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A Posthumanist Microethnography of Multiculture: Olfactory Assemblages in Rome's Banglatown

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Abstract

The present article draws from a wider research project conducted in the months of February and May 2015 in Tor Pignattara, one of the twelve urban zones constituting the V Municipality of the city of Rome. The project, which takes the shape of a multisensory, posthumanist microethnography of multiculture, mainly attempts to investigate how affective urban materialities are capable of organizing and co-participating in the iterative reconfigurings of everyday experience with/in the locale. In particular, it looks at how material social practices such as racialization, gendering and classing intra-act (Barad 2007) in the production of constitutive in/exclusion(s) with/in it. After a brief introduction about the context of the research and the process of gendered racialization by which it is currently invested, this article proposes feminist new materialism as a theoretico-methodological framework that counters the epistemological identity politics responsible for the essentialization and reification of constituencies in the locale. By conceiving identity structurations as more-than-human assemblages given by the intra-action of human and nonhuman actants, feminist materialism challenges their assumed discreteness and poses them as co-constitutive, dynamic and overlapping historical formations rather than as pre-existing givens. In fact, it accounts for the enactment of the nonhuman in the materialization of what there is. This article proposes a feminist new materialist reading of food and kitchen odors in Tor Pignattara as a tool to denounce the arbitrariness of the dichotomous thinking that structures life in late western modernity.

Keywords: posthumanism; nonhumans; gender; race; intra-action; feminist new materialism.

Introduction: Rome's Banglatown as a fractured and contested borderland

Tor Pignattara is one of the most multicultural areas of the city of Rome. According to official data issued by the Statistics Office of the City of Rome, on the 31st of December 2013, there were 8,732 registered foreign nationals residing in the locale,³⁴ 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. As the data shows, Tor Pignattara is today home to a large Bangladeshi community, officially the largest and oldest Bangladeshi community residing in the Italian territory (Bisio, 2013; Casu, 2008; Pompeo & Priori, 2009; Pompeo, 2011; Priori, 2012;), so much so that nowadays it is commonly referred to as Banglatown.³⁵ Their arrival can be traced back to the early 1990s, when 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 – the 39/1990 Law, also known as “Martelli Law.” This influx was initially directed towards Rome and in particular the suburban area of Tor Pignattara, its attractiveness being the high availability of lower quality and cheap housing. In the 1980s and 1990s, in fact, Tor Pignattara underwent a residential, commercial and productive evacuation following the process of de-industrialization and tertiarization of Rome that changed the geography of the city and triggered a process of suburbanization of its population (Fusco, 2013). The Bangladeshi community started acquiring a stable character in the early 2000s, testified by a steady increase in the number of applications for family reunification visas (Bisio, 2013; Casu, 2008; Fioretti, 2011; Pompeo, 2011; Priori, 2012).

Like many other culturally diverse locales, Tor Pignattara/Banglatown is a disputed and conflicted territory, where invisible albeit concrete boundaries are constantly built, maintained, fostered, destroyed, moved, negotiated, mocked, and revised. Dominant representations situate the locale with/in the Roman suburb/periphery, and reduce it to a collector of (im)migration that is consequently associated with exoticized difference and decay. These “grand narratives” (Lyotard, [1979] 1984) inform and structure everyday experience and perception in the locale: (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.

As the Banglatown of Rome, Tor Pignattara is generally understood as 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. Such is the case of Muhammad Shahzad Khan, a 28-year-old Pakistani man

who was beaten to death in the street on the evening of the 18th of September 2014 by a 17-year-old Italian boy. The reason behind his killing, as reported by witnesses, neighbors and police (Angeli & Salvatore, 2014; Leogrande, 2015; Santoro, 2015), was ‘simply’ that the young Pakistani was singing the Koran.

