production.

One last important aspect of walking ethnography is that it also constitutes a form of autoethnography (Spry 2001). In fact, by being in conversation through my walking with other bodies and urban materialities inhabiting Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, allow not only for the agency of things to emerge, but also for the entanglement and relationality between those things and myself as a researcher/knower and to understand what kind of space I contribute to create with my doing. Tami Spry (2001), in an article titled 'Performing Autoethnography: An Embodied Methodological Praxis,' gives the following definition of autoethnography: 'a radical reaction to realist agendas in ethnography and sociology which privilege the researcher over the subject, method over subject matter, and maintain commitments to outmoded conceptions of validity, truth, and generalizability' (710). As a form of self-narrative, autoethnography resists grand theorizing and abstractions, and contributes to question the myth of disembodied research – i.e. that kind of research where the researcher vanishes from the picture – as objective. By placing the relationship between knower and known at the center of the knowledge created, autoethnography, as a research methodology, contributes to the feminist new materialist agenda of questioning the observer's absolute externality as a requirement for

producing objective knowledge (Barad 2007), and proposes feminist objectivity based on partial perspectives and situated knowledges as the only way to have objective vision on the issues under analysis (Haraway 1988). Through autoethnography the researcher, in fact, is both subject and object, theorizer and theorized, and thus becomes 'the epistemological and ontological nexus upon which the research process turns' (Spry 2001: 711). Finally, by combining tenets of autobiography and ethnography to do and write autoethnography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner 2011), the researcher employs a method that is both process and product. Therefore, autoethnography constitutes the perfect method to study assemblages and phenomena rather than single objects as it allows to account for their characterizing tension between movement and capture, flow and fixity.

A central part of ethnographic and autoethnographic practice is constituted by field notes and stories. After looking into some literature focusing on the different forms and ways to make notes and keep track of one's work on the field (Emerson 1995; Newbury 2001; Bernard 2006), I decided that the way that best suited the kind of work I was about to do in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown would be that of the field paper diary. In fact, by virtue of its non-linear, heterogeneous nature, the field diary enables the concomitant intertwining of the different and differently-valued ingredients of my research project – prior experience, theoretical observations, ideas, readings, photographs, drawings – into a single medium that can be regarded as 'the vehicle for ordered creativity' (Schatzman & Strauss 1973 in Newbury 2001: 3). I also felt that the field diary would be suitable to record the rhythmic tempo of my embodied ethnographic practice. A quick note, a photograph, a longer and more structured written piece, a drawing, the color of the pen I chose to write with, or even just the shakiness or

confidence of the letters on the page would then speak of the slowing downs or accelerations of my practice, the urgency or the relaxedness of certain moments and situations, the moments of frustration or "enlightenment" originating from specific encounters. During my two periods on the field in February and May 2015, I was always accompanied by my little notebook, pencil case and smart phone camera, which then became a constitutive part of the machinic assemblage of myself as a researcher/researched.

Swedish feminist pedagogist Hillevi Lenz Taguchi (2010) dedicates a chapter of her latest book *Going Beyond the Theory/Practice Divide in Early Childhood Education* to the '"machinic" quality of pedagogical documentation' (66), intended as a tool for observation and constructing documentation of everyday pedagogical practices within the space of the school. According to Taguchi, this type of documentation can be seen 'as a movement or force that creates a space that makes our lived pedagogical practices *material'* (66; original emphasis). I believe that her argument can be extended to the field diary as a form of documentation of the embodied ethnographic practice I conducted in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown. In my view, in fact, the field diary, like the pedagogical documentation, can be conceived as a 'space where a constructed cut of the event is actualized and from which further intra-activity emerges' (ibid). In other words, a particular materialization of the event is enacted through the matter/materiality of the documentation itself – text, photographs, drawings, etc. The documentation as matter/material should not, however, be considered as a fixed entity, but rather a material-discursive apparatus (Barad 2007) emerging through the entanglement of discourse and matter. Its machinic nature renders the documentation/diary as a doing

rather than a thing. Taguchi (2010) writes, in fact, that pedagogical documentation 'is *alive'* (67; original emphasis) insofar as, through its intra-action with other matter and assemblages, it enables the production of differentiated knowledge from a specific event. The use of this kind of documentation highlights also the entanglement existing between the researcher and the apparatuses of knowing – observational practices and documentations. Given the impossibility to clearly tell them apart from each other, the boundary between theory and practice, subject and object, discourse and matter gets irremediably questioned.

A final methodological note concerning the field diary has to do with the ethnographic stories that it produces and that are featured in this work. It is important to state at this point that the (auto)ethnographic stories that I include here 'are not aimed at *representing* events in a personal life, but rather at *articulating* collective concerns' (M'Charek 2010: 310; original emphasis). Despite being true to the material mobilized for this research – in particular stories and excerpts taken from my field diary – the material is thoroughly theorized and not just used to induce empathetic identification with the incidents recounted. On the contrary, as science studies scholar Amade M'Charek explains in her autoethnography of hair in connection with race and sex, articulation is employed to render the collective nature of such material. Given that, as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe ([1985] in M'Charek 2010) define it, articulation is intended as 'any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as the result of the articulatory practice,' the stories mobilized here index a multitude of relations, such as 'the events; the specific practices that are mobilized; the style of narrating these in an [auto/]ethnographic account (a genre); the way they are placed in the

context of an academic article, and related to the problem of difference, race and materiality' (ibid) among others. I want to reaffirm here that theorization, in this respect, should not be considered as the grand theorizing aimed at producing generalizations on issues of difference in the context under analysis. On the contrary, theorization should be intended as following the lines of flight that originate from the singularity of a thing, i.e. an attempt to capture the impersonal yet singular, the tension between what there is and what there could be. I see theorization starting from the singularity of the auto/ethnographic story as a way to trace the ways in which the virtual is actualized and could be actualized differently (Coleman & Ringrose 2013).

A short methodological note on the temporality of the research: spacetimemattering and the notion of futurity

The reflexive nature of walking ethnography is vital with regards to my position as a researcher in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, insofar as a deeply affective, emotive and personal connection has been tying us together over the last eight years, even during the time of my physical absence from the locale. In fact, before I relocated to Utrecht, in January 2013, I had been living and working in Rome for already six years, four of which I spent in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, initially exclusively as a teacher in the school of Italian for foreign women and mothers managed by Asinitas Onlus[30] and then, for the last two years, also as a resident.

Obviously, this aspect cannot be disregarded for two main reasons. Firstly, the sedimented bulk of unsystematized memories and habituated practices coming from my

[30] A small organization operating on the territory, which manages schools of Italian and intercultural centers with (im)migrants (www.asinitas.org).

previous experience in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown inevitably inform my reading of the context and emerge through meaningful affective research encounters in that locale. Secondly, the uninterrupted contact with the locale through meaningful friendships and local Facebook groups made sure that, in some way, I never "left the field," not even when I was not physically there. These two considerations speak of the temporality of this research, one that belies the narrative of *telos* embedded in modernity in favor of a 'becoming-time' (Puar 2007: XIX), an assemblage notion of time as resulting from the enfolding of multiple histories and futures. The very distinction between there and not there, past and present is thus reconsidered through an embodied onto-epistemological practice that keeps an eye out for those shadows and ephemeras that haunt what there is and draw us affectively into the enfolding fabric of the world (Barad 2007; Gordon 2008). This way it will be possible to study 'how traces of place and history become revitalized within acting assemblages' (Renold & Ivinson 2014: 364) and co-participate in the (re)configuring of what there is and will be.

Even though the material social practices problematized in this work focus mainly on the hauntings of a controversial past, nonetheless they also, in Harawayan (1988) parlance, tell us about how bodies and meanings get made, 'not in order to deny meanings and bodies, but in order to live in meanings and bodies that have a chance for a future' (580). Also Karen Barad (2007) problematizes the idea of futurity. Decisively moving away from the modernist idea of the future as an endless vector of progress, she proposes a politics of possibilities, that is 'ways of responsibly imagining and intervening in the configurations of power' (246), as a tool to replace a politics of location that is stuck in geometrical conceptions of power that conceive space, time and matter as

discrete and deprived of agency. By conceiving space, time and matter as entangled and intra-acting, Barad conceives futurity in terms of the iterative material reconfiguring of the spacetime manifold, i.e. as spacetimemamttering.

Queer theorist Jasbir Puar (2007), in the foreword to her book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, talks extensively of her ambitious project to give an assemblage reading of the short circuits generated by the intra-acting workings of homonationalism, surveillance, terror, war, securization, torture, empire and violence, and inquires what it means to entertain an unfolding archive, i.e. one that is happening before our eyes. The answer she provides is that of assuming an 'anticipatory temporality, a modality that seeks to catch a small hold of many futures, to invite futurity even as it refuses to script it' (XIX). This anticipatory temporality is distinct from a paranoid temporality based on imitation and embedded in a risk economy that tries to ensure a future – the repetition of the same – even in the event of tragic catastrophes. Unlike paranoid temporality, the anticipatory temporality advocated for by Puar is closer to a Spivakian notion of 'politics of the open end' (in Puar 2007: XX), which is invested in innovation and disruption of the same.

I conceive my work precisely in terms of this anticipatory practice that tries to catch a glimpse of those futures that are already here but still unknown, with the aim not to lay bare an already-set path to follow, but to foster our sense of responsibility and accountability for what there is and what there will be. As I previously stated in this chapter, nothing happens independently from us. We are spatio-temporal-material nodes of enfolded futures and possibilities. As Barad (2007) writes, '[q]uestions of space, time, and matter are intimately connected, indeed entangled, with questions of justice' (236).

Therefore, it is our responsibility to make sure that the future we help to enact is more just.

Chapter 2

Mural Assemblages in Rome's Banglatown

Commissioned Street Art and Racegender Entanglements

This chapter is dedicated to the new materialist assemblage analysis of two sets of murals that were recently commissioned by the local Comitato di Quartiere[31] (CdQ) within the framework of the "street art revolution" that is presently investing in Rome's peripheries with the aim of (re)qualifying these (assumedly) run-down and destitute areas of the city. As I briefly mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, the surge in commissioned street art over the last year in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown is happening within the framework of a recent but aggressive process of gentrification that hit the locale and spread from its westernmost urban area called Pigneto to its easternmost one – Marranella – more strongly associated with Banglatown.

The two sets of murals that are object of analysis in this chapter were both commissioned as part of two larger projects/initiatives proposed by local organizations with aim at promoting a 'cultural regeneration' (TorpignaLab 2015 http://www.torpignalab.it/; my translation) of the locale. In particular, the first set I will be analyzing, titled *5 Melting Icons*, consists of four murals and five portraits, and was realized in April 2014 on the lower part of the façade of the Ex-Cinema Impero, a former cinema that has been empty and in state of abandonment since its closure in the 1970s. As I will thoroughly discuss further on in the chapter, these murals were conceived as one of the initiatives proposed by Cantiere Impero, a local committee campaigning for the

[31] Neighborhood committee.

reopening of the former cinema, to push for the (re)qualification of the building and its transformation into a cultural pole for local artists, as well as for the revival of the romantic/ized popular identity of the locale as proposed by 1950s and 1960s works by neorealist intellectual Pier Paolo Pasolini.

The second set of murals – *Melting Faces § Stories § District* – is located on the same street as the first one, only at a couple hundred meters distance, and it was realized on one side wall of the primary school "Carlo Pisacane" to celebrate the 'mestizo face' (ibid; my translation) of the locale. The murals were officially inaugurated on the 28th of February 2015 with a public unveiling ceremony that gained national media coverage, and were conceived within the framework of the TorpignaLab project, an initiative proposed by five local organizations engaged in the socio-cultural promotion of the locale.

Throughout the chapter, these murals will be considered as affective urban materialities capable to organize and co-participate in the iterative reconfigurings of everyday experience with/in the locale. Through the registers of spatiality and temporality, this investigation will show how material social practices such as racialization and gendering intra-act in the production of constitutive in/exclusion(s) with/in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown.

Street art and gentrification: aestheticizing the suburb

Since the beginning of 2015, Tor Pignattara/Banglatown has often been on national media, finally with stories of positive and edifying developments in the cultural milieu of the locale. The same media that before labeled the area as a ticking time bomb

of racist intolerance ready to explode (Roma Notizie, August 2014), now refer to it as a virtuous model of self(re)birthing and (re)qualification. The reason behind this shift in representation has to be identified in the "street art revolution" that is currently taking place there. Far from being a spontaneous initiative of artists willing to donate their work to the community or send out a critical message against the dominating structures of our time, *I Love Torpignart* – this is the name of the initiative – is the result of a programmed, controlled and concerted effort of the local CdQ, M.U.Ro. – Museum of Urban Art of Rome – and Wunderkammern art gallery to turn Tor Pignattara/Banglatown into a museum *en plein air*.[32] In only twelve months, *I Love Torpignart* counts already thirty "official" murals throughout the area that are mapped in real time.[33]

Tor Pignattara/Banglatown is not an exception in the city. In fact, this tendency to use street art to embellish run-down suburbs has become a generalized practice in Rome over the last years, when other (previously-)dodgy locales like Tor Marancia, San Basilio, Garbatella, Ostiense and Quadraro have been targeted by organizations and art galleries/museums to promote their (re)qualification. The most pro-active actor in this revolution is precisely the previously mentioned M.U.Ro., a not-for-profit organization founded in 2010 by Diavù – the stage name of Roman street artist Davide Vecchiato – to promote and produce street art as a tool to (re)qualify the suburbs. This organization operates with the economic,[34] political, infrastructural and institutional support of the

[32] This initiative has a dedicated Facebook page with constant updates on new murals, initiatives, fundraising, etc. The first-hand information regarding the "street art revolution" is taken from their Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/iLoveTorpignArt; last accessed on the 28^{0h} of May 2105; 11AM)
[33] https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=z43qNiLahS8U.kjBd5KQgx74s (last accessed on the 28th of May 2015; 11AM)
[34] M.U.Ro. is partially funded by the City of Rome and Province of Rome through public tenders. The remaining costs are partly covered by the artists collaborating with M.U.Ro., who donate part of the costs of their work to the organization, and partly by private citizens willing to sponsor a specific project/mural, thus contributing to its maintenance as well as the promotion of the organization's mission. (www.muromuseum.com; last accessed 29th of June 2015)

City of Rome and the Province of Rome, and is hence taken up by local institutions as an official and effective tool to act upon the (assumed) socio-cultural decay of the peripheries. M.U.Ro. is defined as a site- and community-specific project, i.e. aimed to produce art that dialogues and respects the history and the "soul" of the places where it is hosted. In fact, the realization of all artworks is discussed and agreed upon with local CdQs and population, both through public meetings and online social media. The artworks so produced belong to the communities living in those areas, and thus aim to instill some sense of "local pride" and foster relationships through a common cultural heritage "donated" from the outside.