The Bangladeshi settlement is mostly perceived as shamelessly and unapologetically appropriating the space of the locale. The ‘dispute’ mostly concerns the establishment of two basement mosques that every Friday gather dozens of men praying on the surrounding sidewalks, their particularly smelly dietary culture based on heavily fried and spicy food, and the noisy public celebrations on the occasion of national festivities. This article argues that such perceived ‘invasiveness’ and ‘aggressiveness’ has engendered over the years a process of gendered racialization that simultaneously racialized and feminized Tor Pignattara and the Bangladeshi community residing there. Due to its alignment with exoticized/exoticizing non-whiteness, Bangladeshi-ness was racialized and externalized from the Italian space (El-Tayeb, 2006, 2013). Furthermore, the public, media and institutional narrative started describing Tor Pignattara/Banglatown as a “far west” (Cifelli, 2014; Mari, 2014; Mattioli & Burrocacao, 2014), a “jungle” (Santoro, 2015), a “labyrinth” (Santoro, 2014), and a “borderland” (Wu Ming, 2015). The deployment of such language of “imperial progress” (McClintock, 1995, p. 120) and the depiction of Rome’s suburb as epistemological problems and anachronistic spaces of regression within modernity’s spacetime, produced an alignment of the suburb with the figuration of the colony and, hence, its parallel feminization. The trope of the suburb as uncivilized, disorderly and labyrinthine recalls the feminized virgin land of colonial narrative (Fanon, 1965; McClintock, 1995; Said, 1978). Journalists, writers, politicians and dwellers venturing – or relocating – into the suburb were then seen as masculinizing agents bringing light and order into such unenlightened swarm. Through the scopophilic power of voyeurism and the “imperial archive of the spectacle” (McClintock 1995, p. 82), the feminized and racialized suburb could be reclaimed as a male and middle-class territory, a land for male knowledge and power to conquer.

It is not an accident, in fact, that an opposite process emerged, starting from the mid-2000s, aiming to re-masculinize and re-racialize (as white) Tor Pignattara/Banglatown. This dynamic takes the shape of a rather aggressive gentrification process promoted by both institutional and civil society actors. Its rather paradoxical and contradictory traits produce a tension between a ‘do-gooder’ kind of narrative that romanticizes the locale, its diversity and multiculturalism, simultaneously promoting neoliberal and neocolonial values and ideals that, *de facto*, maintain racialized hierarchies in place. The promotion of a consumption-based sense of community as a tool to revive the locale’s ‘exhausted’ sociality, produces a re-evaluation politics that turns the regenerated areas into commodified spaces of consumption (Palipane, 2011; Pompeo, 2011), where cultural diversity is used as a marketable commodity and transformed into a palatable, non-confronting version of multiculturalism (Pardy, 2009).

Gentrification, in other words, can be seen as a counter-process of masculinizing racialization that re-habilitates and re-cludes the area into a symbolic *telos* of progress, by promoting a requalification that simply expands the center – the masculine, white space of Italian-ness – to the disadvantage of the periphery. This is achieved through the “boutiquing” (Zukin, 2009) and upgrading of the commercial and leisure landscape, the proliferation of night bars and artists ateliers, the aestheticizing of run-down walls through commissioned street art, the sanitization of space through the dismantling of local street markets and ethnic fast-food stalls/stores. By doing so, gentrification perpetuates the same racialized hierarchies harking back to imperialist and modernity discourses.

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 the following section, it will be shown how a feminist new materialist framework can help us extricate ourselves from the confines of such rigid understanding of reality, and steer away from a kind of research still too enmeshed in the same identity politics that are fracturing the locale, essentializing constituencies, and reinstating the status quo.

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

Being interested in observing how race and gender are mobilized and co-participate in shaping everyday experience in the locale, and reveal the complexity of identity structurations, I chose to ‘converse’ with those things and bodies that are generally seen as inert when it comes to social issues. This brought me to conceive race and gender as more-than-human assemblages given by the ‘intra-action’ (Barad 2007) of all different manners of (human and nonhuman) actors.

According to feminist philosopher Iris van der Tuin (2015, p. 33), feminist new materialism moves beyond epistemological identity politics, and 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, p. 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.

By working with and negotiating the so-called ‘4Ms’ (Lehmann in van der Tuin, 2015), 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 theoretico-methodological shift, as it will be thoroughly explained in the following section, operates a decentering of the human subject as the sole holder of agency, through which the enactment of the nonhuman will eventually be accounted for. Drawing from Donna Haraway’s (1988)

politics of the subject that foregrounded new feminist materialist concerns through the “‘complexification’ of the way matter comes to be defined” (Hinton, 2014, 100), new materialism proposes a (re)conceptualization of agency that allows us to understand how bodies and meanings come to matter. It enables a historicization of boundaries and separations to see how they sediment, materialize, persist, and contradict each other. Finally, it enables the production of accountable knowledge that places the relationship between knower and known, 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, p. 246). For my project on Tor Pignattara/Banglatown this meant 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.