The twenty-one artworks that form part of M.U.Ro. are *public* and free to visit. The "new Rome" of street art has in fact now been included among the must-see tourist highlights on the official website of the City of Rome (Turismoroma, 2015), a street art finder-app has been launched in May 2015 (Artribune 2015), and organizations organize walks and bike tours to discover those hidden gems (Misuraca 2015; M.U.Ro. 2015). A large recent event was a 25km bike tour named *Pedali e Murales – in Bici alla Scoperta della Nuova Roma*[35] that took place on Sunday the 10th of May 2015, when a critical mass of cyclists moved around the city to explore, all together, these "remote" areas that are now the symbol of "Rome's XXI Century Renaissance."[36] The Facebook page of the event counted 1.700 "going." Also, M.U.Ro. organizes periodic paid guided walk/bike group tours addressing international tourists – in English and Spanish – who are invited to delve into the urban landscape and its history through the street art medium.

[35] Pedals and Murals – Discovering the New Rome by Bike.
[36] Information taken from the Facebook page of the event (https://www.facebook.com/events/1557971281133779/1560195374244703/; last accessed on the 14th of May, 11:43PM)

Even though this "street art revolution" is widely celebrated and praised by local dwellers, politicians/institutions and media – both national and local – nonetheless it also attracted a rank of detractors, who point out the problematic sides and dangerous traps intrinsic to this process. Italian journalists Lorenzo Misuraca (2015) and Eleonora Carrano (2015), for example, highlight the fact that this process of "muralization" of the suburbs is often used and appropriated by local authorities to boost a positive self-perception of those areas, which are then resemanticized: the suburbs, in other words, are no longer the symbol of "immigrants' invasion," drug dealing and organized crimes, but become also the symbol of cultural fervor and renovation. Both authors refer to the risks that such quick and superficial restyling brings along. Firstly, the murals might be taken by the current city administration as a cheap and convenient alternative to serious institutional planning. If the murals are not accompanied by structural interventions capable to substantiate a durable and self-sustaining development and regeneration of the locale, they will end up being just a nice but useless patch in territories that require a totally different kind of intervention, such as public transports, green areas, cultural and aggregation centers, hospitals and occupational opportunities. Secondly, the murals contribute to the gentrification of the areas that host them. By promoting the aestheticizing of run-down and uncharming blind walls, the "muralization" transforms the suburbs into hipster and pop areas consecrated to a commodification of spaces and relations, where the prices of real estates soar up and push out those groups and constituencies who cannot keep up with those transformations (see also Introduction).

I would also like to add another element of criticality with regards to the "muralization" of the suburbs. As I argued in the Introduction to this thesis, the suburbs

invested by this process, exactly like Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, are areas that spontaneously emerged and anarchically developed over the course of the Twentieth century in the total absence of any town-planning schemes or housing policies. This origin story contributed to producing a representation of the suburbs as a "far west," i.e. a sort of "private," autonomous space, functioning according to a set of rules and values that centralized powers could not fully comprehend or act upon.[37] I argue, however, that the "muralization" is now turning the suburbs into public spaces through their tentative inclusion into the space of the city.[38] As previously argued, in fact, the inclusion of these spaces into the ranks of official tourist attractions is currently turning the streets of these areas into *public* museums. This shift introduces two interesting elements. Firstly, the fact of being labeled as a public museum implies that anyone is allowed to go, take photos and peek into the suburbs' life, like the aforementioned periodical bike/walk tours. During the final part of my fieldwork in May 2015, in fact, I had the chance to talk with local dwellers about a growing rank of tourists and cameras "intruding" into the previously independent space of the local community. Secondly, this increased exposure comes along with several "socio-cultural representational duties," if I may say so. By this I mean that the increasing number of visitors pressures local authorities to make sure that these areas are worthy to become public, i.e. they must be in line with the rest of the city

[37] I refer the readers to Pompeo's (2011) work, in particular his analysis of the so-called "moral peripheries" of the 1960s, i.e pioneering social-communitarian experiences/experiment such as those of Acquedotto Felice Mandrione, Quadraro, Gordiani and Tor Pignattara. These same "moral peripheries" are the ones taken up by neorealist artists, and Pasolini in particular.

[38] For example, the current Mayor of Rome Ignazio Marino recently launched – June 2015 – an initiative called "Roma è tutta Roma" and the hashtag #ideefuoricentro – "all Rome is Rome" and #ideasoffcenter – to encourage citizens to collaborate in 're-centering the *banlieue* and granting it the status of city' (City of Rome, June 2015; my translation). The use of the term *banlieue* in this context is quite emblematic in conveying an image of the suburbs as something shameful, something to be hidden or, actually, eliminated to make room for the city. In fact, the *banlieue*, in this figuration, is neither center nor the city, but rather their negation. (http://www.comune.roma.it/wps/portal/pcr?contentId=NEW822290&jp_pagecode=newsview.wp&ahew=contentId:jp_pagecode)

in some respect – attractiveness, safety, services and leisure, for example. A convergence with the neoliberal and commodified/commodifying values of the center, in other words, has to be sparked, and citizens are pressured to become the driving force in this process. Lebanese urban studies scholar Mona Harb (2013), in her article "Public Spaces and Spatial Practices: Claims From Beirut," refers to the work of several other scholars (Kaviraj 1997; Mitchell 2003; Amin 2006; Taraki 2008; Deeb and Harb 2013) and states in fact that 'public spaces and squares turn into places of consumption and aesthetic zones, patronized by the well-healed people. Local authorities make sure to further assert them as such, cleaning and beautifying them as well as consolidating their visual and formal features' (1). As a result of this process, in other words, the suburbs are broadcast as abstract public spaces of cultural regeneration, that is as spaces finally converging with and surrendering to the center and its values.

This shift from private to public, I argue, generates specific types of socio-spatial relationships and practices that, as I will show in the following section, mobilize and contribute to a reconfiguration of a diverse set of apparatuses including race, gender, imperialism, class and nationality, among others. In particular, I argue that, in the case of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, the iterative reconfiguring of this array of elements through their intra-acting reveals an enfolded spatiotemporality where histories and futures, localities and distance are reworked through the world's iterative reconfiguring. Italian colonialism, fascism, Eritrea, Italian-ness and multiculturalism are mobilized here through a process of masculinizing racialization (see Introduction) that turns Tor Pignattara/Banglatown into the symbolic *telos* of the "new Rome" and "future Italy" (Greison 2013; Petri 2013; Rostelli 2013) that is worthy of entrance into the space of the

city and, hence, of the nation. In the following section, I will delve into my first case, which will be analyzed as an affective more-than-human assemblage enabling the analysis and observation of those interference patterns.

5 Melting Icons: on the masculinizing power of (re)monumentalization

Figure 2: 5 Melting Icons

The set of murals that is object of analysis in this section is actually the first one ever commissioned in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown. As I briefly mentioned in opening of this chapter, the set of five portraits was realized in April 2014 on the lower part of the façade of the Ex-Cinema Impero on Via dell'Acqua Bullicante 121, a former cinema that

has been empty and in state of abandonment since its closure, over forty years ago. In 2011, the local C.d.Q., in collaboration with the associations Ad Duas Lauros and M.U.Ro., started an initiative called Cantiere Impero to gather consensus, projects, ideas and partnerships to push for the reopening of this historic cinema. After a petition that collected around 4000 signatures, a process of participatory planning was launched to ask the local dwellers what their dream was for the future of the cinema. The collective/concerted efforts of imagination envisioned the Ex-Cinema Impero as a cultural pole with several cinema rooms, a theater, music rehearsal rooms, artist ateliers, slow food restaurants and office spaces for local organizations. The project was rejected by the local municipality; nonetheless, Cantiere Impero functions now as a stable platform trying to create cultural synergies and collaborations through public initiatives such as film screenings projected on blind walls throughout the territory.[39] One of their most important actions was precisely the realization of this set of mural portraits that depicts five artistic icons of Italian culture of the economic boom – Pier Paolo Pasolini, Anna Magnani, Mario Monicelli, Sergio and Franco Citti – whose oeuvre showcased and was a reason of pride for Tor Pignattara.[40]

I would like to include now two excerpts from my field diary that, I believe, can introduce interesting elements for the assemblage analysis of these murals as affective urban materialities.

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[39] Information taken from the blog of Cantiere Impero (https://cinemaimpero.wordpress.com/; last accessed on the 14th of May 2015, 11:55PM)

[40] Pasolini set two movies – *Accattone* (1960) and *Mamma Roma* (1962) – and one of his most famous books *Ragazzi di Vita* (1956) in Tor Pignattara. Anna Magnani gave a memorable performance in Pasolini's *Mamma Roma*, where she starred as the main character. Franco Citti was also an actor, who starred as main character in Pasolini's *Accattone*. Sergio Citti was a good artist friend of Pasolini who had his atelier in Tor Pignattara and served as Pasolini's language consultant for his novels. Finally, Monicelli set the closing scene of his movie *Un Borghese Piccolo Piccolo* (1977) in Piazza della Marranella, one local square in the area.

12th of February 2015

[…]

I get off the 409 bus and start walking on Via dell'Acqua Bullicante, with the stupidly happy face of the Italian emigrant who has finally gone home for the holidays after a long time of work abroad. I look around, not at my feet as I always do. I feel light; my steps are swift, but not too much. I want to take my time. Twenty meters after the bus stop, my eye is caught by a set of five beautiful mural portraits on the walls of the former Cinema Impero. I look up and smile. *Pier Paolo Pasolini! Anna Magnani! And… ehm… who are these other three faces? Well, it doesn't matter for now. Wow! So they finally won their battle! The population of Tor Pignattara finally got their Cinema back!* A group of youth is hanging around the side entrance, chattering and making fun of each other. *Yes, it must be so! If the door is open, it must be so!* I look at the portraits for a few minutes; they are truly beautiful. I take out my phone from my bag and start taking pictures. I'm ecstatic, and I run up to my little school. I want to hear everything, all the stories.

[…]

"Cinema Impero? Nooo, they lost it. It has been bought by a private. He opened a stupid dance school. They teach salsa in a little room downstairs," Alessandra tells me. Well, this is a disappointment. Pasolini, Magnani, stupid dance school… that is a distasteful piece of cognitive dissonance.

15th of February 2015

[…]

I am walking swiftly on Via dell'Acqua Bullicante towards Piazza Malatesta. I am late for my brunch appointment in the city center with Michele. I start running, and whenever I get close to a bus stop, I look back to see if the damn 409 bus is coming my way. I lose hope. The only way is to keep on running, I tell myself.

[…]

I run and run, and along the way I pass by the Ex-Cinema Impero, and Pier Paolo Pasolini's big, familiar face stares back down at me. I think about how ironic it is that a cinema whose name is dedicated to the Italian colonial past – a past that is generally suppressed from public consciousness – is located in the heart of the "multiethnic neighborhood of Rome," *la bella borgata dove il razzista ha la sua bara*[41]. And I also think how ironic it is that it has an architectural twin in Asmara, and many homonyms throughout former Italian colonies. I also think how ironic it is to see the big faces of Pier Paolo Pasolini, Anna Magnani, Mario Monicelli, Sergio and Franco Citti painted on its walls. They are the symbols of art and culture of Rome, in Rome, of Italy, in Italy, and even beyond. *Ragazzi di Vita*, *Mamma Roma*, *Un Borghese Piccolo Piccolo*. These are all symbols of an Italian *grandeur* that is now far gone but that people seem reluctant to let go –

[41] "The beautiful suburb where racism found its grave" (my translation). This line is taken from the lyrics of a song titled *Il Lago che Combatte* by Asslti Frontali and Muro del Canto, two local hip hop bands.

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(leftist) artistic genius and (fascist) imperial power enmeshed
with/in the same concrete walls.
But I still have to keep on running, no time for cogitations.

[…]
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The two elements that emerge from these excerpts and that I would like to draw attention to are: the enactment of vertical spatiality that emerges through the affective encounter between my body and the materiality of the murals; and the enfolded temporality haunted by the shadows of histories that emerge in my second encounter with the murals, when the affective capacities of my body are reconfigured through a sense of discomfort. I argue that the intra-action between these two elements clearly speaks of the process of gendered racialization that produces a masculinizing racialization of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown as white, thus (re)locating it into the Italian spatiotemporality, and producing a collapsing of Italian-ness with whiteness. As argued in Chapter 1, this tendency is consistent with the regime of 'phallicized whiteness' theorized by Shannon Winnubst (2006: 10), a shorthand she uses to describe the functioning of racialized epistemological and political systems of domination within late western modernity where whiteness 'becomes both the structuring element and the effect of a set of cultural practices and discourses that historically confer disproportionate, and often abusive, power on some persons over and in excess of others' (14).

I will start by analyzing verticality through a new materialist assemblage reading of space. Very influential poststructuralist authors like Michel Foucault ([1975] 1977),

with his masterpiece work *Discipline and Punish*, Henri Lefebvre (1974) with his groundbreaking book *The Production of Space*, and Michel De Certeau (1984) with his book *The Practice of Everyday Life*, wrote of the relationship existing between procedures and the space that they reorganize so as to make an operator out of it. Feminist new materialist authors like Donna Haraway (1997), Leela Fernandes (1997), Manuel DeLanda (2006) and Karen Barad (2007) among others, also extensively argue throughout their oeuvre that space is far from being just an innocent container or a neutral backdrop for the unfolding of events. Nonetheless, they bring poststructuralist claims of space as socially charged a step further by stating that space and society are co-constitutively produced and emerge through their co-constitutive intra-action. This conceptual move allows a shift towards a conception of space as an active agent of change. In order to give a new materialist assemblage reading of the vertical spatiality enacted through the murals, it is necessary, then, to move away from those geometrical models of spatialization that reify complex practices and make them as things inside containers (Haraway 1997; Barad 2007), to see how that specific spatiality and everyday spatial practices co-emerge and are iteratively reconfigured.

Henri Lefebvre (1974) writes about vertical spatiality in relation to the logic of visualization that dominates modern cities and that is aimed to draw invisible-but-concrete boundaries to discriminate and separate spaces and constituencies. He states that

> [t]he arrogant verticality of skyscrapers, and especially of public and state buildings, introduces a phallic or more precisely a phallocratic element into the visual realm; the purpose of this display, of this need to impress, is to convey an impression of authority to each spectator. Verticality and great height have ever been the spatial expression of potentially violent power. (98)

From this quote it is possible to see how the enactment of a vertical spatiality, through a skyscraper or a huge mural, is far from being mere, innocent spatiality. Verticality, as Lefebvre states, is the phallocratic symbol of Western modernity's masculinizing thrust, which acquires also a racialized dimension when put in context of the 'violent powers' of European imperialism. The European metropolis, with its modern and majestic architecture, has been and still is the symbol of (white) Western modernity as opposed to backward, premodern civilizations that, in "our" Western collective imaginary, still live in straw huts and shacks. Verticality is thus the symbol of the white Master/Self, looking down on the horizontal, inchoate mass of non-white Slaves/Others.

I argue that this kind of spatiality can hence be read as a condensation of the workings of several apparatuses (Barad 2007) including gender, race and (neo)imperialism that co-participate in the iterative reconfiguring of the affective assemblage of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown. Through the enactment of a vertical spatiality, the locale is reconfigured as a masculine, white space that can be (re)included in the space of the city. Moreover, the charged vertical spatiality contributes to the reinstating of a regime of phallicized whiteness that associates the view from above with power, authority and objectivity. As it is evident from the first excerpt from my field diary, even though, at the moment of our encounter, I was not able to identify all the five faces on the walls, I nonetheless passively accepted their authority for the sole fact of their being located on those walls, at a higher position than mine. It is also worth pointing out that, whereas at the time of its construction Cinema Impero was actually the instantiation of verticality in Tor Pignattara – as argued in the introduction, in the 1930s the locale was

still a muddy shantytown of huts and barracks – nowadays it is just another building in the densely urbanized fabric of the locale. Therefore, the realization of these murals on its façade has to be seen as enacting a (re)monumentalization of the building, i.e. a (re)activation of its verticality. As Lefebvre (1974) writes, in fact, buildings are the prose of the world, as opposed to the poetry of monuments (227). Monumentality, in his work, is read as a tool for 'separating the sacred from the profane,' or 'a means of banishing the obscene' (226)[42]. By (re)enacting the cinema's verticality, in other words by reconfiguring it as a monument, imperialist powers and dynamics are reinstated as the divine authority, what Haraway (1988) would define the 'god trick' that promises totalizing and infinite vision. Finally, the re-verticalization of the cinema as a monument agentially operates a cut between its sacred and higher/heightened status, and the other surrounding buildings that are not worthy of such elevation.

The same kind of reconfiguring is enacted also through the particular temporality that is haunted by the shadows of the histories enfolded with/in those walls and portraits. As Karen Barad (2007) writes, '[t]emporality is produced through the iterative enfolding of phenomena marking the sedimenting historiality of differential patterns of mattering. […] [M]atter carries within itself the sedimented historialities of the practices through which it is produced as part of its ongoing becoming' (180). In other words, it does not make sense to construe time as the succession of evenly separated moments/units, given that matter does not change in time but rather it comes to matter through the very

[42] It should also be noted that verticality and verticalization have strong Christian roots. In particular, the idea that Heaven is located in an indefinitely and infinitely higher place than the Earth we live in conveys the idea that what is up, high, elevated is better than what stands be/low. In fact, as Classen, Howes and Synnot (1994) remind us, in early Christendom a very common practice of renunciation among people of exceptional holiness was that of 'living on top of a pillar – closer to heaven and away from worldly temptations' (53).

making/marking of time. The histories sedimented with/in the walls and the murals are a proof that the past is never left behind but rather is enfolded together with the present and the future. This is what Barad (2010) defines 'hauntology' – borrowing from Derrida (1994) – that is the non-conventional ontology of spacetimemattering as a conjuration of the ghosts of virtuality in the material enfolding of the spatime manifold. Let us see what these stories tell us.

The building of the Ex-Cinema Impero was designed by Mario Messina, the official architect of the fascist regime. The cinema was inaugurated in 1938 and its name was chosen in memory of the then reconstituted Italian empire. Starting from 1940, the building of Cinema Impero hosted all local fascist celebrations. Another remarkable fact concerning those walls is that the Cinema Impero of Torpignattara was built as an identical copy of the homonymous Cinema Impero of Asmara, Eritrea, inaugurated in 1937 and still functioning today. The latter was part of a central effort from the fascist regime to create a close tie between Italy and its colonies through the realization of identical copies of buildings on both sides of the Mediterranean. In Asmara, for example, the area built during the Italian domination is called Piccola Roma, insofar as the architects of the regime tried to replicate Rome's architectural rigor in the space of the colony (Ficacci 1997).

As regards the murals, instead, I would like to draw attention to the figure of Pier Paolo Pasolini in particular, as he is the most prominent and the one around which all the others revolve. As I specified in footnote 10, in fact, all the other personalities are people who worked with Pasolini in the realization of his book or movies on Tor Pignattara. Pasolini is particularly loved in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, as he is recognized as the

intellectual who brought the suburbs into the public eye in the 1950s and 1960s. Pasolini did not only represent the suburbs, but he also spent most of his life experiencing and taking in their life. As he writes in *Una Specie di Coazione del Destino*, published in 1958 on the cultural magazine *Città Aperta*, he yearned for the 'pagan' and 'primitive' sort of morality typical of the suburbs, and delved – or, as he writes, 'regressed' – into it to satiate both his sociological-anthropological and erotic needs. Most of his time, he recounts, he spent sitting in *osterie* and *pizzerie* in Tor Pignattara, or talking to his painter-friend Sergio Citti, who had his atelier in Via della Marranella. However, Pasolini was not a *borgataro* – an inhabitant of the *borgata* – he was a bourgeois intellectual, residing in a bourgeois neighborhood on the Gianicolo hill, who descended into the suburb with the anthropological drive of the *flâneur* exploring the anachronistic, wild space of the periphery, to then retreat back into his little studio and write his books (Pasolini 1958).

It appears evident how the histories enfolded in the walls of the Ex-Cinema Impero contribute to the masculinizing racialization of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown. As a symbol of the racist powers of imperialist domination, the walls of this former cinema contribute to the racialization – as white – of the neighborhood through the 'frictions of distance' (Gilmore in Barad 2007: 246) with its Eritrean twin, the living symbol of the masculinizing verticalization of imperialism. The verticality of the cinema's building, in fact, speaks about both the aforementioned feminizing reduction of the suburb with the space of the colony – Tor Pignattara as Eritrea – as well as the use of verticalization by imperialist regimes as a strategic tool to gain symbolic – as well as political and economic – control over such "foreign lands." As regards the murals and the stories

enfolded with/in them, they also contribute to reinstating the primacy of the white *flâneur* as the phallicized signifier around which the future of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown is structured.

In the following section I will demonstrate how the second set of murals *Melting Faces § Stories § District* contributes to the same processes of gendered racialization, this time through the enactment of a different spatiotemporal arrangement resulting from the intra-action between horizontality and futurity to determine in/exclusions. I will argue that such spatiotemporal arrangement mobilizes racegender in its entanglement with the nationality apparatus through the workings of fundamental notions in this respect such as language and the somatic norm.

***Melting Faces § Stories § District*: racegender entanglements and the fragmented horizontality of nationality**

Figure 3: Melting Faces § Stories § District

Melting Faces § Stories § District is the title of the second set of murals that I will analyze in this chapter. This collective artwork consists of three murals and four portraits, and was realized by three local street artists: Diavù, Nicola Alessandrini and

Lucamaleonte. Inaugurated on the 28th of February 2015, these murals were commissioned and realized within the framework of TorpignaLab, a month-long project proposed by five local organizations[43] with the financial support of the City of Rome (Department of Culture, Creativity and Artistic Promotion) to promote a cultural regeneration of the locale through the discovery and recovery of its memory, identity and future. In particular, the realization of this collective artwork was intended as an artistic exploration of the mestizo identity of the locale. Each artist was "adopted" – as the official website of the project states – by one local family taken as the symbol/representative of one "culture," one origin and one religion: the ((im)migrant, nor-Roman) Italian, the Bangladeshi and the Chinese. The artists, by spending time with "their adoptive families," aimed to delve into their history and imaginary in order to glean a face, a body and a character that could represent that family and their past, as well as those of their "culture" of origin. Such project is described as 'a voyage deep down into the soul of the territory, which will culminate with the representation of those three memories-cultures on a public wall, necessarily together, necessarily one next to the other, as bearers of a common history' (TorpignaLab 2015; my translation). The public wall chosen for the realization of the murals is a side wall pertaining to the primary school "Carlo Pisacane" located on Via dell'Acqua Bullicante 24 – a couple hundred meters from *5 Melting Icons*. The choice of this particular location is motivated as follows: 'in Tor Pignattara a new sense of community is emerging, which is the result of "spontaneous" processes of integration, shared imaginaries and progressive dismantling of boundaries and prejudices. This is the laboratory for the new Rome, international and mestizo, which everyday grows and improves precisely inside this school [Carlo

[43] Musica e Altre Cose, Da Sud, Bianco e Nero, MENA, and the local CdQ. (http://www.torpignalab.it/chi-siamo/)

Pisacane][44] to which this wall belongs' (ibid; my translation). For the inauguration ceremony of the "(im)migrants' wall" – this is how the artwork has been renamed – the local population was invited to collectively unveil the artworks. The white sheet covering those faces on the walls is taken as a figuration for the 'veil of hypocrisy that hides the reality' (ibid; my translation), which is metaphorically lifted by the whole community, united against intolerance and prejudices.

By working along the lines of the previous study case, I would like to introduce here two more excerpts from my field diary, this time from the second and final part of my fieldwork in May 2015. In particular, I would like to draw attention here onto a spatialization characterized by a horizontality fractured into units and the sense of discomfort originated by the strong colors employed by the artist Nicola Alessandrini to represent the Italian face.

Sunday, 10th May 2015

[…]

After our visit to the local mosque, Federico, Behts and I are walking on Via dell'Acqua Bullicante towards Pisacane [the primary school]. We have to meet Valentina there, she is going to pick me up with the scooter to go to the opening of a photo exhibition at a small gallery/café not far from there. We are completely absorbed into our conversation; it is my first night in Rome since last February and apparently we have a lot to catch

[44] Carlo Pisacane was an Italian revolutionary and patriot who participated in the Italian independence wars (1848-1866) together with Giuseppe Garibaldi and Giuseppe Mazzini. He is one of the most relevant figures in the birth of the Italian nation.

up on. As we are walking-talking, I suddenly stop. 'Right, the murals! I almost forgot about them! Guys, do you mind if we stop for a second?' We are standing on the opposite side of the street; too many cars parked are blocking my view. *Man, they are really big, though! They are bigger than I thought, actually. I do not really like the portrait on the right, the "Italian guy." Too much color, and too bright. I do not really get it. What does all that bright red stand for? Flowers? And why does he have a blue and a green hand? And what is he holding, some blades, or pointy mirror chips? It feels completely out of touch compared to the others.* We are in a hurry, so we leave almost immediately. Anyway, I tell myself that I have to go back there, take some pictures and "spend some time with the murals."

[…]

Monday, 11th May 2015

[…]

I have my first appointment with the dentist this afternoon. The idea of crossing the whole city scares me as always. I wish I had a bike, at least I would not have to stand for hours in the heat and sun waiting for a bus that does not come; especially, I would not have to stand in an overcrowded, un-airconditioned bus that keeps on restlessly boarding people, even when there is not even the space for a pin left.

I walk down from the school [where I used to work]; it is around 1.30pm and the weather is just amazingly bright, sunny and warm –

32 degrees. The heat comes from above, but also from below and around me: the asphalt and the walls of the buildings are scorching. I stop at the Chinese bar at the corner to get a few bus tickets and a fresh drink, and then I keep on walking along Via dell'Acqua Bullicante in the direction of Via Casilina. When I get to the murals, I decide to stop and take a few pictures. I look at them closely. Their dimension is quite impressive. I can basically look them in the eyes.

I try to find a way to take a picture of all of them together, but it is physically impossible. The mural develops horizontally and there is not enough space between the wall and the parked car to have a more comprehensive framing. Actually it is impossible to have a comprehensive framing even with my naked eyes; my head keeps on turning from left to right to left again. The only way to do it would be to go to the opposite side of the street, but then again, like yesterday, there would be all the parked cars blocking it out. The only way to take a picture of the whole triptych is from one side, which adds an element of geometric linear perspective to it: the closer the bigger, the farther the smaller. I take it from the right, the Italian side. I'm not happy with the result, the picture is completely imbalanced and the Chinese group at the end is barely discernible. In order to remedy to the deformation of the image and the loss of detail of the farther portrait I decide to take separate pictures of the three "panels." I still struggle to make each portrait fit the frame of the smart phone camera – it is a pretty cheap and basic one – especially the Chinese double portrait. I try a couple of times, but the two figures do not fit, bits and pieces of each

are cut out. And then there is that ugly, ugly pipe that sticks out from the lower side of the wall, right under the portrait of the Chinese man. Does it really have to be there in full sight? Couldn't the municipality fix it before the realization of the mural, instead of leaving its "guts" open like that?

I put my phone back in my bag, and walk swiftly towards the bus stop.

[…]

I would like to start out once again by discussing the spatial arrangement that these murals enact, even though, as it will become clearer a little further down in the section, the entangled nature of spacetime enacted through this mural will render it rather difficult to treat spatiality and temporality separately. I argue that the horizontality of this mural, when read together with the verticality enacted through *5 Melting Icons*, indicates a process of feminized racialization of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown as non-white, as the feminine space to be managed, organized and rearranged through the vertical powers of imperialism. The fragmentation of horizontality into "cultures," or I would rather say nationalities, emblematically brings about modernity's fixation with detail and the racialized implications of such fixation.

Unlike *5 Melting Icons*, where the elevation of the portraits produced a concomitant elevation of the figures depicted to the rank of quasi-sacred authorities and

of the cinema to the rank of monument,[45] *Melting Faces § Stories § District* follows a horizontal layout where the three "cultures"/nationalities are presented one next to the other, one after the other, and at the same level as the onlookers and passers-by. As evidenced by the second field diary excerpt, in fact, I can look these figures in the eyes, so no instantiation of verticalization emerges through our encounter. This spatial arrangement seems to ooze out togetherness and equality, both between the figures represented and between them and the onlookers/passers-by. If read against Lefebvre's (1974) previous definition of verticality as a phallocratic symbol employed by potentially violent powers to impress and convey a sense of authority in the onlookers, horizontality, on the contrary, acquires an acceptation of non-authoritarian, non-hierarchical structuration and becomes synonym with equality. A quote from Lefebvre's (2003) *The Urban Revolution* might help to clear out this point. As he states, '[v]erticality, a height erected anywhere on a horizontal plane, can become the dimension of elsewhereness, a place characterized by the presence-absence: of the divine, of the half-fictional half-real, of sublime thought' (38). In other words, if verticality stands for a transcendental and disembodied power, on the contrary horizontality becomes synonym with presence, reality, existence and nature/matter. If we read the two artworks through one other, then, it is possible to see how the vertical powers of imperialism described in the previous section are in charge of looking down and ruling on this inchoate, horizontal mass that, like nature, needs to be ordered, classified, arranged – in this context, the white, masculine, bourgeois, intellectual (Italian) Self vs. the (im)migrant Other.