Identity structurations as more-than-human assemblages

Looking at race and gender through a feminist new materialist lens means considering them as “material social practices [...] constituting ‘bodies-in-the-making and contingent spatiotemporalities’” (Haraway in Barad, 2007, p. 224), rather than as preexisting, fixed attributes of certain (marked) bodies. This shift 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. Such a rigid understanding of identity and difference traps subjects into a bounded spatiality and progress/future-oriented teleology, which becomes the normative framework in which meaning is shaped (Winnubst, 2006). Therefore, this work intervenes in furthering understanding of the entangled relationship between identity categories and those spatio-temporal practices and frameworks that feed the systems of domination of late modernity. By reading these categories as material social practices, feminist materialism challenges their assumed discreteness and poses them as co-constitutive, dynamic and overlapping historical formations that transcend the humanist sphere of agency.

Feminist new materialism defends 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 (Saldanha, 2006; Puar, 2012).³⁶ Such project calls for a different kind of thinking, one that functions differently from the closed economies thinking of our western modernity. As argued by French philosophers George Bataille (1988-91) and Bruno Latour (1991), in fact, the severance from a more general_perspective contributes to the perpetuation of systems of dominations through a persistent future temporality, and a geometrical conception of space, upon which the ideal of the modern subject is founded. Both philosophers send out a call to think in “general economies” (Bataille in Winnubst, 2006, p. 3), to retie the “Gordian knot” (Latour, 1991, p. 3) that keeps the world together, in order to resist modern politics of

domination. By doing so, they argue, it is possible to question current geometries of power that constrain identities into rigid, pre-constituted spatio-temporal-material molds, and query the division between matter and discourse, nature and culture, as the starting point for deconstructive critique.

By shifting the focus from individual, separate entities, to relationality and “phenomena” – “the ontological inseparability or entanglement of the object and agencies of observation” (Barad, 2007, 309) – feminist new materialism accounts for the enactment of the nonhuman in what comes to matter. As a result, a shift from ‘mere’ epistemology to “ethico-onto-epistem-ology” (Barad, 2007) is operated, i.e. an appreciation of how ethics, knowing, and being, are interweaved and co-participate 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 and every phenomenal entity – be it human or nonhuman. This way, ‘insignificant’ events like the sudden materialization of a particular kitchen odor will be shown to co-participate in the contingent emergence of identities, so as to interrogate how inclusions and exclusions come to matter, and keep an eye out for f(r)ictions rather than f(r)actions.

Multisensory microethnography to account for the enactment of the nonhuman

Given all previous considerations, the research methodology that seemed to best fit the context under analysis, and its structuring conditions, is given by the intra-active workings of two different but overlapping methods, which are very much focused on relationality, spatiotemporal configurations, and the enactment of the apparently insignificant.

Firstly, there is a kind of mobile ethnography that human geographer Cheng Yi’En (2013, p. 2) defines as walking ethnography, i.e. a mobile and embodied practice that “offers insights to the multiple splices of time-space narratives.” As an inherently rhythmic experience constituted also through the sensorial aspects of the researcher’s body, walking ethnography mobilizes “urban materialities as affective materials for organizing mundane experience and urban mobilities as heterogeneous and rhythmic” (ibid). By working with, and through, affect, walking ethnography accounts for matter’s “vibrant” nature (Bennett, 2009) and agency, and for its co-participation in the structuring of everyday (urban) experience. Through affect, urban materialities can 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. Walking ethnography, hence, always happens in conversation with other bodies and things.

This very last aspect introduces the second method employed in this research, i.e. multisensory microethnography (Renold & Mellor in Coleman & Ringrose, 2013). This

method is a multisensory practice that is constituted through the sensorial aspects of the researcher's body, and a microethnography insofar as it tends to focus on the small events of everyday experience. By exploring the ways in which race and gender “work on, in and across bodies and things” (p. 24) in the locale, multisensory microethnography allows us to see how subjectivity extends ‘beyond the individual and towards a collective and connected affective assemblage of other bodies and things’ (p. 25), thus accounting for the enactment of the nonhuman.