[45] '[E]ach monumental space becomes the metaphorical and quasi-metaphysical underpinning of a society, this by virtue of a play of substitutions in which the religious and political realms symbolically (and ceremonially) exchange attributes - the attributes of power; in this way the authority of the sacred and the sacred aspect of authority are transferred back and forth, mutually reinforcing one another in the process' (Lefebvre 1974: 225).

This tension between verticality and horizontality becomes rather apparent the more we keep reading 'diffractively' (Haraway 1997; Barad 2007) these two artworks. Another relevant element emerging from the excerpt above is the difficulty/impossibility for an onlooker to have a comprehensive view/frame of the artwork. It is impossible from close up, due to the narrowness of the sidewalk; but it is impossible also from the opposite side of the street, due to the parked cars that block it out. I believe that such difficulty, or rather impossibility for the onlooker to deal and interact with the three portraits all at once brings about issues concerning the 'logic of the limit' (Winnubst 2006: 8), i.e. modernity's fixation with the notion of separateness as the fundamental requirement for objectivity. As I have extensively discussed in Chapter 1, the epistemic line that has been drawn between Man – in this case, the verticalized, masculine observer/power – and the world – the horizontal, feminine mass/nature – has elevated and placed the human above *and* outside of nature. However, the imperialist agenda underlying the world's fragmentation into discrete and knowable units has also implied the fragmentation of the human Himself into a universal subject and His less-than-human objects through racialization (Chow 2002; Puwar 2004). By reading *5 Melting Icons* and *Melting Faces § Stories § District* through one another one can ascertain the persistence of such racialized hierarchization that sees the white, middle-class, highly-educated man – the celebrated and romanticized figure of the *flâneur* that Pasolini represents the universal human form, the model to look up to from below.

In fact, as Lefebvre (1974) once again writes, '[t]he horizontal chain of sites in space is thus replaced by vertical superimposition, by a hierarchy which follows its own route to the locus of power, *whence it will determine the disposition of the sites in*

question' (225; my emphasis). This notion of fragmentation and disposition resonates quite strongly with Foucault's (1978) work on disciplinary powers and their use of space to control bodies. In his book *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault defines discipline as 'a political anatomy of detail', or a 'stone-cutting,' a 'micro-physics of power' (139) that covers the entire social domain. These acts of cutting, fragmenting, separating and arranging are described by the author as 'small acts of cunning endowed with a great power of diffusion, subtle arrangements, apparently innocent, but profoundly suspicious, mechanisms that obeyed economies too shameful to be acknowledged, or pursued petty forms of coercion' (ibid). Foucault, like Lefebvre (1974; 2003) and Haraway (1988), also points to the relationship existing between the sacred/transcendental and the obsession with boundary-drawing practices and detail – 'every detail is important since, in the sight of God, no immensity is greater than a detail' (140). This reading confirms, then, the previous considerations concerning verticality and horizontality: disciplinary powers vertically act upon a horizontal plane, literally "slicing" it into separate and discrete units that are then (re)arranged and (re)organized to fit the dominant structure(s).

This idea of parceling as a vertically-imposed/enacted dynamics – i.e. operated by the dominant, transcendental and God-like powers – strongly resonates with/in the whole setup of this mural project. In fact, as I mentioned before, the three (Italian) artists involved in it spent some time together with the families assigned to them – they say, in fact, that they were "adopted" – so as to capture and represent the essence of those families/"cultures." This idea of the artist adopted by the family/community/"culture"/nationality is consistent with the ideal of the white intellectual artist as a *flâneur* who, like Pasolini, takes in the life of the "lower planes" of

life to then "truthfully" represent it in his works. This tendency cannot but reinforce the ideal of the male, white, western, bourgeois, intellectual as the objective, absent-present observer who is able to access and bring up the true nature of his object(s).

I would like to add another aspect concerning the fragmentation of horizontality, which, I believe, introduces here important elements that have to do with the entangled nature of spacetime. As Barad (2007) has thoroughly demonstrated throughout her work, modernity generally conceives time as a linear succession of evenly spaced units that can be objectively counted and measured. This line is generally represented as an arrow – a Cartesian axe – that proceeds from left to right, consistently with the left-to-right reading path of most western languages. Given the orientation of the time-arrow, progress proceeds from left to right as well, whereas regress goes backwards.[46] Therefore, the perception of horizontality as lack of hierarchies is profoundly questioned when thinking spatiality and temporality through one another. All that is horizontal can be "read" along this pattern; therefore, also the mural in question can equally be read as a "story" that has a linear development from left to right. In order to better understand what kind of story the mural can tell, I will now examine the histories enfolded within the materiality of its walls and drawings to unveil a narrative of nationality as entangled with notions of phenotype and language, and thus nature and nurture, which forecloses Italian-ness from being acquired by non-Italians and poses it as a transcendental, exclusionary ideal.

[46] The famous visual representation of human evolution from the ape, for example, is represented as a sequence of evenly spaced figures "walking" from left to right, where the left pole represents the ape and the right pole represents the human.

In an interview that appeared on the local online news portal Roma Today on the 27th of February 2015,[47] Diavù, the lead artist in this project, discloses to the public some important histories behind the realization of the murals and, most importantly, the families/"cultures"/nationalities depicted on the wall. The story the artist is laying out for us starts – on the left – with Liu's family. Liu is a Chinese woman who moved to Italy when she was only six years old to reunite with her father, who instead moved out of China in 1979 after Mao's regime left him jobless for having a female second-born. Liu's father is the one who opened the first Chinese restaurant of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown. Liu is praised for her knowledge of *romanaccio* – Roman dialect – and for her integration into the local social fabric – 'she knows everyone.' Then the story moves onto Rupali's family. Rupali is a Bangladeshi woman who has been living in the locale since the end of the 1990s. She is the mother of Michele, the 9-year-old boy whose 'big yellow face' is depicted on the wall. Finally, the last family/"culture" to be introduced is the Caporello's, a family of Italian domestic (im)migrants who settled down in Tor Pignattara at the end of the XIX Century and started a franchise of seven butcheries throughout the area. Diavù informs us that only one is left today; all the others have been bought by other (im)migrants and turned into different businesses – he specifies that one in particular has become a Bangladeshi grocery. The moral underlying Diavù's narrative, as he states, is that 'tradition is something that changes; when it remains the same it is not tradition anymore, but rather fear. So, these are three families of immigrants […] whose home is Tor Pignattara.' The interview ends with some very interesting remarks. He tells that one day, during the realization of the mural, someone approached him and provocatively

[47] http://pigneto.romatoday.it/torpignattara/video-murale-torpignattara-via-.html

asked ‘do we need to have the Chinese even on the walls now?,’ to which he responded that

> she [Liu] is Roman, even though she has a different face. And he [Michele] is Roman too. He attended the Pisacane [the primary school] and we are proud to draw on a wall that belongs to that school, because it is an example, a model for the whole country. If we were able to narrate [sic] it better, it would be a model for the whole Europe. Moreover, the Romans always had diverse faces; they were not Caucasian. Therefore, what is tradition if not this? (Roma Today, 2015)

I find the linear narrative offered by the artist particularly interesting when put in connection with the previous remark about the (spatial) representation/figuration of time as a linear arrow of progress. In fact, the story told by Diavù moves from left to right, going from the (Chinese) (im)migrant, passing through the (Bangladeshi) second-generation (im)migrant and culminating with the (Italian) domestic (im)migrant who has nonetheless gained full membership in the local community for his living in the locale for over a century. Read this way, the linear progression of this horizontal axe places Italianness on the right side and thus poses it as better, as higher in rank despite being at the same height. Nationality, then, appears as a central apparatus with/in the more-than-human assemblage under analysis. Nationality appears to be conceived as a horizontal axe – common to all human subjects – vertically sliced into discrete entities, which are then reorganized by the dominant power(s) along the same horizontality but according to a linear arrow of value/progress. I argue that the ordering of this vector in “our” story is influenced by elements such as the somatic norm, language and class, among others,

which are brought into play through the histories enfolded with/in the bricks of that wall an that I will now present.

The primary school "Carlo Piscane" – which originally was named after Luigi Michelazzi, a fascist lieutenenent who died in 1936 during the imperialist war in Ethiopia – was inaugurated in 1939, once again during the years of the fascist regime, as the first local school in Tor Pignattara. The building of this primary school, exactly like the Cinema Impero, can be read once again as a masculinizing effort aimed to bring Tor Pignattara not only within the space of the city, but also and most importantly within the space of the nation. As Ficacci (2007) states, in fact, the increase in the number of schools around those years is related to the fascist schooling project, which was strongly aimed to standardize the educational system and foster a strong sense of national identity and nationalistic fervor. Therefore, it could be said that the construction of this school was not only meant to respond to a structural need of the local community, but also to perpetrate a sort of "cultural imperialism" aimed both to subjugate and conquer these areas that were developing in an anarchic and uncontrolled way, and bring them out of their archaism.

The importance of education in the unification and promotion of a common national identity is a particularly relevant topic in a divided country like Italy. Being still a relatively young nation – its unification dates back to 1861 – Italy was in fact the result of a conglomerate of countless small independent states that coexisted in a climate of relative peace over the peninsula for several centuries. After a war of "liberation" that led to expulsion of the Spanish "invader" from the South, the unification of the country took place with the so-called annexation of the southern Kingdom of the Two Sicilies – the

largest state present on the peninsula until then. From then on, a persistent and violent narrative of an "Italy on two speeds" became a common leitmotif of the successive governments of the newly born country, which contributed to the representation of the Southern part of the country as poor, lazy, "clever," dedicated to crime, illiterate and archaic (Micali 2009). The level of essentialization of the South and "its culture" acquired racializing traits (Chapter 1) that are very strong still today, and have been picked up by the xenophobic party Northern League, which built his political campaign and agenda around the discrimination of the South and even got to propose the secession of the Northern part of the country from the South (Micali 2009; Meret 2010; Barbieri 2012).

The structural inequalities resulting from such North/South dialectics[48] engendered over the years a process of domestic (im)migration that acquired a remarkable character over the years (Micali 2009). It was precisely people from Italy's South who swelled the ranks of the population literally building up Rome's suburbs (see Introduction). The documentary *Una Scuola Italiana* (2010) produced by Asinitas Onlus and directed by Angelo Loy and Giulio Cederna, features some interesting interviews with teachers who had been working in the school for around 40 years, where they tell the cameras that it was especially the children of Calabrian (im)migrants who attended the school in the 1970s. And in those years, being a southerner – or derogatorily a *terrone* – was not an easy task, given that the level of intolerance made it basically impossible to even find a place to rent. This is how the suburbs started out; and it should not come as a surprise that the school was envisioned as a catalyst of Italian-ness and national unity in such a divided territory.

[48] These dialectics are not exclusive to Italy but are also common other European countries.

Following the historical development of the locale, and the surge in international (im)migration flows, the primary school "Carlo Pisacane" maintained its function of promotion of Italian values. However, in 2009, a strenuous and aggressive political campaign targeted the school as a "ghetto school," and a Ministerial Circular was issued by the then Minister of Education Mariastella Gelmini, which set to 30% the maximum number of foreign students enrolled in each class (Ricciardulli 2009; Roma Today 2009; TGCom 2009; Benedetti 2010; Merlo 2010; Novelli 2010; Gabriele 2010). Parents' associations, politicians, local and national institutions, media and activist started battling and coalescing to obtain the closure of the school. In response to those attacks, a counter-campaign aimed instead to cast a light upon the impressive educational work that teachers and educators were carrying out every day inside those walls gained momentum. This campaign was so successful that it did not only manage to save the school from closure, but also to have the Ministerial Circular removed. Since then, the primary school "Carlo Pisacane" is pointed to as a model of integration and multiculturalism in the heart of the most diverse area of Rome and, probably, of the whole country (Greison 2013; Petri 2013; Rostelli 2013; Fraddosio 2014; Roma Today 2015).[49]

The historiality enfolded with/in the walls of this primary school acquires particular relevance when read in its intra-action with Diavù's rendering of the artwork's moral, which could be rephrased as follows: "despite their somatic difference, these (im)migrants have a linguistic proficiency that renders them Roman." The artist's comment highlights an understanding of Italian-ness as determined by a particular somatic norm on the one hand, and a particular linguistic proficiency on the other.

[49] For more information about the "Pisacane incident," I refer the readers to the aforementioned documentary *Una Scuola Italiana* (2010).

Postcolonial studies scholar Nirmal Puwar (2004) writes at length on the notion of the somatic norm in her book *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Space*. Here she states that

> [t]he moment when the historically excluded is included is incredibly revealing. The unease generated by the position and posture of a black [non-white] figure in a privileged public space invokes the constitutive boundaries of the imagination of the nation. The consistency of the play of national symbols, stories and monuments is jarred by the impending arrival of this figure. It threatens to dislodge the established configuration of the inter/national and history. […] [T]his is a presence that prods us to look again at what flanks, towers above, circles and is inside and outside the production of national space. (5)

With a clear reference to Lefebvre's (1974; 2003) notion of monumentality, Puwar invites to think about how the display of somatic difference in those spaces dedicated to the building, promotion and proliferation of the nation – public squares, and, I would argue, even the school in this respect – can visibilize/visualize the until-then invisible somatic norm underlying the (racialized) national/istic project. A Chinese woman painted on a wall attracts criticisms and generates resistance from the local population, as the artist himself recounted, which inevitably unveils the normative nature of nationality as entangled with a racialized optics defining a particular national somatic norm. These considerations are particularly interesting with respect to the "muralization"/monumentalization of the suburbs that is turning their streets into an open-air museum and, hence, a public space. This way, the suburbs become also invested in the symbolic domain of the nation, and thus contribute to the reproduction of the national universal norm and figure of leadership.