The proposed methodology encourages the researcher to be “enmeshed in the social space of the location” and thus “transcend the visual bias of observation” (Palipane, 2011, p. 10) by engaging in embodied activities with (human and nonhuman) others, such as eating, talking, sitting and, of course, walking. Being in conversation with other bodies and urban materialities through walking and sensory perception allows not only for the agency of things to emerge, but also for the entanglement and relationality between those things, and the researcher/knower to be observed, so as to understand what kind of space they contribute to create with their own doing. The exploration of “affects associated with the micro-intensities of everyday life,” and “the multisensory dimensions of place, including [the researcher's] ‘gut reaction’” (Renolds & Ivinson, 2014, p. 365) contributes to question the myth of disembodied research as objective, 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). The focus on affective intensity is particularly apt for studying assemblages and phenomena rather than single objects as it allows us to account for their characterizing tension between movement and capture, flow and fixity, so as to “trace the ways in which the virtual is actualized, and may be actualized differently” (Coleman & Ringrose, 2013, p. 11).

In the following section, I will illustrate the case of kitchen odors in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, so as to show both the workings of this posthumanist kind of embodied microethnography and the co-constitutive role of a volatile nonhuman actant in the iterative reconfigurings of the locale.

Fragrant assemblages: a new materialist analysis of food smells

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. Strong food odors in the locale are often synonymous with racialized difference: it is the Bangladeshis who are accused of smelling, using spices, over-frying their food and thus intoxicating and corrupting the sensorium of Tor Pignattara. As a result, it is not uncommon to witness or hear stories about unpleasant and rather distressing incidents involving kitchen smells and next-door neighbors that paint a picture of (essentialized) olfactory incompatibility between Italians and Bangladeshis, and maintain a polarized identity politics in place.

During my fieldwork, for example, I had a conversation with an Italian man who lives in a predominantly Italian building, where there is only one Bangladeshi household. As he recounts, neighborly relations in that building are reduced to the bare minimum: a polite and forced greeting upon random encounters in the elevator or along the stairs. Except when he takes the elevator around lunchtime and finds himself sharing that cramped little space with one of the other Italian residents. In those occasions, it often happens that the embarrassing elevator silence is broken by the usual annoyed comment “these Bangladeshis!” or “what a stench of fried food!” generally accompanied by wrinkled noses and rolled-up eyes. The racializing utterance enunciated upon the sudden appearance of that particular smell clearly performs a grooming and bonding function, i.e. it is aimed at setting up alliances and testing allegiance to one’s own group.

Another striking story from my fieldwork is that of a young Bangladeshi woman who was constantly harassed by her Italian (female) neighbor because, once again, the smell of fried food would not stay put in her apartment, but travel through pipes, cracks, and openings directly into the neighbor’s home. The violence unleashed by the fragrant invasion of space reached a shameful peak when the Italian woman, one day, rang her neighbor’s doorbell and physically attacked her. In that moment, the Bangladeshi woman was holding her newborn baby in her arms. The shock produced by the escalation of aggression pushed her to report the incident to the police, a thing which did not yield any response on their side. Soon after, she figured that moving to a new apartment in a different area of the city was the only way to protect her child from the reiteration of such violence.

The physical and symbolic violence unleashed in these two incidents proves that kitchen odors are key factors in the emergence of identity political dynamics in the locale. The unruliness of kitchen odors in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, which exceed the boundaries of the (Bangladeshi) home, dissolves the boundary of the home – the symbolic space of the private and the self – and thus challenges the self/‘other’ divide that is deeply ingrained in western modernity’s dichotomous thinking and individualistic notion of the bounded subject (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1988, 1997; Latour, 1991; Winnubst, 2006). In those situations, smell(s) act as “apparatuses of bodily production” (Haraway, 1997) through which race and gender 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. Incidents like the ones described above reveal the age-old equation rel(eg)ating smell and smelliness with/in certain kinds of marked bodies, thus seemingly confirming the need for them to be contained, disciplined and administered.

The long history of smell management throughout western modernity (Corbin, 1986; Classen *et al.*, 1994; Lefebvre, [1974] 1991; McClintock, 1995) testifies to the fact that smell has been aligned with the primitive and the uncontainable, and thus actively participated in the structuration of marked identities throughout the modern world. The criticism of odors was part of the much wider criticism of all the tendencies

suspected of leading to ‘degeneration,’ which should be understood as a swaying from the modern disembodied subject norm. Only degenerate and excessive bodies – racialized, gendered and classed – were gifted with, or plagued by, foul and strong odors, which were often considered intrinsic to their specific groups, and almost as inalterable as skin color. Given their assumed naturalness, odors became 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.