The answer given by Diavù to the exclusionary remark made by a passer-by offers language and linguistic proficiency as compensation to the (im)migrants' somatic "defect." The artist is basically arguing that "even if they look different, they still speak like Romans." Puwar (2004) provides very interesting insights on the play between personhood, language, civility and race by analyzing Frantz Fanon's (1986) famous passage where he recounts André Breton singing the praises of Aimé Césaire for his perfect use of the French language. Puwar uses this example to consider the categorizations that underlie the incongruity of a black man mastering a European language, which, in that case, was the Master's language. She see competency in the imperial language as the sign of a non-white person's ability to rise to some of the heights of white civilization. In her words,

> [l]anguage is intimately connected to governamentality. The association of European languages with rational thinking, the values of civilization and intelligence is part and parcel of the long routes of colonization that make our postcolonial times today. The stamp of superiority and assimilation has been, and continues to be, borne by language in the workings of racial governamentality. Questions of national and international governance have informed the practical work of measures in everyday encounters on the streets as well as within institutions. […] Language is intrinsic to the somatic norm […], and the imperial/legitimate language is a key tacit requirement. (108-109)

As previously argued, then, if "the looks fail" the racialized (im)migrant, proficiency in the imperial language is a sign of their ability *and* willingness to 'renounce [their] jungle', as Fanon would put it (in Puwar 2004: 108).

However, another element intervenes to complicate matters, i.e. class. In fact, the language that these (im)migrants – all three of them – are assumed to master is the Roman dialect, i.e. the language of the lower social stratum, generally associated with low literacy levels, and not certainly the cultivated language of high culture. Liu and Michele are in fact grouped together with the Caporello's, who, as previously mentioned, stand for the poor (im)migrants from the rural South. This family is taken as the symbol of the romanticized popular imaginary of Tor Pignattara, i.e. of the "moral peripheries" represented by Pasolini in his works. However, the Caporello's, despite their being Italian, are set apart from the other group of Italian icons painted on the walls of the Cinema Impero, and in particular from the leadership norm they represent. The spatial arrangement of the two murals places them at a lower position, as lower is their class.

Therefore, if we think back to the linear narrative of progress that I previously analyzed, the mural story seems to say that racialized (im)migrants can at most aspire to be(come) equal to low-class, southern Italian (im)migrants, who, in some respects, are less Italian than the upper-class. Full Italian-ness – the one that constitutes the invisible somatic norm – is foreclosed to them all. In their aspiring to be like the Caporello's, the mural seems to say, they will still remain different and somatically "funny." As the first excerpt from my field diary evidentiates, the bright, flashy colors, as well as the abstract shapes employed by Nicola Alessandrini for his portrait of the Caporello's enact difference as strangeness; such strangeness, for its being somatic, is seen as natural and hence irreconcilable with the universal ideal of what being fully Italian entails.

In this sense, it is possible to say that nationality emerges here as nature and nurture, blood and culture, soma and language. However, the two are not presented as co-

constitutive but rather as complementary: culture/language is an attribute of nature; when nature is "flawed" as in racialized embodiments, culture/language cannot make up for such "defect."

Conclusion

In light of previous considerations, it is possible to conclude that the mural portraits analyzed in this chapter function as affective urban materialities that contribute to the iterative reconfiguration of constitutive in/exclusions and boundaries in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown through processes of gendered racialization that render Italian-ness as masculine and white, and non-Italian-ness as feminine and non-white. By reading *5 Melting Icons* and *Melting Faces § Stories § District* as part of a more-than-human assemblage, it has been possible to demonstrate how Tor Pignattara gets separated from Banglatown both spatially and temporally. Whereas *5 Melting Icons* appears to be enacting a process of masculinizing racialization aimed to re-habilitate and re-include the area into a symbolic *telos* of progress – Tor Pignattara as hip, as "*the* place to be in" – *Melting Faces § Stories § District* evidentiates instead an opposite feminizing operation that is anyway instrumental to the masculinization of the locale. In fact, the romanticization of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown as the feminine space, the generous mother who welcomes and gives a home to everyone – "Mamma Torpigna" as it is commonly referred to – produces a concomitant romanticization of popularness, diversity and multiculturalism that is employed to further the masculinizing and exclusionary gentrification project that is affecting the area.

In fact, the dynamics described in this chapter, and in particular the tension between masculinization and feminization, inclusion and exclusion, demonstrate the persistence of the modern dichotomous thinking I have extensively discussed in Chapter 1. Within this system, stigmatization and romanticization proceed along the same lines, and are fraught with the dangers of essentialism and irreducibility (Chow 2002; Pompeo 2011). As Puwar (2004) also argues,

> [t]he language of diversity is today embraced as a holy mantra across different sites. We are told that diversity is good for us. It makes for an enriched multicultural society. There is a business case for diversity. There is a governance case for diversity. Within these loud proclamations, what diversity actually is remains muffled in the sounds of celebration and social inclusion. (1)

The sounds of social inclusion in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown are translated into art galleries, bohemian cafes, cultural associations, street art festivals and exhibitions that are gentrifying the area through an aestheticizing campaign of run-down walls, while leaving unattended important issues such as the lack of infrastructures, libraries, aggregation centers, sport facilities, theaters/cinemas that are afflicting the area and its population and fomenting structural inequalities and racist dynamics. Like the monumentalization of Asmara in the 1930s, the current "muralization" of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown is invested with/in the symbolic of the nation. Therefore Banglatown, as the symbol of the anachronistic space, has to make way for Tor Pignattara, so that it can finally be the "*piccola Roma*" it has never been.

Chapter 3

Olfactory Assemblages in Rome's Banglatown

Food Smells as Active Agents in Processes of Gendered Racialization

Tor Pignattara/Banglatown is a fragrant space. Food smells in particular are an overbearing presence in the locale: they flood the streets, fill staircases and elevators, make you feel hungry and sometimes angry. Because in fact, food odors in the locale are synonymous with racialized difference: as we will see, it is the Bangladeshis who smell, use spices, over-fry their food and thus intoxicate and corrupt the social atmosphere of Tor Pignattara. In the years that I lived and worked in the locale, I had the (unfortunate) chance to witness or hear stories about an endless series of unpleasant and rather distressing incidents involving kitchen smells and next-door neighbors related to this assumed olfactory incompatibility, which produces episodes of harassment, aggression, hate speech, racism, street protests, sit-ins, local neigborhood committees meetings, Facebook hate campaigns and what more.

In light of this kind of incidents, I want to dedicate this chapter to a new materialist analysis of smell – both as sense and odor – aimed to highlight its co-constitutive role in the definition of everyday experience within the locale through the iterative reconfigurings of constitutive in/exclusions. I argue that the unruliness of kitchen odors in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, which exceed the boundaries of the (Bangladeshi) home, violently denounces the domestic/colony divide deeply ingrained in western modernity's dichotomous thinking and individualistic notion of the bounded subject (Haraway 1988, 1997; Latour 1991; Winnubst 2006; Barad 2007). In particular,

this chapter is concerned with presenting smell as an apparatus of bodily production (Haraway 1997) through which race, gender and class structurations come to matter, and the traditional division between marked and unmarked bodies (Haraway 1997; Puwar 2004) along the lines of the nature/culture divide gets reinforced and perpetuated. The kind of incidents described above reveals, in fact, the age-old equation rel(eg)ating smells with/in certain kinds of marked bodies, thus seemingly confirming the need for them to be contained, disciplined and administered. In what comes I will demonstrate how, in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, this process is implicated in discriminating – both in the sense of telling apart and excluding – non-Italian-ness from Italian-ness. In other words, I will look at how smell is implicated in the process of masculinizing racialization of the Italian national identity and, consequently, of the locale.

Before delving into the discussion of my case, I would like to reflect on the importance and challenges of working with smell as a proximal sense – like taste and touch – in an (auto)ethnographic research on gendered racialization processes, and in particular through a new materialist framework.

On doing research through smell: its challenges and potential

Working with smell in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown has been extremely challenging, both during fieldwork and analysis. As it will be thoroughly discussed shortly, odors are volatile, ephemeral; they "appear," fill your nose, stir your innermost being and then, as quickly as they manifested, vanish. And all this happens in just a few instants. Smell is literally "a punch in the stomach," an embodied sensory perception that vanishes quickly but gives off a strong affective intensity (Corbin 1986; Classen, Howes

& Synnott 1994; Gilbert 2008; Marks 2013; Sobchack 2013). As media scholar and artist Laura Marks (in Papenburg & Zarzycka eds. 2013) states, due to the freight of personal affect it brings with itself, smell 'seems to be the least translatable and most personal of all the senses' (Marks in Papenburg & Zarzycka eds. 2013: 146). Also French philosopher Michel Serres ([1985] 2008) in his book *The Five Senses* writes of smell as apparently being the sense of singularity, which is conveyed by the fact that even by "stopping" all other senses, we can still identify, 'years later and from a thousand other smells' (ibid), a particular person, a situation, an event; and these memories assumedly have to do with the Self, they are its emanations. The affective recollection of smell is thought mainly as individual memory and, therefore, as something other – and lesser – than knowledge. Precisely for this reason, smell has been deemed only adequate for sensous refinement and hedonic pleasure: smell is the sense of sexuality, or the sense of narcissism – i.e. the one through which the "I" can appreciate and celebrate its own historiality. In other words, smell is assumed to be a-social and inherently personal. How, then, can one do research, with a claim to "scientificity," through such a fleeing stimulus?

As Marks (in Papenburg & Zarzycka eds. 2013) argues, despite its ephemeral nature and assumed a-sociality, smell can still be semantically coded, even though less easily than other sensory perceptions. The possibility to communicate and thus actualize olfactory sensations, according to the author, 'does *not* reveal the fundamental naturalness of smell; it shows that cultivated odors operate across a membrane from the material to the symbolic, the asocial to the communal' (146; original emphasis). In other words, to use feminist theorist Donna Haraway's (2003) shorthand, one could say that

smell is eminently a 'natureculture,' a material social practice through which olfactory experience emerges as historical and contingent, but still a medium of shared knowledge.

In the context of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, odors – especially food odors – are everywhere: my field diary is constellated by a series of small olfactory events that take up at most one line of handwriting recording the ephemeral apparition of an odor. While working through my data and going through my field diary, I realized that, inevitably, the kind of engagement that I entertained with such evanescent materialities needed to be of a different kind compared to the murals I discussed in Chapter 2 – odors are not like murals I can "play with" or go back to as many times as I want. Smells pervade the air around us and consequently our own bodies. They are pure immanence, *intra-action*, enfolding mutability, or 'mortality' (Marks in Papenburg & Zarzycka eds. 2013: 149). The only thing left to work with is the affective intensity generated through them. And here lies the challenge, but also the great potential.

As Marks (in Papenburg and Zarzycka eds. 2013) explains in her article "Thinking Multisensory Culture," analyzing smell's affective recollection is a liminal kind of work located in the nexus of psychoanalysis and non-psychoanalytic affect theory, 'in that the former pays little attention to the singularity of the sense experience, while the latter does not have a concept of repression, both of which are important to the experience of smell' (146). Smell, in fact, is both individual and collective, personal and social. It exceeds the boundaries of the Self, or, even better, shows the self to be an enfolded mass of spatiotemporal intensities traveling back and forth through spacetime.

For this reason, as Marks argues, 'the proximal senses […] are not only hedonic but may also be senses of knowledge (epistemology), vehicles of beauty (aesthetics) and

even media of ethics' (145). Smell and the other proximal senses, in fact, can be extremely valuable tools in non-dualist philosophies and theories/methodologies like new materialism. In light of their critique of dichotomous thinking and idealism, such frameworks can work profitably with the embodied nature of smell and its connection to materiality to highlight the inextricability of perceiver and perceived.

It should be clear, however, that it is not my intention here to propose and encourage an inversion of the sensory hierarchy that places vision and hearing – generally associated with objectivity and scientific knowledge – at the top of the sense ladder. It is not just a matter of adding previously-disregarded senses to our philosophical and theoretical engagements; on the contrary, the question one needs to ask is 'what are the particular pleasures and knowledges we can get from different kinds of sensory experience?' (149) 'How can it [this knowledge] make life worth living?' (150).

I believe that the great potential of working with smell has precisely to do with the impossibility to separate ourselves from it and with the fact that the only thing we can work with is the images, stories and sensations conjured up through some olfactory perception. In the affective intensity generated through smell, in fact, lies 'the great pressure and potential of the virtual' (154); in other words, it is through that messy tangle of images, stories and sensations that futurity emerges. As ridiculous as it may sound, the 'olfactory imaginary' (148) we help to enact has to do with social justice and futurity, i.e. it is about responsible ways to imagine and intervene in the configurations of power (Barad 2007).

Understanding what capacities are activated through affective intensities is about dealing with our own implication in the materialization of what there is. As feminist new

materialist scholar Karen Barad (2007) writes, 'each moment is alive with different possibilities for the world's becoming and different reconfigurings of what may be possible' (Barad 2007: 182). What more than this can make life worth living? What more than the realization of our co-constitutive relation with the world could make us wish to live our lives fully? Nothing of what we do is beyond importance, nothing of what we do is beyond us, not even the most "spontaneous" exclamation "what a nice smell!" or "what a stench!" If, as Barad (2007) writes, 'matter carries within itself the sedimented historialities of the practices through which it is produced as part of its ongoing becoming' (180), then it becomes evident how smell acquires an ethico-onto-epistemic value; in other words, smell becomes a practice of knowing in being – a situated, embodied form of knowledge – that also concerns our responsibility for what may come to be. '[T]o retie the Gordian knot [… between] exact knowledge and the exercise of power – let us say nature and culture' (Latour 1991: 3), we need to have the weaving spool of ethicality run through the fabric of the world: as Haraway (2003) would put it, 'the world is a knot in motion' (6), and affect is foundational of its ethics.

I believe, moreover, that working through and with smell on the issue of identity structurations that form and inform everyday experience in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown can be an extremely powerful tool to enhance accountability. As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, identity structurations and hierarchies – race and gender in particular – are enfolded with/in the olfactory imaginary of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown. Smell participates in racializing Italian-ness as masculine and white. For this reason, rather than taking it as a natural part of life there, I believe it is important to understand

how everyone is implicated in the iterative materialization of a racialized olfactory regime in the locale.

In order to understand how this happens, I need to follow the olfactory trail of smell management throughout western modernity through the works of French historian Alain Corbin (1986) and French cultural historians Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Synnott (1994). Such (unfortunately brief) socio-historical account of smell and olfaction aims to question the naturalness – or self-evidence – of smell, and refuses the erasure of identity structurations from "our" everyday olfactory experience(s).

A brief social history of olfaction: on "sniffing" race, gender and class

In opening their book *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, Classen, Howes and Synnott (1994) write the following: 'Smell is powerful. Odors affect us on a physical, psychological and social level. For the most part, however, we breathe in the aromas which surround us without being consciously aware of their importance to us' (1). In fact, as I have argued above, odors can provoke very strong emotional responses: they can unite or divide people, empower or disempower, even reinforce hierarchies and political orders. Despite its importance in the production and definition of the social space, smell has traditionally been degraded to the realm of nature as a quality of the non-human – or the less-than-human – in western societies. A feeble and atrophied (sense of) smell is, in fact, what distinguishes the human from the non-human animal: humans do not smell, i.e. they do not know the world through its fragrance or ooze out odors.

According to Classen, Howes and Synnott (1994), the devaluation of olfaction in contemporary western societies should be read in connection with the revaluation of the

senses that took place during the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries. In fact, '[t]he philosophers and scientists of that period decided that, while sight was the preeminent sense of reason and civilization, smell was the sense of madness and savagery' (3). In fact, for example, Darwin's theory of evolutionism postulated that Man lost its ability to smell in the process of evolving from His animal ancestors. Freud also held that smell had given way to sight once Man started to walk upright, thus removing His nose from the proximity with scent trails and increasing the visual field (Corbin 1986; Classen, Howes & Synnott 1994). The modern Man, in other words, became a visual(izing) subject, and vision was the privileged sense for the production of objective knowledge. As a result, all those "Others" who emphasized smell as an important interface with the world were judged to be anachronistic savages, insufficiently evolved, or else aberrations.[50] In fact, French historian Alain Corbin (1986) in his book *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odour and the French Social Imagination* mentions the stereotypical association of smell to lust, desire, and impulsiveness, which renders smelling and sniffing akin to animal behavior. Moreover, as he argues, given their ephemeral nature, 'olfactory sensations can never provide a persistent stimulus of thought. Thus the development of the sense of smell seems to be inversely related to the development of intelligence' (6). In sum, smell became a prerogative of those irrational and marked subjects – women, blacks and lower classes – against which the modern subject came to be defined.

[50] A literary example of the aberration of a developed sense of smell is Patrick Süskind's novel *Perfume: The Story of a Murderer* (1985). The story is set in Eighteenth-Century France and tells the story of Grenouille, a journeyman perfumer who is devoid of odor but possesses an extremely developed sense of smell and murders young virgins to extract their scent and create the perfect perfume. Here, Grenouille's developed sense of smell is associated with the ruthlessness of the predator, which renders him more akin to an animal than to a human.

The criticism of odors was part of the much wider criticism of all the tendencies suspected of leading to "degeneration,"[51] which should be understood as a swaying from the modern disembodied subject norm: it was assumed that degenerate bodies were gifted with – or plagued by – foul and strong odors. And so women were defined by the mephitic reek of menstrual discharges responsible for the purging of the humors – and thus gifted with putrefying powers – and the milk that impregnated their particular atmosphere (Corbin 1986); blacks became Europe's 'great unwashed' (Mcclintock 1995: 211); and finally the malodor of the working class became a marker of 'their low, "foreign" status' (Classen, Howes & Synnott 1994: 167).

Such devaluation of the sense of smell and odor itself happened in concomitance with the lowering of the threshold of tolerance of smells that started around the middle of the Eighteenth Century in Europe. This process, defined by several authors (Lefebvre 1974; Corbin 1986; Classen, Howes & Synnott 1994; Mcclintock 1995) as deodorization, took the shape of an enterprise aimed to eliminate foul odors from the modern world. According to French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1974), this immense deodorizing campaign had much to do with modernity's 'transposition of everything into the idiom of images, of spectacle, of verbal discourse, and of writing and reading' (198). In other words, the elimination of odors pertained to the much wider enterprise to shoot Man out of nature and into the heights of culture. Corbin (1986) also stresses the

[51] It should be noted, at this point, that smells were thought to carry diseases, and especially the plague. Classen, Howes and Synnott (1994) notice that '[t]his belief in pathogenic odors as plague carriers was strengthened by the fact that victims of the plague themselves emitted a strong smell. […] The overwhelming putridity of plague victims seemed to many God-fearing people to be none other than the reek of sin made manifest' (59). Nonetheless, strong smells were also, quite paradoxically, thought to protect against disease. Corbin (1986) notes that '[t]raditionally, in a period of epidemic people tried to protect themselves by covering themselves with aromatics' (63). In other words, smelling strongly themselves, they could create a "fragrant shield" against infectious disease traveling through the air. It was with advances in personal hygiene that strong smells started seeming suspicious and a mark of uncleanliness. It is important to notice, then, the connection existing between smells, diseases, sinfulness and cleanliness as a means to hierarchize and order society.

connection between this 'olfactory revolution' (61) and modernity's underlying individualism. In his reading, the 'privatization of human waste' that started in that period was 'only one aspect of a larger trend, the rise of the concept of the individual' (ibid). The modern subject, and with it the whole West, became odorless: a proper – and hence clean – body was the one who did not let its odors and humors trespass the boundary of the Self. Containment of odors, humors and passions – in other words, self-boundedness – became the defining quality of the modern Self.

Feminist post-colonial scholar Anne Mcclintock (1995) gives a very interesting reading of the deodorization enterprise undertaken by the West by putting it in the context of the imperial crisis of the Nineteenth Century.[52] The author dedicates one chapter of her book *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* to the analysis of what could be defined as the "soapification" of the West, i.e. the surge in the commoditization of soap that took place in the context of the deodorization enterprise. As she writes, soap emerged commercially in an era of crisis and social calamity, and thus served 'to preserve the uncertain boundaries of class, gender and race identity in a social order felt to be threatened by the fetid effluvia of the slums, the belching smoke of the industry, social agitation, economic upheaval, imperial competition and anticolonial resistance' (211). The elimination of odors, in sum, was embedded with/in an imperial body politic tending towards the preservation and reinforcement of the modern subject as the norm. As Corbin (1986) states, '[a]bhorrence of smells produces its own form of social power' (5). Therefore, in a world where foul

[52] The deodorization campaign I am referring to in this chapter should be seen as an ongoing process still today. It is quite common in Italy, for example, to hear of groups strenuously campaigning against the installation of incinerators close to residential areas, not only for the polluting action of the smoke, but also for the stench coming from the collection and processing of garbage and waste.

smells appeared to threaten the social order, deodorization, soapification and cleansing became a reassuring tool to buttress its stability.

The association of deodorization with soap, i.e. of odorlessness with cleanliness, is consequently responsible also for the collapsing of dirt with smelliness. The soap advertisements analyzed by Mcclintock (1995) in her work constitute a perfect example of that dynamic with regards to race. The hoard of before-and-after kind of imagery, portraying generally a black child who becomes (only partly) white after washing, contributed, as previously mentioned, to define colonial bodies as unwashed, dirty and, hence, smelly. A similar reduction to dirty-ness took place also for women and the lower classes: whereas the former were reduced to the dirt of menstrual period – as previously argued, it had the recognized function of purging humors and clean(s)ing the body – the latter were plagued by the dirt of sweat and dust of manual labor (Corbin 1986; Classen Howes & Synnot 1994). In other words, soap acquired a 'liminal role in mediating the transformations of nature (dirt, waste and disorder) into culture (cleanliness, rationality and industry)' (217), i.e. of combating – physical and moral – degeneration.

In sum, it can be argued that smell – as both sense and odor – has been aligned with the primitive and the uncontainable, and thus actively participated in the structuration of race, gender and class identities throughout the modern world. These alignments, as well as smell's pervasive and transgressive nature, rendered smell as the most threatening sense to the social order in the West (Classen, Howes & Synnott 1994; Sobchack in Papenburg and Zarzycka eds. 2103). As a result, 'the regime of olfactory silence' established by western modernity posited 'the centre (the power elite) [as governing] from a position of olfactory neutrality. [… Power] has become impersonal

and abstract, and therefore odorless' (Classen, Howes & Synnott 1994: 161). It is possible to conclude, then, that power's unmarkedness passes also through olfactory neutrality. Racialized, gendered and classed odors are often considered intrinsic to their specific groups, and almost as inalterable as skin color. Given their assumed naturalness, odors become fully part of the 'somatic norm' (Puwar 2004) defining such groups, thus further reducing marked embodiments to their *soma* and biology: the filthiness of black skin, the reek of menstruation and lactation, the stench of manual labor.

In order to understand how fragrant bodies and meanings come to matter in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, I will now show how the locale's olfactory stigma as a low-class settlement, which accompanied and shaped its development, got revived through its (re)configuration as a collector of (im)migration. The "stench" of class and race, thus mingled, produced the locale as the feminized "Other," a figuration of the colony, not worthy to be included in the space of the city. The gentrification process investing the area, however, through its revaluation of the local romanticized popular imaginary (see Introduction), racializes deodorization as a masculinizing operation of (re)inclusion of the locale into the space of the city.

'I used to call it an open-air sewage:'[53] the olfactory stigma of class

As previously argued, the association between strong odors and degeneration/dirt is a recurring trope defining olfactory experience within western modernity. Interestingly, the narrative of smell and dirt[54] is a rather preeminent and recurring one throughout the

[53] Quote translated from Ficacci (2007: 29; my translation).
[54] I would like to point out that more and more new materialist scholarship is paying attention to the notion of dirt and waste. In particular, I am aware of Jane Bennett's (2009) work *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, where the author takes the start from a little pile of waste she encountered in the streets to introduce her theoretical framework

history of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown. As I have extensively explained in the introduction to this thesis, the locale emerged as the first spontaneous settlement in the southeastern quadrant of the city of Rome, in the total absence of any urban planning schemes or housing policies. At its outset, the locale is described as a shantytown of huts and shacks, devoid of hygienic facilities and infrastructurally isolated from the urban fabric. Streets were not paved and mud was a constant factor of everyday life there, especially in the rainier times of the year. Italian historian Stefania Ficacci (2007), in her book *Tor Pignattara: Fascismo e Resistenza di un Quartiere Romano*, recounts that, at the time of its outset, the locale counted two or three rural constructions that served as refreshment posts for the farmers coming from the countryside with their little carts full of goods and vegetables to sell in the city center. All around, there were only fields and the Via Casilina – the main road connecting Tor Pignattara/Banglatown to the city center still today – was just a dusty alley. Via della Marranella, instead, was just a trench cut through by a little and dirty stream, the *Fosso della Marranella*, that served as a collector for all wastewaters from the eastern quadrant of the city and stagnated in a little pond – *la marrana* – which basically became an open-air sewage.

As Ficacci points out, the atmosphere in Tor Pignattara was not healthy at the time. The only people who would settle down there were (im)migrants from the countryside who wanted to set up their workshops and small businesses on very cheap land, outside of the excise belt and therefore tax free. With time, the number of businesses increased for this reason, as well as for the practical aspect of setting up a

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of vital materialism and posit materialities as vibrant, lively and vital players in the world. Even though Bennett's notion of matter's vitality is one of the red-threads running throughout this while thesis, this chapter will focus on the issue of food smells. I reserve the right to thoroughly discuss the relation existing between smell and waste elsewhere, possibly in a future paper springing from this thesis.

workshop right on top of the *Fosso della Marranella* so as to directly discharge wastewaters in there. It is only in 1931 that the then mayor of Rome Filippo Cremonesi approved the construction of the Marranella cesspool, a sewage system aimed to improve the sanitary conditions of the locale through the elimination of insalubrious wastewaters that ran through the houses and made the air fetid. The works for the construction of the cesspool were completed in 1934 and, after that, the quality of the air was advertised – by the institutions – as finally wholesome and healthy, which encouraged new arrivals and thus fostered a further expansion of the settlement. However, the Marranella cesspool soon proved inadequate to meet the demands of an overcrowded area that continued expanding at a vertiginous rate. Moreover, the area still lacked a proper and branched-out sewage system to connect all the buildings on other smaller streets to the cesspool. As a result, even if the *Fosso della Marranella* got swallowed and dried up by the cesspool, other major trade and travel hubs were still muddy trenches collecting discharges, subjected to constant floods, with stagnating water collected in pits and pools. Needless to say, domestic sanitation and bathing facilities were not available. People used to go to the *Casa del Passeggero*[55] by the central train station to use their public showers upon paying a small fee.

The situation remained basically unchanged for several decades, until after World War II, and well into the 1970s, when Tor Pignattara was finally included in official and centralized housing policies and urban planning schemes. Pier Paolo Pasolini (see Chapter 2), still in 1955, in his book *Ragazzi di Vita* writes about sidewalks that looked like sewers, streets full of holes and muddy pits, ditches full of black waters, garbage

[55] The Passenger's House, a public toilet and shower facility located at Termini train station. It is now closed and in state of abandonment for decades.

invading the streets and, most importantly, the pervading and solid stench of dirt, decay and lack of cleanliness. Very much like George Orwell (1937 in Classen, Howes & Synnott 1994), who wrote that the 'the real secret of class distinctions in the West' can be summed up in 'four frightful words... *The lower classes smell*' (166; original emphasis), Pasolini carried out a very similar operation by stressing the olfactory unpleasantness of Tor Pignattara and connecting it with the cultural, moral and human debasement of the suburb. The intra-active workings of class, dirt/reek and (corrupt) morality contributed to the reduction of the locale to a figuration of the colony (see also Chapter 2), a feminized, foreign and low-status land to be salvaged, elevated, cleansed and, hence, redeemed.

The expected redemption appeared to arrive in the 1970s with the makeover of the locale promoted through local strategic planning, which, thanks to centralized initiatives for the construction of public and social housing, introduced hygienic and mobility infrastructures, an efficient sewage system, domestic sanitation, the paving of the streets and, thus, included the area into a more formal urban fabric. However, things were soon bound to change. In the next section, I will show how Tor Pignattara's lower-class stench would soon be revived by the arrival of Bangladeshi (im)migrants in the 1990s, which (re)activated the olfactory exclusionary regime targeting the area.

Smell as an active agent of change in the iterative materialization of the locale

It is clear by now how smell has been employed throughout western modernity to enact and maintain race, gender and class structurations. In the previous sections, I have demonstrated that smell is far from being an innocent and natural component of life, and argue that therefore it should be taken as a more-than-human assemblage of enfolded

historialities and distances, i.e. a fragrant bundle of intra-acting and entangled entities. Given its co-constitutive nature with/in the world's iterative becoming, smell becomes an active agent of change, as much as the space and time it helps to materialize. I will now introduce an excerpt from the field diary I kept in February 2015, as it can provide useful spatiotemporal elements for my analysis of smell as a more-than-human assemblage in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown. As a disclaimer, I would like to specify that I am including two incidents from the same morning, one involving my affective reaction to food smell and one involving the reaction of a friend's neighbor. I found it necessary to include the second mainly for its relevance with regards to smell and its co-constitutive relationship with identity structurations. It should not be assumed that I am distancing myself from being implicated in those dynamics of olfactory racialization; on the contrary, the precise fact that I am working on these issues in this chapter makes me an agent in the olfactory assemblage of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown. This is to say that I have to work with the data I have, and, unfortunately or not, I did not record any incident where my affective reaction was explicitly connected to olfactory racialization. For now, what I can account for is the affective reaction to the story my friend told me, and indeed, this is exactly what I am doing with/in this chapter and, in particular, in what comes.