However, as media scholar and artist Laura Marks (in Papenburg & Zarzycka eds., 2013) maintains, violent reactions triggered through olfactory sensation, like the ones reported above, show that “cultivated odors operate across a membrane from the material to the symbolic, the asocial to the communal” (p. 146). In other words, smelling is a material social practice through which olfactory experience emerges as historical and contingent, but still a medium of shared knowledge by virtue of its educability. The passions – affect – conjured through the material social practice of smelling, signal a moment of gathering force, in which “a person feels the great pressure and potential of the virtual – of the broad realm of possibilities one of which can be summoned into being” (p. 154). The intra-action of those fragrant and oily particles with the racialized olfactory regime of the locale, produces the materialization of racializing violence – physical and symbolic – as a way to resolve the situation of indeterminacy, restore the self/‘other’ dialectic and contain the ‘contamination.’

The porous and shifting nature of identity boundaries in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown contributes to its iterative materialization as a spacetime of mixture, involved in the dissolution of “racially inflected subjectivities and active in the formation of novel subjects and innovative modes of affiliation” (Rhys-Taylor, 2010, p. 21). Nonetheless, within western modernity, this is picked up as the feminine and racialized ‘other,’ an unruly body itself in need of being administered and bound through the deodorizing process of gentrification. Unbridled and unregulated multiculturalism, and the con-fusion it entails, is understood as intrinsically dangerous, and a potent metaphor of the social decay that the ethnicized/racialized ‘other’ might cause in the established order (Classen, 1992; Rhys-Taylor, 2010). The deodorizing mission of gentrification through the elimination – or, anyways, strict management – of racialized odors takes on the role of masculinizing agent of history, enabling the exit of the suburb-as-colony from its savage state through the West’s civilizing mission. Through an identity politics of containment, gentrification domesticates the body of the suburb, and promotes the imperialist body politics of the modern subject.

Conclusion

In this article, I have shown how a feminist new materialist engagement with the olfactory dimension of multiculturalism contributes to account for the nuances of social formations in Tor Pignattara/Banglatown, and foster a more ethical engagement with

those histories, space(s) and materialities co-participating, together with ‘us,’ in the iterative materialization of the locale. In particular, the incidents here illustrated highlight the racialized olfactory regime emerging through the intra-action of the unruly nature of (food) smells and the internalized trope of marked bodies as excessive. The racialization of modernity’s olfactory regime contributes to racialize odorlessness – to be intended as the absence of odors foreign to the dominant cultural order – as masculine and white. Gentrification’s effort to eliminate excessive odors thus charges the aesthetic – sensory – space of the multicultural suburb 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 stressing 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, p. 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. Rather than trying to describe the reality of the locale, this work proposed a practice capable of fostering our sense of responsibility and accountability for what there is, and what there will be. The “naturalcultural contact zone” (Haraway, 2008, p. 7) of olfactory sensation proved to be an extremely valuable tool in this new materialist investigation of multicultural. The embodied and affective nature of olfactory perception³⁷ acknowledges the inextricability of perceiver and perceived, and shows the self to be an enfolded mass of spatiotemporal intensities traveling back and forth through spacetime. Subjectivity, then, results from “intricate and multidirectional acts of association” (p. 31), as a multidirectional form of entanglement that questions the geometrical conception of spacetime proper to western modernity.

Notes

³⁴ Throughout the article, 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, p. 95). This is intended to stress the practiced dimension of Tor Pignattara/Banglatown as a spacetime structured by routinized social practices.

³⁵ 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%).

³⁶ 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. Even though Hegel stresses the relational nature in the mutual definition of self and other, he still understands them as two polar opposites, one the negation of the other, and thus

asserts that identity is mediated through difference. The other-from-the-self – or the object as opposed to the subject – is defined by Hegel as objective in itself, self-evident, 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.

³⁷ Smell and the other proximal senses – taste and touch – “link us to the material world, indeed bringing it close to or into our bodies” (Marks in Papenburg & Zarzycka eds., 2013, p. 149).

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