Saturday 14th of February 2015

Finally, after months and months of "broken" sleep, last night I had a great night sleep. I slept until 11.30am, which is very unusual for me. I feel very rested, and my batteries are recharged. I get up, go into the kitchen and say good morning

Edoardo and Elena. They are super excited because Saturday morning, for them, equals "having breakfast/brunch at Fattori," a new nice little coffee bar in Tor Pignattara that serves amazing coffees, croissants and many other delicacies. I learn from them that Fattori is the-place-to-be on Saturday morning; it has become a sort of meeting point for their group of friends and for the young hip people of the area. We get ready, and we storm out of the house, because it is getting late and they do not serve breakfast for the whole day. We run down the stairs and we decide to go there by car to be fast. As soon as we are outside the door, my nose is filled with a delicious, mouthwatering, garlicky smell of *soffritto*.[56] "*Mmmmm, che odorino!!*" I say out loud. And Edoardo replies immediately "*Beh, in effetti è ora…*"[57] I look at the watch and indeed it is 12pm, lunchtime. The smell makes our craving for food stronger, if possible. We speed up to get to the car and finally satiate our stomachs.

[…]

We [Elena, Edoardo and I] are sitting at Fattori and Emanuele comes and joins us at our table. Emanuele is a friend of Elena and Edoardo, I do not know him very well but I have always found him extremely funny. I am happy to see him and we engage in thick conversation. *How have you been? How is it going in Amsterdam? Are you back to Rome to stay? What is your research about?...* My brief, clumsy, embarrassed and somewhat guilty – I always feel a

[56] Generally *soffritto* is a mixture of finely chopped onions, carrots and celery sautéed in olive oil, but of course the mix of vegetables can change according to regional recipes and variations. *Soffritto* is used a base for most Italian sauces.
[57] Mmmmm, what a nice smell!! – Well, it is indeed the appropriate time of the day…

sense of guilt when I tell people in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown that I am doing a research basically "about them" – explanation definitely gets Emanuele going! He starts telling me that he recently moved to a new place, one of those newly renovated condos full of *italiani bene*.[58] Every time he takes the elevator around lunch time and finds himself sharing that cramped little space with some of *those Italians* – most often complete strangers who barely say 'hi' when you meet them outside of the elevator – it almost always happens that *those Italians* drop the usual "*'sti bengalesi…*" or "*senti che puzza de fritto, oh!*"[59] in order to break the embarrassing elevator silence.

It is really unbelievable that nowadays the phatic function of language is now conceded to racialization. Today racist intolerance has taken over the role of master topic for small talk in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, and deposed what I generally refer to as "the weather talk" – it was always too hot or too rainy, it seemed. Is racism, the us-vs.-them kind of mentality, the only "glue" that holds Italian(ness) together? What would it mean to be Italian in Tor Pignattara if one could not nag about their stench? Would we still be Italian without an external threat or opponent?

[…]

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[58] Middle- and upper-class Italians. This is a common phrase commonly used to refer the newcomers who recently moved into the locale as a result of the gentrification process.

[59] "These Bangladeshis…"; "can you smell the stench of fried food?"

I would like to draw attention to two main elements emerging through the affective encounter(s) with the fragrant materiality described above: firstly, the unruliness of smell enacts a form of spatiality that could be defined as multidirectional entanglement questioning the geometrical conception of space proper to western modernity; secondly, the congested temporality enacted through the intra-action of smell and language, i.e. nature and culture, contributes to the materialization of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown's spacetime as mixture. I argue that the intra-action between the two contributes to the materialization of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown as the feminine and racialized Other, an unruly body itself in need to be administered and bound through the deodorizing process of gentrification. But let us start by considering space.

Spatial enactment of smell in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown: multidirectional entanglement and the domestic/colony divide

I believe that the preeminent characteristic of smell is precisely its spatial unruliness: odors do not stay put – as the excerpt above shows, they overflow into the streets, staircases and even whole condos; they refuse to be bridled and shamelessly straddle the air currents that carry them around. I believe that the impossibility to bind odors deeply unsettles the logic of the limit (Winnubst 2006) upon which western modernity rests. Odors uncontainability derives from the fact that, according to psychologist Avery Gilbert (2008), odors are perceptions caused by physical substances, i.e. tiny molecules that are light enough to evaporate and then be carried to our nose on air currents, in other words and entanglement of mind-matter. As he explains, '[s]trictly speaking, smells exist only in our heads. Molecules exist in the air, but we can only

register some of them as "smells." Odors are perceptions, not things in the world. The fact that a molecule of phenylethyl alcohol smells like rose is a function of our brain, not a property of the molecule' (25). Gilbert's explanation appears interesting with regards to smell's uncontainable nature for a number of reasons. Firstly, for their being diffused in the air we breathe, the olfactory context that constitutes our general atmosphere is mostly not experienced as smell but rather as unremarked, odorless air (Sobchack in Papenburg & Zarzycka eds. 2013). Of the billions and billions of particles that compose the air, only some of them are perceived and then transformed by our brain into specific odors and fragrances. Secondly, and consequently, 'odor is experienced not only in our awareness of its standing out as a figure against the air we breathe as a *particular* smell but also as unspecific and diffuse, *generalized* with every breath we take into the naturalized and unnoticed atmosphere or (back)ground of our being in the world' (Sobchack in Papenburg & Zarzycka eds. 2013: 124; original emphasis). In fact, as Classen, Howes and Synnott (1994) also remark, it is often when our faculty of smell is impaired that we realize the essential role that smell plays for our wellbeing. Thirdly, given the concentration and (con)fusion of fragrant particles in the air, it is extremely difficult to clearly distinguish and fractionate smells into specific entities, because, as Gilbert (2008) and Sobchack (in Papenburg & Zarzycka eds. 2013) explain, most aromas are elaborate bouquets composed of hundreds of different molecules. Finally, smells are not an objective reality, but rather originate in the nexus between the molecules and our embodied perception. In sum, smell appears to be the sense of mixture and (con)fusion, undecodable and impermanent, precisely for its intrinsic power to blend with/in the air around us that we passively experience and take in as odorless.

As a result, smell unveils the absurdity of the classification enterprise undertaken by Man, the one Foucault ([1966] 1970) refers to in opening his book *The Order of Things*, i.e. the idea that the world is constituted by separate and discrete entities that can be easily observed, singled out and ordered by Man as the objective observer. Moreover, the boundary crisis enacted by smell – objects as bodies are not bounded in themselves, as well as the observer is not ontologically separable from the observed – reveals the arbitrariness of the notion of absolute externality of Man from nature as a foundational requirement for objectivity. Suddenly, the distance that Man put between himself and the world He is meant to rule upon from that higher position collapses and with it His project of total vision and knowledge. Finally, Man's precipitation from His disembodied outer-space position reveals the agential nature of boundary drawing practices: if boundaries are not there, frozen and forever fixed, for Man to observe, know and administer, then it means that they must be contingently enacted through intra-acting (more-than-human) agencies.

In particular, I argue that the boundary crisis enacted through smell's unruliness in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown vehemently denounces the arbitrariness of the boundary of domesticity, in other words the boundary of the private and the Self. The fact that kitchen smells travel from one apartment to the other or into the shared apartment spaces (like elevators) and into the streets disrespectful of the physical and concrete boundaries of the home – constituted by actual walls, bricks, cement, insulation materials, conduits etc. – produces a collapsing of the domestic/personal with the colony/public.

Following Mcclintock's (1995) analysis regarding the aforementioned soapification and deodorization campaign that characterized the West from the second

half of the Nineteenth Century, I argue that the cult of domesticity, intended as a celebration of the space of the home as proper, private and clean/hygienic, strongly resonates and overlaps with the nationalistic mantra of the home country as equally proper, private and clean. The author, in fact, by analyzing the surge of the soap industry and the aggressive advertising campaigns imbued with racist imagery and fetishism, argues that 'the cult of domesticity became indispensable to the consolidation of British national identity, and at the center of the domestic cult stood the simple bar of soap' (209). The aggressively entrepreneurial breed of advertisers that emerged in those years, according to the author, played a vital role in the imperial expansion of foreign trade that was comparable to that of bureaucrats: in a period of imperial crisis, domestic hygiene was bound to 'restore the threatened potency of the imperial body politic and race' (211). By being invested with the cult of empire, the aesthetic – intended here as sensory – space of the home became the symbol of the nation, whose boundaries had to be defended from what lied outside of them.

Within the framework of the dichotomous thinking that characterizes western modernity (see Chapter 1), in fact, if the home/nation is the place of properness, cleanliness – moral and actual – and odorlessness, then the world outside of it – and the colony in particular – is by contrast configured as dirty, improper, smelly and, hence, corrupt. Therefore, as a polluting agent, the colony/outside has to be kept at a distance in order to preserve the home/nation. With the changing demography of European population resulting from sizeable (im)migration flows into the continent, the cult of domesticity through cleanliness and odorlessness gets revived by the "forced" cohabitation of local and (im)migrant families within the same buildings and

neighborhoods. Once again the home/nation, the seat of odorless (and colorless) power, need not be offended by the reek of the colony.

Temporal enactment of smell in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown: reviving the olfactory stigma through racialized smell

In order to appreciate the contribution of smell in terms of temporal enactment, I would like to draw attention to the two different affective responses emerging from the excerpt, as I believe that their intra-action with language can be seen as the instantiation of affect's virtuality. As was mentioned in opening of this chapter, by virtue of its uncontainable nature, 'smell is experienced neither literally nor discretely as particular smells but, rather, as an *affective quality* of both a world and a whole sensory experience' (Sobchack in Papenburg & Zarzycka eds. 2013: 137; original emphasis). Despite its devaluation as an asocial sense of singularity unable to provide a useful and sufficient stimulus for knowledge production, smell can nonetheless still be semantically coded through language, which reveals it as fundamentally naturalcultural.

As exemplified by the two affective encounters presented in my field diary excerpt, it is precisely in the nexus of perception and language that those virtual presences are actualized. In the first part of the excerpt, the affective encounter between my embodied self and the pervasive garlicky smell engendered an unspecified affective recollection connected with pleasure and desire. The intra-action between that smell and my 'sensous unconscious' (Marks in Papeburg & Zarzycka eds. 2013: 147), and most likely my physical sensation of hunger, could not be translated into consciousness – i.e. it did not translate into a clear image or memory from the past – but was nonetheless

conveyed through language to my interlocutors. In other words, it can be argued that affect participates in the actualization of the virtual, i.e. in the definition of what may come to be. In this particular instantiation of virtuality, affective recollection was responsible for the 'mingling' (Serres [1985] 2008) of my body with the environment as well as with the bodies of my friends, thus producing a sense of anticipation for the lunch that we would have shortly afterwards. Consistently with Serres definition, smell is 'the time of mixtures' (168).

In the second case, the affective encounter between the Italian neighbor/stranger in the elevator and the smell of fried food escaping the boundary of the (assumedly Bangladeshi) home engendered a kind of affective recollection harking back into a sensous unconscious that conjured images of racialized olfactory difference. The intra-action between that person's embodied perception and their racist sensous unconscious translated into a racialized image associating the "stench" of fried food to the racialized Bangladeshi (im)migrant. The utterance, with a nose curled up in despise, of that brief '*'sti bengalesi…*,' actualizes not only three decades of local anti-Bangladeshi intolerance following their assumed invasion of the locale, but also and most importantly centuries of race, gender and class structurations within the iterative reconfigurings of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown's spacetime. I would like to briefly sketch them below.

Racialization of food smells and the aversion for the "uncontainable" smell of onion, spices and fried food, could be read, following Classen, Howes and Synnott's (1994) analysis, through the lenses of religion and sexuality. They write, in fact, that spices were introduced to medieval Europe by the crusaders, who encountered and acquired a taste for them during their sojourns in the Holy Land. Spices were usually a

delicacy reserved to the elites, which were used to disguise the pungent smell and taste of decay of rotting meat, fish and vegetables.[60] However, already in the Seventeenth Century, their use in cookery began to decline. By this time, not only were their strong savors no longer an exciting novelty, but also their moral connotation came under attack. With the advent of the Puritan movement, in fact, spices were denounced 'as sensual stimulants, exciting all of the grosser passions. Serious-minded Christians, it was argued, should not indulge in such gastronomic excess, but keep to plain, unpretentious fare' (68). Once again, then, strong smells and the assumed confusion of the senses they produced coincided with the notion of a loose and dirty – 'grosser' – morality. If we take into account that, then, food spices affect the body's natural perspiration, their "sticky" odor becomes a permanent marker of sin and corruption attached to those marked bodies. As previously mentioned, smell is naturalized as part of their *soma*.

The heightened sensitivity and annoyance towards smells in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown should be read in connection with the processes of gentrification that is currently investing the locale (see Introduction). Racist olfactory discourse, and in particular the "odor of the (im)migrant," has nowadays become a subject of high-level political debate in European countries in recent years. Classen, Howes and Synnott (1994) remind us, for example, that Jacques Chirac, at the time of his presidency in France, tried to win a share of the anti-immigrant vote by professing 'sympathy for the French worker, whom he characterized as forced to put up with the noise and smell of the immigrant family living off welfare next door' (165-166). These debates surely reflect the changing composition of European society: if, traditionally in Europe, it was the

[60] In that period, the absence of refrigeration rendered the preservation of foods extremely difficult and it was not uncommon for medieval aristocrats to consume food that was already beyond the rotting stage (Classen, Howes & Synnott 1994).

working class who "stank" – from the perspective of the middle and upper classes – now it is the smell of race that makes white stomachs churn.

As regards Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, the olfactory stigma of race is revived and reinstated through the toponymy of the area. As I have mentioned in the Introduction to this thesis, Bangladeshi settlement, since its outset, has been generally associated with the Marranella area, which, as previously shown, is precisely the area where the *Fosso della Marrana* used to flow. Via della Marranella, the previous bed of the *Fosso*, over the years has been renamed into Via della Bangladella. The wordplay, which substitutes Marran- with Banglad-, creates a collapse between an open-air sewer and the Bangladeshi community, in other words dirt, reek and mephitic air with non-whiteness.

Nonetheless, I would add that, through gentrification's olfactory racism, race and class difference are separated, pitted against each other and hierarchized: the European poor/working-class, despite their low status in the social ladder, are not as low and debased as the "smelly and dirty (im)migrants." French philosopher Michel Serres ([1985] 2008) writes in fact that '[i]n the future, war will not break out between cultures with hard differences, but will pit against each other those, on the one hand, whose nutritional or cultural ethnology […] can still be described; and on the other, those who will vegetate in the absence of sapience and sagacity, anaesthetized, drugged, frigid' (186). In this beautifully poetic passage, rich in figurations and metaphors, Serres evidentiates the dialectic existing between the moderns, whom he sees as anaesthetized by language and discourse – 'addicted to speech as to a drug' (98) – and the ancients,

whose senses – of taste and smell, in this case – grant them with the capability of knowledge and acuteness.[61]

A similar (olfactory) war is already currently taking place in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, as well as in many other European suburbs. Gentrification in the locale, by mobilizing a past popular imaginary that blatantly romanticizes the low-class identity of the area, takes up modernity's obsession for separation and classification – class is not race, race is not class – and hence reiterates its spatiotemporal credo in space's geometricity and time's linearity. By separating class from race through the reviving of the deodorizing campaign, gentrification is concomitantly operating a hierarchization of difference that marks class as higher in rank than race and, hence, more modern. As a result, Italian-ness gets disconnected from race and racialized difference/marked-ness and is thus configured as white, odorless and masculine. Deodorization becomes a means to reiterate the masculinizing racialization (as white) of the area, aimed to (re)include it within the space of the city, and hence of the nation.

To conclude, odorlessness, as a symbol of western civilization, is masculinized as an agent of history that enables the exit of the colonial subjects from their savage state through the West's civilizing mission. The reinforcement of the boundary between the domestic – intended both as home and nation – and the foreign/colony through the notion of cleanliness and odorlessness is instrumental to the racialization (as white) of the nation as a male-birthing ritual, marking the exit from a feminine condition. To be deodorized and, hence, Italianized, Tor Pignattara need to get rid of the smell of Banglatown, as

[61] According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, sapience derives from the Latin *sapere*, meaning "to taste, have taste." Sagacity derive also from the Latin *sagax*, meaning "of quick perception." I would also add that, with regards to sagacity, the word "sage" plays a role: the English term sage, in fact, indicates both a wise person, but also a very fragrant herb. For this reason, I argue that Serres invokes both the sense of taste ad smell, which, in their phrasal usage, both imply acuteness and knowledgeability: to have taste, to a nose for…

much as in the 1950s and through to the 1970s the central powers eliminated the smell of poverty and debasement.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated how, by acknowledging its mixed and (con)fused nature – a blend of hundreds of particles, past and present, personal and collective, nature and culture – smell forcefully emerges as an affective more-than-human assemblage capable to unsettle the Cartesian logic underlying western modernity, dominated by division and separation (Haraway 1988; Latour 1991; Winnubst 2006; Barad 2007). As the sense 'of the confusion of encounters' (Serres [1985] 2008: 170), smell is 'a highly complex compound, a blend of a thousand proximities, unstable knot of capricious currents' (ibid). The Cartesian logic is then deeply questioned by a (re)conceptualization of the world as a subtle[62] receptive body, as the locus of topology rather than geometry, of confusion over analysis, of knots, folds and tangles. Like a piece of tapestry, 'senses are entwined in its [the world's] fabric, they inhabit the tapestry, enter the weaving, form the canvas as much as they are formed by it' (60). Smell, as all other senses, is inextricable from the world's materiality: it actually co-participates in the world's iterative materialization as a fragrant bundle of intra-acting and entangled agencies. It is the intra-action between the fragrant molecules and embodied olfaction that smell comes to matter, and with it the affective recollection of times, spaces and things/bodies in the here-and-now of perception. 'We do not smell simple, pure odors'

[62] Serres ([1985] 2008) uses this term to define the body, which he likens to a piece of tapestry. The term "subtle," in fact, derives from the Latin *subtilis*, i.e. thin, fine, well crafted, intricate.

(170), writes Serres; on the contrary, through smell, we help to enact cosmologies of enfolding spacetimematterings.

To conclude, smell can be seen as a 'condensation' (Barad 2007) of the workings of different apparatuses of bodily production through the reciprocal enfolding of bodies, environments and histories. According to Serres ([1985] 2008), in fact, the body in its milieu of air should be read as a 'mingling' body, i.e. iteratively enfolding with/in the environment in such a way that they are intra-woven, unbounded, indeterminate. The ontological inseparability of bodies, or of body and environment, implies that the world makes itself differentially intelligible through its sedimented historiality, i.e. its hauntological nature (Barad 2010). As Serres ([1985] 2008) writes, 'I can draw a thousand maps, but I am only ever talking about time' (158): this way, fragrant boundaries are historicized and agentially cut in the making of spacetime.

Conclusion

In this thesis I proposed a new materialist analysis of the workings of racegender entanglements through affective urban materialities in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown. My aim was that of investigating how affective urban materialities such as street art and food smells co-participate with/in processes of gendered racialization within the locale. My analysis was carried out through the (auto)ethnographic research method defined as walking ethnography. The posthumanist, ontological take on identity categories I advocate for uses the registers of temporality and spatiality to query the modern credo of absolute externality and boundedness. After all, not only race and gender are entangled; matter and (racegender) signification are so too. In doing so, my analysis demonstrated how space, time and matter are active agents of change, contributing to the iterative reconfiguring of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown and its constitutive in/exclusions.

Throughout this thesis, I have worked, on the one hand, through the hauntings of controversial pasts enfolded with/in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown's iteratively materializing spacetime manifold, so as to show, to say it with Barad's (2010) words, that 'the past was never simply there to begin with and the future is not simply what will unfold; the "past" and the "future" are iteratively reworked and enfolded through the iterative practices of spacetimemattering' (260-261). On the other hand, I have engaged with the contingency of spatial enactments emerging through the intra-actions of my embodied self and the affective urban materialities under analysis, which allowed me to posit space as 'topological dynamics' (Barad 2007: 177), thus rejecting all geometries of absolute externality and inherent vertical and unchanging difference. As explicated in the

theoretico-methodological Chapter 1, these two layers of the thesis allow me to capture the multiplicity of the real in its flow and fixity.

The employed methodology is a multi-sensory (auto)ethnography enabling me to work through part of the urban sensorium – the visual and the olfactory – and use affective intensity to account for the enactment of the material. The decision to work in this manner is justified by my desire to lay bare the gendered racialization processes – as I have defined them – which are responsible for the polarization and deepening of identity f(r)actions within the locale. After all, I entered the locale with prior knowledge about such processes, knowledge gained from my work and life in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown in 2009-2013.

As I have extensively discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, Tor Pignattara/Banglatown is currently invested with a process of feminizing racialization that produces a collapse of non-Italian-ness with exoticized/exoticizing non-whiteness. Within this socio-material framework, (im)migration is blamed for all the locale's evils, as well as for its state of cultural, social and infrastructural decay, in other words for its emasculation. This narrative has proven instrumental for the aggressive emergence of a counter-process of masculinizing racialization aimed to turn Tor Pignattara/Banglatown into the symbolic *telos* of the "new Rome" and "future Italy" that is worthy of entrance into the space of the city. I have framed this process within the context of gentrification (Pompeo 2011), intended as the promotion of requalification initiatives aimed to simply expand the (city) center – the masculine, white space of Italian-ness – to the disadvantage of the periphery – the feminine, non-white space of non-Italian-ness. By doing so, I

argued, gentrification perpetuates the same racialized and gendered hierarchies harking back to imperialist and modernity discourses.

In Chapter 2 on "the visual", I focused on the so-called "street art revolution" that is currently embellishing numerous rundown and "uncharming" blind walls throughout the area. In my analysis I demonstrated how the contingent spatiotemporality – resulting from the art works' instantiation of verticality and fragmented horizontality, entangled with enfolded histories of imperialist domination, *flânerie*, nationhood, somatic difference and linguistic proficiency – produced the symbolic separation of Tor Pignattara from Banglatown, Italian-ness from non-Italian-ness, and consequently engenders dynamics of racial segregation.

A similar outcome yields from the olfactory case discussed in Chapter 3, which concerns food smells and the racialized regime they uncover within the locale. Here, I have proved that the unruly nature of (food) smells, in intra-action with the trope of marked bodies' assumed unruliness, participates in racializing odorlessness as masculine and white (Italian). The cult of domesticity (McClintock 1995) – the celebration of the space of the home as proper, private and clean/hygienic – (re)proposed by gentrification (re)activates the nationalistic mantra of the home country as equally proper, private and clean. Gentrification's effort to eliminate excessive odors thus charges the aesthetic – intended here as sensory – space of the home with the symbolism of nationhood and reinstates the domestic/colony divide enmeshed with/in the imperialist body politic aimed at preserving the modern subject as the norm.

By evidentiating the entanglement of both human and nonhuman actants in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, I was able to 'take a step toward a more ecological sensibility'

(Bennett 2009: 10), i.e. embrace a diverse politics of agency capable of distributing value more generously and fostering ethical and wiser interventions into such renewed ecology. As Barad (2010) writes,

> there is no getting away from ethics on this account of mattering. Ethics is an integral part of the diffraction (ongoing differentiating) patterns of worlding, not a superimposing of human values onto the ontology of the world (as if "fact" and "value" were radically other). The very nature of matter entails an exposure to the Other. Responsibility is not an obligation that the subject chooses but rather an incarnate relation that precedes the intentionality of consciousness. Responsibility is not a calculation to be performed. It is a relation always already integral to the world's ongoing intra-active becoming and not-becoming. It is an iterative (re)opening up to, an enabling of responsiveness. Not through the realization of some existing possibility, but through the iterative reworking of im/possibility, an ongoing rupturing, a cross-cutting of topological reconfiguring of the space of responsi-bility. (265)

In sum, then, it is my wish that this thesis may contribute to the social, public and political debate in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown in two ways: firstly, by challenging racializing narratives on (Bangladeshi) (im)migrants' assumed difference played out by both xenophobic and pro-multiculturalism groups, thus countering processes of racial segregation; secondly, by fostering a more ethical engagement with those histories,

space(s) and materialities co-participating, together with "us," in the coming to matter of the locale.

With regards to this, the new materialist notion of ethics, as exemplified by Barad's words, exits the humanist sphere in which it has been entrenched – ethics as a quality proper exclusively to (human) subject, who could then willfully decide to exert it or not – to enter the realm of posthumanist relational alterity. Ethics, in other words, is intended as accountability for what comes to matter, i.e. as 'an ethics of worlding' (Barad 2007: 392).

To conclude, I conceive of my work as an attempt 'both to receive and to participate in the shape given to that which is received' (Bennett 2009: 17), i.e. as an anticipatory practice that tries to catch a glimpse of those futures that are already here but still unknown, with the aim not to lay bare an already-set path to follow, but to foster our sense of responsibility and accountability for what there is and what there will be. As I previously stated in this thesis, nothing happens independently from us. We are spatio-temporal-material nodes of enfolded futures and possibilities. If '[q]uestions of space, time, and matter are intimately connected, indeed entangled, with questions of justice' (Barad 2007: 236), then it is our responsibility to make sure that the future we help to enact is more just.

Afterword

During my fieldwork in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown I had the opportunity to sing together with *La Banda*, an initiative launched by the NGO Asinitas Onlus in May 2013 that every year tours the streets of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown serenading stores, shops and private homes in exchange for vegetables to cook a massive soup for the local community. My field diary entries from those days record a series of contrasting affective intensities emerging through that vocalic event. On the one hand, some entries reveal 'the temporally and qualitatively intricate make-up of […] embodied becomings and experiences in the material world' (Tiainen 2013: 7). I use words such as "vibrant," "shaking," and "disintegrating." In one particular entry I even wrote "I do not know where I end anymore.". With/in *La Banda*, in fact, each and every participating body – both human and nonhuman, Italian and non-Italian – appear as constantly (re)emerging, becoming anew, their dimensions undergoing a veritable transition through the generative force of their vocalic relatedness. On the other hand, words such as "racist violence," "death"and "the choir of black people" are recorded, testifying to the fact that affective encounters between *La Banda* and "random" local dwellers in the streets, as well as with the materiality of the vegetables falling from high up, conjure a historiality that testifies to voice's implication in questions of gendered racialization of bodies and constituencies – such as the racialization of Muslim minorities in Europe, racialized street singers as nuisance, the unruly noisiness of the (im)migrant body, among others.

I believe that the machinic complexity constitued by *La Banda* represents the perfect case for future research into the intra-action between (human and nonhuman)

voice and racegender entanglements. By deepening our understanding of the racial dynamics playing out in our engagement(s) with voice, a project on interweaving new materialism, voice and racegender entanglements, in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown or elsewhere, would make a relevant contribution within the existing new materialist canon (Neumark 2010; Eidsheim 2012; Trower 2012; Tiainen 2013) on voice as a culturally conditioned material entity, which nonetheless has not yet engaged with the spatiotemporal enactment of voice and its relation with race structurations.

In a future, new materialist project on the issue of the gendered racialization of voice, I will conceptualize voice's materiality in terms of vibration (Trower 2012) as a means to exceed the humanist realm of speech, signification and music/singing, and account for the enactment of the nonhuman – such as musical instruments, walls and other surfaces intra-acting with sound waves, for example – into the world's iterative becoming. The resulting intricate pattern of (non)sonorous interferences and reverberations will reveal the world to be a vibrant and vital process of spacetimemattering, consistent with what has been argued in the present thesis. Such project, together with the present thesis, will contribute to break what new materialist scholar Zakiyyah Iman Jackson defines 'the resounding silence in the posthumanist, object-oriented, and new materialist literatures with respect to race' (2015: 216). As she argues, the move towards the posthuman is a move towards 'the racialized metaphysical terrain of orders of being, temporality, spatiality and knowledge – it reveals that we never left it' (217). It is then of paramount importance to acknowledge and try to appreciate the ways in which racialized structurations intervene and co-constitute what there is. As Saldanha (2006) writes, we are in need of re-ontologizing race, uncovering the host of

processes that constitute its machinic geography. Fighting racism is not a question of denying race or moving past it, but rather the cultivation of its energies against the stickiness of racial segregation.

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Mamma Torpigna (https://www.facebook.com/mammatorpigna?fref=ts)

Comitato di Quartiere Torpignattara – Neighborhood Committee

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Tor Pignattara, Cittadini a Confronto

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Alice nel Paese della Marranella

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Cantiere Impero (https://www.facebook.com/RiapriamoCinemaImpero?fref=ts)

ILoveTorpigna (https://www.facebook.com/ilovetorpigna?fref=ts)